



JOUR 491: Transmedia, New Media, and Strategic Public Relations/Communication

4 credit hours

Spring 2016 – Tuesdays – 2-5:20 p.m.

Location: ASC 228

Section: 21444D

syllabus v. 3, updated 2/23/2016

Instructor: Daren C. Brabham, Ph.D.

Office: ANN 310K

Office Hours: Appointments are best. Generally available Tuesdays 11 a.m. to 1 p.m and available online.

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I. Course Description

We are in the midst of a period of profound and prolonged media change, which is impacting the ways messages are generated and circulated. The communication and marketing industries are now facing pressure to rewrite the rules around branding and strategic communication. At the heart of these changes are four core concepts:

Participatory Culture, as represented by dramatic shifts in the communication capacity of everyday people and grassroots communities, including the capacity to produce media that in some way challenges or revises messages produced by media companies, advertising agencies, and corporate communicators.

Transmedia Branding, as defined through the dispersal of core information and experiences surrounding a brand across multiple media platforms with the goals of intensifying audience engagement.

Spreadable Media, as characterized by the central role that social networks play in shaping how messages travel across the culture and get customized and diversified as they get inserted into a range of ongoing conversations.

Crowdsourcing, as witnessed by the increasing number of organizations cultivating online communities to solve problems, innovate products, and provide input that benefit them, bringing the collective intelligence of a crowd to bear on challenging opportunities.

II. Overall Learning Objectives and Assessment

The central concern of JOUR 491 will be to help students better understand how public opinion and reputation are formed and negotiated at the intersection between top-down corporate communication and more grassroots and networked forms of expression. What does it mean to conceive of brand messages not as a monologue where brands speak to their audiences but rather a dialogue where consumers often speak back to brands? Our goal is to consider a growing body of literature that looks at the nature of consumption and storytelling within a networked culture in order to identify some core principles that might shape public relations practice. Because of the rapidly changing nature of this media environment, PR professionals need to be able to map the ways brand messages get taken up, reshaped, recontextualized, and redirected by a range of different groups for their own purposes. They need to be able to propose new strategies that engage with rather than seeking to shut down grassroots discussions about their brands. The course further places current theories into action in the PR domain and thus tests their value for informing practice. Emphasis is placed on strategic problem solving skills rather than tactical execution. Students will be assessed for their demonstrated mastery of these concepts through papers, projects, and class discussion.

III. Assignments

a. Description of Assignments

Blackboard Postings – 100 points total

Students should share short reflections, questions, and/or offer links to current events for discussion related to the materials read for each week's session. This will provide a springboard for class discussion. Ideally, these should be posted by noon on the day the class is being held.

Autobiographical Reflection Paper – 150 points

Select a brand which you find personally meaningful and describe how your relationship with this brand has evolved over time. What aspects of the brand appealed to you? When did you first become attracted to this brand? What impact have specific commercials or campaigns had on your relationship to the brand? How do you use this brand to express something of your own identity or to connect with other consumers? Using your own experience as a starting point, and drawing on our readings so far, discuss the issue of whether the meanings of brands originate with consumers as much as they do from the products or the advertising around them. The result should be a five page essay (double space, 12 pt. font, 1" margins) which includes a mix of autobiographical reflection and critical engagement with the course readings.

Deconstructive Project – 250 points

Students will select from recent history (i.e., the last five years) a transmedia or digital branding campaign. Dissect and analyze your topic by writing a 10–15 page (double space, 12 pt. font, 1" margins) case study in which you follow the guidelines of a strategic planning model, indicating: (1) how the company or organization developed the branding campaign; (2) your own analysis and commentary on each step of their approach, and (3) possible alternatives to that approach. Feel free to hypothesize in those instances where insufficient data are available to you, making certain that your hypotheses make sound intellectual and strategic sense. Be sure to cite your research sources and indicate those areas in which you are hypothesizing. Bear in mind that this is a deconstructive, rather than constructive, exercise. You are analyzing a program that has already taken place, not creating a new one (except to the extent that you offer suggested alternative approaches as part of your analysis). You may not use a case on which you have based a prior assignment for any other class. You will be expected to informally present your project in class the day it is due. This is an individual assignment.

Netnography Group Assignment – 150 points

After the Deconstructive Project, students will be assigned to groups for a course project with each group selecting a brand of their choice, pending instructor approval. The group will produce two deliverables regarding this brand. The first deliverable requires the execution of a netnography research study to obtain audience insight based on discussions among members of online communities. Utilizing contemporary internet tools, including social media monitoring if possible, students will identify the core audiences for the chosen brand and will seek to identify the ways these communities are making use of the brand as a cultural resource within their ongoing interactions with each other. You should take stock of websites, videos, and other media produced by advocates and critics of the brand as well as comments made about the brand through Twitter and other social media. You should also look at how content from the company or media stories about the company are being shared via social media. This should be an organized document that is thorough and easy to read. Quality of the insights derived from the research are more important here than a particular page length requirement. This is a key piece of research that will inform the second deliverable for your group. All members of the group will receive the same grade as a starting point, but the grade can deviate up to a full letter for specific individuals in the group who do not pull their weight as assessed by confidential peer evaluations supported by substantial documentation. This is not typical, but it exists as a safeguard against freeloading. Tips for successful teamwork will be covered in class.

Constructive Group Project – 200 points

In your group, you will develop a 10-15 page (double space, 12 pt. font, 1" margins) transmedia or digital branding campaign for your brand. Groups will simulate agency or in-house teams tasked with proposing a realistic campaign for a brand, product, candidate, or cause. The campaigns should be modeled after the strategic planning

model with a particular focus on execution (strategies and tactics). Each group will present their project at the end of the semester, paying particular attention to strategies and tactics. All members of the group will receive the same grade as a starting point, but the grade can deviate up to a full letter for specific individuals in the group who do not pull their weight as assessed by confidential peer evaluations supported by substantial documentation. This is not typical, but it exists as a safeguard against freeloading. Tips for successful teamwork will be covered in class.

Class Participation – 150 points

It is important to attend class and actively participate, since class activities and interaction with peers encourage creative dialogue and diversity of perspective, which helps enhance your learning. It is expected that students will come to class having read the materials and prepared to join class discussions, contributing questions and comments about the materials. If you are unable to attend class for some reason, please notify the instructor as soon as possible, and assume personal responsibility for gathering notes from other classmates. At the end of the semester, points will be allocated to students based upon:

- ✓ Consistent (i.e., every week) demonstration that they have read the material for scheduled class discussion
- ✓ Contribution to class discussion, answering questions, asking relevant questions (sitting quietly with perfect attendance is not considered participation)
- ✓ Demonstrating respect for fellow classmates, guest speakers, and instructor (including appropriate use of personal technologies during classroom time and on-time arrival to class)
- ✓ Mature classroom behavior that supports learning

b. Research and Citations

On occasion, you may be asked to prepare materials on topics with which you have little knowledge. Many online resources are available to assist you, and thorough secondary research is encouraged. Please note, however, that the largely subjective nature of “wikis” makes them unacceptable resources for this course. Additionally, all public relations writers must learn to create original work, and inappropriate use of existing resources/materials – including failure to provide proper citation, verbatim usage of other materials, presenting existing material as one’s original work, lack of proper citation, and/or similar practices – may be construed as an act of plagiarism, and subject to the School’s or university’s disciplinary policy on acts of academic dishonesty and plagiarism (see below). You may use any acceptable mainstream citation style – in-text parentheticals, footnotes, endnotes, APA, MLA, Chicago, etc. – so long as your style is consistent, you adhere to the rules of a particular style, and all citations are complete. Use of photos, illustrations, etc. from other sources also requires attribution in a caption.

IV. Grading

a. Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	Points Possible
Blackboard Postings	100
Autobiographical Reflection Paper	150
Deconstructive Project	250
Netnography Group Assignment	150
Constructive Group Project	200
Class Participation	150
TOTAL	1,000

b. Grading Scale

Final course grades are calculated as the total of points earned as a percentage of total points possible. Grades follow a typical pattern: A = 94-100%, A- = 90-93%, B+ = 87-89%, B = 84-86%, B- = 80-83%, and so on. Performance below 60% receives a failing grade (“F”). Please note that for graduate credit, a “C-” is considered a failing grade.

c. Grading Standards

Please consult the grading guidelines available in the USC Office of Academic Records and Registrar: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/ARR/grades/index.html>. Grades are earned, not given, and “A” grades are reserved for truly “excellent” performance. Work that meets the minimum requirements of an assignment or demonstrates a basic command of course concepts will likely earn a “good” grade in the “B” range, give or take with regards to other factors, such as writing quality. Work in the “A” range not only checks all the basic boxes of an assignment and is error-free but also demonstrates deeper, more sophisticated understanding of course concepts; incorporates additional research or perspective beyond what was discussed in class; and/or is somehow provocative or creative or interesting. In other words, to earn top marks in the course, students will need to go above and beyond in some way. Note that a claim of “hard work” or expending considerable time on an assignment is not relevant to how the resulting product will be graded.

d. Late Work Policy

Work is considered late when it is not turned in by the start of class on the day it is due (or by another specific time as stated in the assignment/syllabus). See submission policy below. All late work receives a failing grade right from the start. That is, an assignment that is late receives an automatic 40% deduction. If the assignment is not turned in within 24 hours of the due date and time, the grade drops another 20% from the original points possible. After another 24 hours, it drops another 20%. Assignments will not be accepted after 48 hours of being late. Some assignments may also be noted as being never accepted late. You are strongly cautioned to allow plenty of time before an assignment is due to account for spotty Internet connections, computer glitches, traffic jams, and other impediments beyond your control. Do not put turning in an assignment off until the last minute. You are also strongly encouraged to save your work frequently and to periodically back up your files onto flash drives or remote backup servers. If you manage your time well, you should have enough of a cushion to account for pretty much all possible hindrances. For all other major impediments known in advance of a due date, such as family emergencies, it is your responsibility to notify the instructor to discuss possible deadline adjustments (note: instructor reserves the right not to honor a deadline extension request or to see documentation of emergency).

V. Assignment Submission Policy

This is a paperless course. All of your work will be turned in electronically via Blackboard unless otherwise stated on a specific assignment.

VI. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

There are two required texts that will need to be acquired for the course:

Jenkins, H., Ford, S., & Green, J. (2013). *Spreadable media: Creating value and meaning in a networked culture*. New York: NYU Press. Available for purchase online:

<http://nyupress.org/books/9780814743508/> (\$29.95 new, or ~\$15 used on Amazon). Also available in print and eBook formats from USC Libraries.

Tenderich, B., & Williams, J. (2015). *Transmedia branding: Engage your audience*. Los Angeles, CA: USC Annenberg Press. Available for purchase online: <http://annenbergpress.com/ebooks-by-title/transmedia-branding/> (\$6.99).

All other materials required for the course can be found as digital files or links to websites organized on the course Blackboard site.

VII. Laptop Policy

All undergraduate and graduate Annenberg majors and minors are required to have a PC or Apple laptop that can be used in Annenberg classes. Please refer to the [Annenberg Virtual Commons](#) for more information. To connect to USC’s Secure Wireless network, please visit USC’s [Information Technology Services](#) website.

VIII. Policies and Procedures

a. Internships

The value of professional internships as part of the overall educational experience of our students has long been recognized by the School of Journalism. Accordingly, while internships are not required for successful completion of this course, any student enrolled in this course that undertakes and completes an approved, non-paid internship during this semester shall earn academic extra credit herein of an amount equal to 1 percent of the total available semester points for this course. To receive instructor approval, a student must request an internship letter from the Annenberg Career Development Office and bring it to the instructor to sign by the end of the third week of classes. The student must submit the signed letter to the media organization, along with the evaluation form provided by the Career Development Office. The form should be filled out by the intern supervisor and returned to the instructor at the end of the semester. No credit will be given if an evaluation form is not turned into the instructor by the last day of class. Note: The internship must be unpaid and can only be applied to one journalism class.

b. A Respectful Class Environment

You are expected to be well-prepared for each class meeting, provide value to the class discussion, and remain courteous and sensitive to the needs and opinions of your classmates. Please be on time, be awake, put phones away, and stay on task on your computer. Interactions with guest speakers should always be professional and enthusiastic.

When contributing to a discussion, make statements that are respectful to other students in the class and different groups of people. Be careful not to personalize your arguments and be aware that not all of your classmates are as comfortable as you may be in presenting ideas in a classroom setting. Different viewpoints are highly encouraged in class discussion – play devil’s advocate if you want. Do not avoid conflict merely because you feel you will be in the minority in presenting your opinion. You are however expected to avoid the use of sexist, racist, homophobic, and other intolerant language in your speech and writing. This is more than an issue of so-called political correctness; this is an issue of professionalism and of excellence in communication, knowing how to be precise and fair and accurate in expression, and understanding that there are diverse stakeholders in any conversation.

c. Official Class Communication

As important announcements will be made via Blackboard and Blackboard’s email communication tool, it is important that you check Blackboard and emails sent from Blackboard (which may be forwarded to an email account of your choosing) regularly. Get in the habit of checking your USC email account as that will be utilized in Blackboard.

IX. Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

a. Academic Conduct

Plagiarism

Presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words - is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/b/11-00-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

USC School of Journalism Policy on Academic Integrity

The following is the USC Annenberg School of Journalism’s policy on academic integrity and repeated in the syllabus for every course in the school:

“Since its founding, the USC School of Journalism has maintained a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found plagiarizing, fabricating, cheating on examinations, and/or purchasing papers or other assignments faces sanctions ranging from an ‘F’ on the assignment to dismissal from the School of Journalism. All academic integrity violations will be reported to the office of Student Judicial Affairs & Community Standards (SJACS), as per university policy, as well as journalism school administrators.”

In addition, it is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself, and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course or Learning Lab, without approval of the instructor.

If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or cheating (including how to properly attribute a quote or scholarly source in an assignment), please ask the professor.

b. Support Systems

Equity and Diversity

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community - such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member - can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage <https://sarc.usc.edu/> describes reporting options and other resources. Additionally, the instructor for this course has received specialized training in working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning students and should be considered a “Safe Zone” if you need to talk confidentially about these or other topics.

Support with Scholarly Writing

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. Any students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to the professor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. The office is located in the Student Union room 301 and their phone number is (213) 740-0776. Please understand that the professor is not qualified or permitted under university policies to provide any disability-related accommodations without authorization from DSP.

Stress Management

Students are under a lot of pressure. If you start to feel overwhelmed, it is important that you reach out for help. A good place to start is the USC Student Counseling Services office at 213-740-7711. The service is confidential, and there is no charge.

Emergency Information

If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

X. Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Important note to students: Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change - and probably will change - based on the progress of the class, news events, and/or guest speaker availability.

KEY

TW = Tenderich & Williams' *Transmedia Branding*

JFG = Jenkins, Ford & Green's *Spreadable Media*

Date	Topic / In-Class	Before Class You Should:
1/12	Introduction to the course; overview of course themes	
1/19	Understanding culture – theoretical underpinnings; why organizations need to care about culture; alternative models for seeking consumer insights (cool hunting, ethnography, social listening, crowdsourcing)	<p>READ: Jenkins' "How Transmedia Storytelling Begat Transmedia Planning"</p> <p>READ: McCracken's <i>Chief Culture Officer</i> [excerpt]</p> <p>READ: Gladwell's "The Cool Hunt"</p>
1/26	The changed media environment – participatory culture v. the broadcast paradigm; personal media v. social media	<p>READ: Kozinets' "E-Tribalized Marketing?"</p> <p>READ: Donaton's <i>Madison & Vine</i> [excerpts]</p> <p>READ: Rose's "This is Your Brand on YouTube"</p> <p>READ: TW Ch. 1 & 2</p>
2/2	Participation and crowdsourcing – what we participate in and why; crowdsourcing; subcultures, fan communities, brand communities; how cultures organize	<p>DUE: Autobiographical Reflection Paper</p> <p>READ: JFG Ch. 4</p> <p>READ: Brabham's <i>Crowdsourcing</i> [excerpt]</p> <p>READ: Caddell's "Becoming a Mad Man"</p> <p>READ: Horowitz's "Creators, Synthesizers, and Consumers"</p> <p>READ: McAlexander et al.'s "Building Brand Community"</p> <p>READ: Cova et al.'s "Tribes, Inc."</p> <p>READ: Fourier & Lee's "Getting Brand Communities Right"</p>
2/9	Transmedia logics – transmedia design principles; transmedia as branded entertainment; continuity v. multiplicity; world-building as brand-building	<p>READ: Jenkins' "Transmedia Storytelling 101"</p> <p>READ: Jenkins' "Transmedia 202: Further Reflections"</p> <p>READ: Jenkins' "Seven Myths About Transmedia Storytelling Debunked"</p> <p>READ: Phillips' <i>A Creator's Guide to Transmedia Storytelling</i> [excerpts]</p> <p>READ: Askwith's "Five Logics of Engagement"</p> <p>READ: JFG Ch. 3</p> <p>READ: TW Ch. 3-7</p>

2/16	Retro branding	<p>READ: JFG Ch. 2</p> <p>READ: Ford's "Mr. Roger's Lessons for a New Generation"</p> <p>READ: Brown et al.'s "Teaching Old Brands New Tricks"</p> <p>READ: IGN's "IGN Reviews Disney Infinity"</p>
2/23	Deconstructive project presentations	DUE: Deconstructive Project Paper
3/1	Netnography – Netnography as a method for market research; assign teams for group project	<p>READ: TW Ch. 9</p> <p>READ: Kozinets' "The Field Behind the Screen"</p>
3/8	<p>Spreadability – media viruses and memes; influencers; the spreadability paradigm; appraisal and value</p> <p>Guest speaker: Limor Shifman, Associate Professor, Department of Communication & Journalism, Hebrew University of Jerusalem</p>	<p>READ: Shifman's "Mememes in a Digital World"</p> <p>READ: Rushkoff's "The Nature of Infection"</p> <p>READ: JFG Introduction & Ch. 5</p> <p>READ: Berger & Milkman's "What Makes Online Content Viral?"</p>
3/15	No class – Spring Break	
3/22	Methods for designing spreadable media campaigns – case studies in digital branding; web tools for creating spreadable campaigns	<p>DUE: Netnography Group Assignment</p> <p>READ: JFG Ch. 1</p> <p>READ: Vedrashko's "Five Things Jersey Shore Taught My Agency About Social Media"</p>
3/29	Activism and rumors – grassroots efforts to spread messages and determine outcomes; the cultural analysis of rumors	<p>READ: Phillips' "Why So Socialist?"</p> <p>READ: Turner's <i>I Heard it Through the Grapevine</i> [excerpts]</p> <p>READ: Del Vicario et al.'s "The Spreading of Misinformation Online"</p>
4/5	Friction points – when corporate communication and participation culture clash; culture jamming and debranding	<p>READ: TW Ch. 8</p> <p>READ: Carducci's "Culture Jamming"</p> <p>READ: Scott's "Repackaging Fan Culture"</p> <p>READ: Jenkins' "Transforming Fan Culture into User-Generated Content"</p> <p>READ: Russo's "User-Penetrated Content"</p>
4/12	<p>Transmedia futures – new technologies, new business models, new strategies?</p> <p>Guest speaker: Robert Hernandez, Associate Professor of Professional Practice, USC Annenberg</p>	READ: TBD
4/19	Global media flows – moving from a national context to a global one; transmedia in a multi-language world; course wrap-up	<p>READ: JFG Ch. 7</p> <p>READ: Appadurai's "How Histories Make Geographies"</p> <p>READ: Zuckerman's "From Weird to Wide"</p> <p>READ: He's "Kung Fu Panda Vidding and Chinese Fan Culture"</p>
4/26	Group project presentations	
5/5	No class – final draft of group paper due online	DUE: Constructive Group Project

XI. About Your Instructor

Daren C. Brabham, Ph.D., is an assistant professor at USC Annenberg and the founding editor of *Case Studies in Strategic Communication*. His research expertise is in crowdsourcing, an online, distributed problem solving and production model that leverages the collective intelligence of online communities to serve organizational needs. He is the author of the books *Crowdsourcing* (MIT Press, 2013), which has been translated into Chinese and Korean, and *Crowdsourcing in the Public Sector* (Georgetown University Press, 2015). His professional experience includes marketing and development for nonprofits, user experience design for an IT research firm, and crowdsourcing consulting. He has an M.S. and Ph.D. from the University of Utah and a B.A. from Trinity University.