



**ASCJ 420 Annenberg Collaboratory:  
Media Reengineered**

**Units: 2**

**Fall 2018 – Mondays – 4-5:40 p.m.**

**Section: 21930R**

**Location: ANN 406**

**Instructor: Prof. Gabriel Kahn**

**Office Hours: TBA**

**Contact Info: gabriel.kahn@usc.edu**

**I. Course Description**

This class seeks to bring together disparate fields -- including computer science, journalism, communication, business and design, but also others who feel they have something to offer – to solve some thorny problems. During the semester, we will try to forge some solutions.

The end result will be a functioning, live product that solves a real, live problem. But much of the day-to-day work involves something else: understanding the processes, goals and values of another discipline. This is achieved by working together, taking an interest in the work of the other, and taking risks. You will be expected to not only bring your own expertise to bear, but to learn the processes, values and craft of the other disciplines. For example: CS students will be asked to explore how their technique and skills can be paired with a journalistic process to reach a desired business goal. Designers must collaborate with CS students to imagine, plan and execute media projects that will be fueled by the work of journalists.

For all, it means thinking about creative solutions to the challenges facing the media industry. You will be asked to examine how three forces interact with one another: consumer habits, technology, and economics. That media landscape is broken in many ways, and your challenge is to fix it, or at least small corner of it.

**Here is how the course will be organized:**

Students will be divided into groups of four. Ideally, each group will have one representative from computer science, design, journalism and business.

Each group will be tasked with tackling a particular problem. Some of these problems may be from actual media companies who have asked us for help in coming up with solutions. Others may be issues that, as a society, we can no longer afford to ignore, such as looking at how data analysis, media and mobile technology might help us to gain a better understanding of the homeless crisis. In the past, groups have looked at data-based solutions to better manage Los Angeles traffic, and new approaches

to mapping crime across the city. A group may also chose to propose its own problem it would like to take on. Throughout the semester, each group will analyze the problem, survey the competitive landscape, and craft a solution. That might be the easy part. You will have to test whether the solution is adequate, whether the design is compelling, whether the project is feasible.

In order to do this you will also have to set numerous deadlines and meet them. You will need to coordinate work in such a way that it draws on all of the talents of your group and you will need to get along.

## **II. Overall Learning Objectives**

This course will have three principal objectives. The first is the final project – the product that solves the problem you have set out to address. This will be something you can show and demo.

The second will be to develop a deeper understanding of the production and consumption of media and improve your own problem-solving capabilities.

The third objective will be forging a practice of working with someone from another discipline. You will expand your vocabulary and your empathy so that you will emerge better equipped to work with computer scientists or journalists.

## **III. Description of Assignments**

**#1: (Individual)** Interview the other. Each student will interview another in the group. They will take an inventory of soft skills and hard skills the others possess. (Instructors will provide examples.) Journalists might not understand the intricacies of backend development skills, for example; this is their opportunity to learn. The inventory of skills will help the group learn each other's capabilities and better understand how they can work together as a team.

**#2 (Individual)** Where can you spend time in the shoes of the other? Editorial meeting? Workflow? A class? Pick a place and go there the other group member. Write up a brief description. Example: A business student visits an editorial meeting with a journalist.

*Assignments 3-6 are part of the final project.*

**#3 (Group)** Define the problem. From the projects we present to the groups, choose one and dig into the essence of the problem that needs fixing. If you are to solve this problem, you must first articulate what it is. The more clearly you can do this, the better your final result will be. (This can be done through text, a slide deck or other means.) Articulating the problems requires you to identify technical and practical challenges in solving the problem. You can start from a BIG problem, and we will help you to narrow down the scope. Survey the landscape. Who else is experiencing a similar problem and how have they dealt with it? Who else has solved a similar problem or proposed a partial solution? (Present to the class as a slide deck.)

**#4 (Group)** Define your solution. How will you tackle this problem? Describe your initial plan for a solution. This plan will likely change over time. (Slide deck). Present this to the class.

**#5 (Group).** Make a plan. What different steps will you need to take? How will you test it along the way? How will you demo it? How can you incorporate changes and feedback? (Slide deck)

**#6 (Group)** Final presentation to class.

**IV. Grading**

**a. Breakdown of Grade**

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Class participation and presentation skills	15	15%
Assignment #1	10	10%
Assignment #2	10	10%
Assignments # 3, 4, 5	30	30%
Assignment #6	35	35%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

**b. Grading Scale**

95% to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B-	67% to 69%: D+
90% to 94%: A-	77% to 79%: C+	64% to 66%: D
87% to 89%: B+	74% to 76%: C	60% to 63%: D-
84% to 86%: B	70% to 73%: C-	0% to 59%: F

**c. Grading Standards**

**For written work:**

**“A” pieces** are clear, comprehensive and well written. They possess an economy of language but are thorough in their inquiry.

**“B” pieces** require more than minor editing and have a few style or spelling errors or one significant error of omission. They are clear, but not without their blemishes.

**“C” pieces** need considerable editing or rewriting and/or have many spelling, style or omission errors. They do not have a clear sense of purpose or organizing principle.

**“D” pieces** require excessive rewriting, have numerous errors and should not have been submitted. No discernible point or objective.

**“F” pieces** have failed to meet the major criteria of the assignment, are late, have numerous errors or both. Your copy should not contain any errors in spelling, style, grammar and facts. The following are some other circumstances that would warrant a grade of “F” and potential USC/Annenberg disciplinary action:

- Fabricating a story or making up quotes or information.
- Staging video or telling interview subjects what to say.
- Using video shot by someone else and presenting it as original work.
- Shooting video in one location and presenting it as another location.
- Using the camcorder to intentionally intimidate, provoke or incite a person or a group of people to elicit more “dramatic” video.
- Promising, paying or giving someone something in exchange for doing an interview either on or off camera.
- Missing a deadline.

**For project-management or coding work:**

**“A” work** functions smoothly, has an elegant design and is intuitive in nature.

**“B” work** functions well, with a few glitches, requires some design tweaks and some additional nudges for the users.

**“C” work** has glitches, the design is crude and the product is difficult to understand for the users.

**“D” work** doesn’t work. The product is not viable, nor is the objective clear.

**“F” work** is either late, incomplete or shows little effort or promise.

## **V. Assignment Submission Policy**

All assignments are due on the dates specified. Lacking prior discussion and agreement with the instructor, late assignments will automatically be given a grade of F.

b. Assignments must be submitted via the class Medium blog, presented in class or, depending on the nature of the work, through other means.

## **VI. Required Readings and Bibliography of Sources**

Readings are to be done before class.

For some work, students will be required to produce a bibliography.

## 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. Course Schedule

	Research or Activity	Deliverable/Due Dates
<b>Week 1</b> <b>Date: 8/20</b>	Introduction. Divide into groups. Explanation of different projects. Walk through: Design thinking crash course, using the Stanford d.school model.	No reading for first week.
<b>Week 2</b> <b>Date: 8/27</b>	Groups select projects. Lecture/discussion on the intersection of journalism, technology and markets.	<b>Readings:</b> Dave Cohn, <a href="#">CMS as your first editor</a> . <b>Assignment #1</b> submitted to Medium blog
<b>Week 3</b> <b>Date: 9/3</b>	Labor Day (no class)	
<b>Week 4</b> <b>Date: 9/10</b>	Demonstration of the Circa app as a problem-solving exercise.	<b>Readings:</b> <a href="#">Sam Ford on his Fusion experience</a> . <a href="#">User Experience Design</a> , by Peter Morville  <b>Assignment #3:</b> Present your group's "problem" to the class, and research about it.
<b>Week 5</b> <b>Date: 9/17</b>	Groups present their landscape (Assignment #4)	<b>Assignment #4</b> Present a solution based on the feedback you received in the previous week. <b>Reading:</b> " <a href="#">What I learned from Seven Years as the Guardian's Audience Editor</a> ," Chris Moran " <a href="#">A Bias for Making</a> ," Jared M. Spool.
<b>Week 6</b> <b>Date: 9/24</b>	Group presentation of solution.	<b>Assignment #5</b> Present a mockup solution given the feedback from the previous week. The solution can be a

		<p>static webpage, a wireframe, something visual, but not slides.  <b>Reading:</b> <a href="#">“The Fundamentals of Experience Design,”</a> Stephen P. Anderson.  <a href="#">“BuzzFeed Wins the Internet Daily,”</a> Jonah Peretti.</p>
<p><b>Week 7</b>  <b>Date: 10/1</b></p>	<p>Group presentation of work plans.</p>	<p><b>Product Iteration:</b> Every two weeks through the rest of the semester you will present a new iteration of your mockup solution. Each iteration should generate an improved end-to-end solution. This way, we have 4-5 cycles of improvements before the end of the semester.</p> <p>Each team should define a specific set of tasks to meet the project requirements (design database schema, retrieve data from particular sources, setup web framework, etc.). Completion of the tasks should be set on a bi-weekly, or at times weekly basis.</p> <p>At the end of each 2nd week they will report which tasks are completed, which tasks were underestimated and need to be moved to the next week etc.</p> <p>This will help them to have a concrete plan how to tackle the project.</p> <p><b>Readings:</b> “Sprint: How to Solve Big Problems and Test New Ideas in Just Five Days;” Preface and Chapter 1. (The pdf will be sent to students.)</p>

<b>Week 8</b> <b>Date: 10/8</b>	Guest lecture on design thinking by Chris Swain.	<b>Iteration One</b>  <b>Readings:</b> "Design of Everyday Things;" preface and Chapter 1.
<b>Week 9</b> <b>Date:</b> <b>10/15</b>	Conversation with the founders of the design firm Rust.	<b>Readings:</b> " <a href="#">Designing the User Experience</a> ," poster.
<b>Week 10</b> <b>Date:</b> <b>10/22</b>	Project updates from groups.	<b>Iteration Two</b>  <b>Readings:</b> " <a href="#">What Google Learned in its Quest to Build the Perfect Team</a> ," <i>The New York Times</i> .
<b>Week 11</b> <b>Date:</b> <b>10/29</b>	Guest lecture on project management from Jake de Grazia.	<b>Readings:</b> To be announced by guest lecturer.
<b>Week 12</b> <b>Date:</b> <b>11/5</b>	Project updates; opportunity for group work.	<b>Iteration Three</b>  <b>Readings:</b> " <a href="#">Why Human-Centered Design Matters</a> ," Dave Thomsen, <i>Wired Magazine</i> .
<b>Week 13</b> <b>Date:</b> <b>11/12</b>	Project updates; opportunity for group work.	<b>Readings:</b> " <a href="#">Wireframing Your Web Application</a> ," by Nathan Barry
<b>Week 14</b> <b>Date:</b> <b>11/19</b>	Project updates; opportunity for group work.	<b>Iteration Four</b>  <b>Readings:</b> " <a href="#">The Bootstrapper's Guide to Launching New Products</a> ," Darren Dahl.
<b>Week 15</b> <b>Date:</b> <b>11/26</b>	Presentation of Final Projects.	<b>Readings:</b> none

**Additional Resources:**

Platforms and Networks Blog, by Tom Eisenmann

This has various resources and readings on everything from UX to selling a startup.

<https://platformsandnetworks.blogspot.com/p/resources-guidance.html>

## **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://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>). 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**

#### *Student Counseling Services (SCS) – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call*

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. [engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling](http://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling)

#### *National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1 (800) 273-8255*

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

#### *Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call*

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. [engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp](http://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp)

#### *Sexual Assault Resource Center*

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: [sarc.usc.edu](http://sarc.usc.edu)

#### *Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086*

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. [equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu)

*Bias Assessment Response and Support*

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. [studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support)

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs*

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. [dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu)

*Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710*

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. [studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa)

*Diversity at USC*

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. [diversity.usc.edu](http://diversity.usc.edu)

*USC Emergency Information*

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

*USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime.* Provides overall safety to USC community. [dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)

## **X. About Your Instructor**

**Gabriel Kahn** has worked as a newspaper correspondent and editor for two decades, including 10 years at *The Wall Street Journal*, where he served as Los Angeles bureau chief, deputy Hong Kong bureau chief and deputy Southern Europe bureau chief, based in Rome. He has reported from more than a dozen countries. In 1998, Kahn launched *Italy Daily*, a joint venture of the *International Herald Tribune* and *Corriere della Sera*, based in Milan, Italy. He has covered the U.S. Congress for the Washington, D.C.,-based *Roll Call*, and served as an editor and writer at *The Forward*, in New York City.