

2 units

Spring 2017: Tuesdays, 12-1:50 p.m.
Section: 21456R
Location: ASC 240

Instructor: Dana Chinn, Lecturer
Office: ASC 227
Office Hours: By appointment on
Tuesdays, Wednesdays
and other days
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I. Course Description

This course will give you a foundation for using web traffic data to help news and nonprofit organizations measure and understand their impact on audiences.

Web - or digital - analytics is an essential tool used by journalists, website managers, communications directors and others who need to make data-driven decisions about site content, design and marketing. “Chief audience officer” and “audience analyst” are just two positions, new to many newsrooms, focused on tapping into the power of digital analytics, big data and data science that e-commerce companies have used for years.

This course will focus on content- or mission-based sites, or sites in which success is measured by whether stories and other content are building and retaining audiences. This is in contrast to e-commerce sites, where the primary goal is usually direct sales.

Both types of sites, however, use the same tools. You will have direct access to the proprietary Google Analytics accounts and other media metrics data (e.g., MailChimp, Facebook Insights) for a number of news and nonprofit organizations. Each week you will get hands-on experience with different types of metrics that help answer questions crucial to an organization’s survival. In addition to learning about basic web metrics, you’ll spend a large chunk of time on search engine optimization or SEO metrics.

You will use Excel and PowerPoint extensively, and learn about industry best practices in data visualization. In-class workshops and weekly assignments will help you learn (or learn more about) these tools and techniques at your own pace.

II. Overall Learning Objectives and Assessment

After completing this course, you will know how to use the basic metrics and functions in Google Analytics, and will understand how to explain basic digital metrics in a report for managers at a news or nonprofit organization.

You will:

- Identify the mission of a journalism or nonprofit organization to inform questions about how content, design and marketing can build and retain audience engagement.
- Recognize which metrics are relevant given a specific question about content, design and marketing.
 - Sessions, users, pageviews
 - Site-level vs. story-level metrics
 - Site vs. page bounce rate, pages per session, attention minutes
 - Search engine keyword clicks and impressions
- Identify target audiences using metrics that describe the impact of media on them.
 - New vs. returning users
 - Users from specific geographic areas
 - Users who email, share, comment or take other behavioral, measurable actions after reading a story
- Use accurate language and data visualizations to interpret and summarize media metrics data.

III. Description of Assignments

Homework assignments will usually fall into one of two categories:

- Multiple-choice and short-answer homework assignments on Blackboard to assess your knowledge and understanding of terms and concepts.

Some of these assignments will also require you to get data from Google Analytics, perform calculations in Excel and/or put the data in a chart or table.

- An infographic that consists of one or more charts, tables and/or screenshots with summary or explanatory text and/or annotations.

We will usually complete a sample homework assignment together in class. One or two of the 12 homework assignments will be group assignments.

The final project is a report with infographics that summarizes your review of the metrics you've identified as the most important for a specific organization to use.

Confidential information

Throughout the semester you will have direct access to the Google Analytics accounts and other digital data for a variety of news and nonprofit organizations. This is internal, proprietary data. Thus, all data, assignments, projects and discussions are confidential. You can show prospective employers your assignments and projects if you strip out all identifying information.

IV. Grading

a. Course Grade Breakdown

Homework assignments (12)	60%
Assignments 6-12 will be weighted more than assignments 1-5.	
Attendance, class participation, group peer assessment	10%
Final project	30%

Total	100%

Attendance, class participation and group peer evaluation

Part of your course grade will be based on your coming to class on time, being prepared, and actively participating during the lectures and in-class workshops.

For the group assignment(s), you will also be required to submit a peer evaluation form. All members of a team will receive the same grade on a group assignment. However, I will adjust your individual course grade if I've assessed that you haven't made an equitable contribution to the group work based on the peer evaluations and my observations.

b. Grading Scale

A	95-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69
A-	90-94	B	83-86	C	73-76	D	63-66
		B-	80-82	C-	70-72	D-	60-62
						F	59 and below

c. Grading Standards

A

The analysis is relevant, uses the correct data and is concise and complete. It identifies any assumptions that were used, data integrity issues, and issues that need to be further addressed (if any) before a manager can make a decision.

The analysis is targeted to a managerial audience, is clearly written and is free of spelling and grammatical errors. It includes relevant charts and graphs with explanatory text. There are no 3D or other types of graphs in formats that obscure

the trends or data points. It uses the correct colors, data labels and font size, and has a plain white or otherwise unobtrusive background. The analyses are in a hard copy format suitable for discussion at a meeting.

B

The analysis is relevant, uses the correct data and is complete. It identifies assumptions that were used, data integrity issues, and issues that need to be further addressed (if any) before a manager can make a decision. The report and presentation have most, but not all, of the attributes of an “A” assignment.

C

The analysis is relevant and uses the correct data, but isn’t complete; it’s a recitation of facts rather than an analysis. It can be used for decision-making if a manager could deduce some of the issues on his/her own. The report and presentation have some of the attributes of an “A” assignment.

D

The analysis is relevant, but doesn’t use the correct data and isn’t complete. It needs further work before it can be used for decision-making. The report and presentation have only a few of the attributes of an “A” assignment.

F

The analysis isn’t relevant, doesn’t use the correct data and isn’t complete. The report and presentation doesn’t have any of the attributes of an “A” assignment.

V. Assignment Submission Policy

Assignments are due on Blackboard before the beginning of each class. Late assignments will be accepted at any time in the semester but a full letter grade will be deducted regardless of the reason for the late submission.

VI. Readings and Supplementary Materials

Readings will be posted on Blackboard weekly.

The lectures, quizzes and grading standards will draw heavily from the following:

- Materials published by the USC Annenberg Media Impact Project:
"Understanding Media Metrics" and "Measuring Digital Media Impact 101"
- Avinash Kaushik, Analytics Evangelist, Google, and advisory board member, Media Impact Project
 - Web Analytics: An Hour a Day, Sybex/Wiley Publishing, 443 pages
 - Web Analytics 2.0, Sybex/Wiley Publishing, 475 pages
 - Occam's Razor, <http://www.kaushik.net>
- "Numbers in the Newsroom: Using Math and Statistics in News," Second Edition, E-version, by Sarah Cohen for Investigative Reporters and Editors,

Inc., 2014, 134 pages. Available via the IRE website store at store.ire.org.

- “The Wall Street Journal Guide to Information Graphics: The Dos & Don’ts of Presenting Data, Facts, and Figures,” by Dona M. Wong, W.W. Norton, 2010, 158 pages.
- Videos on my YouTube (youtube.com/danachinn) and Vimeo channels from Google, practitioners, and me.

VII. Required Tools, Readings and Materials

1. Laptop (PC or Mac)

Please bring your laptop to every class. Being on non-class websites during class will affect the class participation component of your course grade.

- 2. Microsoft Office 2016** (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) is available for free to USC students at itservices.usc.edu/officestudents. I will be using Office 2016 (PC and Mac) for lectures, handouts and in-class demos.

The assignments and the final project must be in Excel and PowerPoint, which are industry standards. Analysts collaborate across departments and organizations and almost always have to hand off their files. If you use Numbers, Keynote, Google Docs, Prezi or other software, you’ll need to convert your files and fix any formatting problems that happen during the conversion process.

VIII. Course Schedule

Full assignment descriptions and grading rubrics will be distributed each week.
All assignments are to be completed and/or posted on Blackboard.

Week	Topics	Readings on Blackboard	Homework due the following week
1	<p>Course overview What is digital analytics?</p>	<p>Chapters on the purpose and history of web/digital analytics by Avinash Kaushik</p>	<p>Assgn. 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interests, skills and tools survey <p>If needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update to Office 2016 • Basic Excel tutorials on Lynda.com
2	<p>Measurement models: What metrics matter?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mass media vs. digital media audiences • Defining target audiences, content topics, and site goals • Behavioral vs. attitudinal research <p>Google Analytics Audience Overview metrics 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sessions, users, pageviews • Pages per session, site bounce rate • Trends vs. totals <p>Excel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentages and ratios; rounding and formatting; copy/paste; auto-fill • Writing with metrics 	<p>“Web Metrics for Journalists,” by the USC Media Impact Project</p> <p>Metrics definitions on the Google Analytics Help site</p> <p>Google Analytics Academy Lesson 3.2</p>	<p>Assgn. 2 – Basic metrics 1</p>

Week	Topics	Readings	Homework due the following week
3	<p>What happened with the most important target audiences?</p> <p>Google Analytics Audience Overview metrics 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Google Analytics overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Metrics by day vs. week ○ Exporting to Excel • Segmenting sessions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Total sessions vs. sessions from new vs. returning users ○ Total sessions vs. sessions from targeted geographic regions <p>Excel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Converting raw .csv files • Combining multiple files into one workbook • Labeling columns accurately • Averages vs. medians; range (highest/lowest); 	<p>“Web Metrics for Journalists,” by the USC Media Impact Project</p> <p>Metrics definitions on the Google Analytics Help site</p> <p>Google Analytics Academy videos</p>	<p>Assgn. 3 – Basic metrics segmentation</p>
4	<p>What stories drove traffic and kept people on the site?</p> <p>Google Analytics Behavior/Site Content metrics – Part 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pageviews vs. unique pageviews • Avg. time on page vs. attention minutes (Google Tag Manager) • Entrances and exits • Site bounce rate vs. page bounce rate 	<p>“Story-level metrics,” from the “Measuring Digital Media Impact 101” workbook by the USC Media Impact Project</p> <p>Google Analytics Academy videos</p>	<p>Assgn. 4 – Story-level metrics</p>

Week	Topics	Readings	Homework due the following week
5	<p>What stories drove traffic and kept people on the site?</p> <p>Google Analytics Behavior/Site Content metrics – Part 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding URL groupings in site architecture • Topic taxonomies • Grouping, categorizing and analyzing stories by page type and topic <p>Excel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting a named range; using filters; sorting • Calculating group bounce rates 	<p>“Story-level metrics,” from the “Measuring Digital Media Impact 101” workbook by the USC Media Impact Project</p> <p>Google Analytics Academy videos</p>	<p>Assgn. 5 – Content groups</p>
6	<p>How did people get to the site? What channels were the most effective in keeping people on the site?</p> <p>Google Analytics Acquisition traffic source metrics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organic vs. paid search • Direct traffic • Referral and social media sites • Email newsletters <p>PowerPoint</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vertical bar chart with table 	<p>Google Analytics Academy videos</p>	<p>Assgn. 6 – Traffic sources 1</p>

Week	Topics	Readings	Homework due the following week
7	<p>When people came to the site, what did they see first, and then what did they do?</p> <p>Google Analytics Behavior/Site Content metrics – Part 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story traffic sources • Landing page bounce rate • Emails, shares, comments 	To be determined	Assgn. 7 – Traffic sources 2
8	<p>What should we report to our board and senior management?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sessions: Total vs. sessions from new and returning users • Sessions: Total vs. sessions from targeted geographic regions • Traffic sources • Stories/content <p>PowerPoint</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Line vs. stacked line charts 	“Quarterly reports,” from the “Measuring Digital Media Impact 101” workbook by the USC Media Impact Project	Assgn. 8 – Quarterly reports
9	<p>Search Engine Optimization: Are people finding our most important stories through search engines?</p> <p>Google Search Console organic search keyword metrics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grouping keywords <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Branded vs. unbranded ○ Topics • Clicks, impressions, position <p>Excel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pivot tables 	To be determined	Assgn. 9a – Organic search 1

Week	Topics	Readings	Homework due the following week
10	SEO workshop In-class group assignment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Code for branded vs. unbranded • Code by topic • Summarize with pivot tables 	To be determined	Assgn. 9b – Organic search 2
11	SEO: What keywords should an org buy? Google AdWords metrics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clicks, impressions • Components of ad Quality Scores: expected click-through rate, ad relevance, landing page experience 	To be determined	Assgn. 10 – Organic and paid search
12	To be determined: Data visualization, MailChimp/email newsletters or Facebook Pages	To be determined	Assgn. 11 – To be determined
13	To be determined: Data visualization, MailChimp/email newsletters or Facebook Pages	To be determined	Assgn. 12 – To be determined
14	What happened? What do we do now? Why? Final project overview		None
15	Final project workshop		

The final project is due via Blackboard on Wednesday, May 10, 2017, 4 p.m.

IX. Policies and Procedures

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 of one 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.

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.

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://dps.usc.edu/contact/report/>. 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.

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://ali.usc.edu/> 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.

Students requesting test-related accommodations will need to share and discuss their DSP recommended accommodation letter/s with their faculty and/or appropriate departmental contact person at least three weeks before the date the accommodations will be needed. Additional time may be needed for final exams. Reasonable exceptions will be considered during the first three weeks of the semester as well as for temporary injuries and for students recently diagnosed. Please note that a reasonable period of time is still required for DSP to review documentation and to make a determination whether a requested accommodation will be appropriate.

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.

About Your Instructor

I've been a full-time faculty member at Annenberg since 2002, and have focused on digital analytics and open data since 2007. This semester, in addition to teaching JOUR 477/Web Analytics for News and Nonprofit Organizations, I'm teaching JOUR 322/Data Journalism.

I have an undergraduate degree in journalism and an MBA, both from USC. I continue to work with various nonprofit news organizations and e-commerce companies as a consultant, and previously worked at Gannett, the Los Angeles Times and other media organizations in strategic planning, marketing and finance.