

**CMGT 590: Directed Research**

**The Annenberg Agency /**

**USC Homeless Initiative**

**Number of Units: 1**

**Spring 2019: Tuesdays 5:00-6:20 pm**

**Section:** 21781

**Location:** ANN 211

**Instructor: Freddy Tran Nager**

**Office:** ASC 333

**Office Hours:** by appointment

**Contact Info:** fnager@usc.edu | 310-228-7775

**I. Course Description**

Hunger and homelessness are not limited to pockets of extreme poverty or people living on the streets. Both can be found in seemingly comfortable communities, and college campuses are no exception, with thousands of students nationwide experiencing some degree of food or housing insecurity. Although many programs, organizations, and individuals are working to help these students, critical issues stand in the way: a lack of awareness about these sources of support; or a sense of shame that keeps those in need from coming forward.

In this Directed Research course in entrepreneurial communications, you will collaborate with graduate students from across Annenberg in an agency-like environment. The goal: to develop a communication campaign that will address food and housing insecurity in the USC community.

**II. Overall Learning Objectives and Assessment**

While serving a societal need, this course also offers professional experience and expertise:

* **Agency insights.** By collaborating with Annenberg grad students in various disciplines, you'll learn how modern agencies function across disciplinary boundaries to serve client needs.
* **Real experience, no hypotheticals.** You'll work directly with a client — the [USC Homeless Initiative](https://www.provost.usc.edu/initiatives/wicked-problems/homelessness/) — to create real work that generates real-world results.
* **Entrepreneurial planning.** You'll help develop the communication firm of the future, The Annenberg Agency, to serve other clients and causes.

In addition, you'll apply your communication skills — and acquire new ones — to master the following practices:

* Assessing client needs and preferences, and translating them into campaign guidelines and specific, relevant end goals (not vague outcomes like "engagement").
* Conducting primary research and literature review to understand the target audience's behaviors and preferences (including media and message).
* Evaluating other relevant stakeholders in the community (such as influencers) to assess their needs and issues, and uncover opportunities for collaboration.
* Converting research findings into an overriding strategy and a detailed, step-by-step campaign plan.
* Directing and developing creative communications that support the campaign goals by being on brand, compelling desired behaviors, and potentially creating a "buzz."
* Identifying and integrating the right media platforms — both traditional and digital — to serve campaign goals within budget.
* Pitching and presenting ideas to clients, and accommodating their requests.
* Using campaign management tools to ensure timeliness and accuracy.
* Setting key performance indicators, analyzing the metrics, and applying that analysis to adjust the campaign tactics — or even the entire strategy.

**III. Description of Assignments**

Each student will be assigned an agency role based on her/his degree program, interests, and skills, with final determination by the instructor. However, students are not limited by their assignments, and should assist their colleagues with constructive input and task completion. Some students may hold two or more roles.

* **Account Planner:** Represents the customer (target audience) and formulates a campaign strategy.
* **Account Manager:** Liaisons with the client, develops the campaign plan, and manages the campaign.
* **Media Planner:** Designates and arranges communication platforms and analyzes their metrics.
* **Digital Marketer:** Manages all online media and analyzes digital metrics.
* **PR Manager:** Establishes relationships with journalists, influencers, and community leaders.
* **Art Director:** Develops creative concepts in partnership with copywriters and creates campaign designs.
* **Copywriter:** Develops creative concepts in partnership with art directors and writes all campaign copy.
* **Producer:** Plans, directs, and edits all audio and video productions.

In terms of assignments, all members of the agency will share responsibility for the following deliverables, regardless of role or contribution level (length of assignment in parentheses):

1. **Campaign Brief:** Guidelines and goals developed in consultation with the client (1 week).
2. **Stakeholders Analysis:** Facts and behavioral insights about the target audience and other community stakeholders based on primary research and literature review (3 weeks).
3. **Campaign Plan & Pitch:** The strategy and all tactics, including timeline, budget, and creative ideas, both as a document and a live presentation to the client (2 weeks).
4. **Creative Executions:** The communication content, including press releases, traditional and digital media, and events, tested on focus groups and approved by the client (3 weeks).
5. **Campaign Analysis:** Metrics and critical analysis, with recommendations for enhancement or changes (3 weeks).

**IV. Grading**

This course is Credit/No Credit. Note that you will not receive Credit simply by attending (and you must attend all sessions). In most sessions, you must speak and contribute. Preparation is essential: complete individual responsibilities before each meeting, research additional materials, and apply theories. Staying silent, or using a phone during sessions, is unacceptable, since it conveys disengagement. Here is how your contribution is evaluated:

* Is it complete, on time, and professional, or is it late, incomplete, and filled with errors?
* Is it relevant to the campaign and its goals, or is it self-indulgent?
* Is it respectful of colleagues and their contributions, or is it an attempt to dominate the process?
* Is it supported by data, third-party theories, and research, or is it entirely subjective?
* Is it creative and risk-taking, or is it "safe" and consisting of standard practices?

In addition to evaluation by the instructor, each student will be evaluated by their peers at the end of the course.

**V. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials**

* **Reference Text (required):** Nancy R. Lee & Philip Kotler, ***Social Marketing: Influencing Behaviors For Good*** (sometimes subtitled "Changing Behaviors For Good"), any edition (later editions have more recent case studies and more discussion of social media, but the fundamentals are the same). This seminal text helped establish the practice of changing behaviors for the benefit of society.
* **Academic Literature:** Consult the USC Library for academic journal articles and other scholarly publications, particularly in relevance to human behavior.
* **Professional Journalists:** You may cite work that appears in major news publications, such as the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Atlantic Monthly* (to name a few). Also include the *Daily Trojan* for campus coverage. Be wary of blogs unless they are authored by journalists or credentialed experts.
* **Subject Matter Experts:** Our campus is home to leading thinkers and researchers on a vast array of topics. Reach out to them for their insights and research recommendations.
* **Primary Research:** Consult documents from your client, and also conduct direct research (surveys, focus groups, or interviews) of stakeholders.

Do not cite Wikipedia as a reference. Rather, refer to the sources listed in the Wikipedia article.

Above all, vet each of your sources by conducting a SMELL test:

* **Source:** What is their background, including education and experience?
* **Motivation:** Why did they write/say what they did? Is there a bias?
* **Evidence:** What is their proof?
* **Logic:** How is their reasoning?
* **Left-Out:** Did they leave out key points or jump to conclusions?

**VI. Electronics Policy**

To complete some course projects, you may need to use your laptop during sessions, *but only during designated work periods and only for course-related work*. Using laptops during discussions or for personal reasons (including work for other courses) will count as an absence. Please take notes by hand, not by typing, since typing is distracting to your colleagues and your instructor. (Hand writing notes also abets learning.)

Phones may NOT be used at any time during a course session.

**VII. Add/Drop Dates (15 weeks: 1/7/19 – 4/26/19)**

* **Friday, January 25:** Last day to register and add classes
* **Friday, January 25:** Last day to drop a class without a mark of “W,” except for Monday-only classes, and receive a refund
* **Tuesday, January 29**: last day to drop a Monday-only class without a mark of “W” and receive a refund
* **Friday, February 22:** Last day to drop a course without a mark of “W” on the transcript. [Please drop any course by the end of week three (or the week three equivalent for short sessions) to avoid tuition charges.]
* **Friday, April 5:** Last day to drop a class with a mark of “W”

**VIII. Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown**

This syllabus is subject to change — and probably will change — based on the progress of the course, news events, and client availability. In case of holidays, classes will meet online or on another date/time to be arranged.

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|  | Topics/ Activities | Readings/Homework | Deliverable/Due Dates |
| Week 1  Dates: 1/7-1/11 | Introduction: meet your colleagues | Start *Social Marketing* |  |
| Week 2  Dates: 1/14-1/18 | Client meeting  [Martin Luther King Day: Monday, January 21] | Continue *Social Marketing;*  Campaign Brief due next week |  |
| Week 3  Dates: 1/21-1/25 | Stakeholders research | Complete *Social Marketing;* Stakeholders Analysis due week 6 | Campaign Brief Due |
| Week 4  Dates: 1/28-2/1 | Stakeholders research |  |  |
| Week 5  Dates: 2/4-2/8 | Stakeholders research |  |  |
| Week 6  Dates: 2/11-2/15 | Campaign planning | Campaign Plan & Pitch due week 8 | Stakeholders Analysis due |
| Week 7  Dates: 2/18-2/22 | Campaign planning  [Presidents’ Day: Monday, February 18] |  |  |
| Week 8  Dates: 2/25-3/1 | Campaign pitch;  Creative development | Creative Executions due week 11 | Campaign Plan & Pitch due |
| Week 9  Dates: 3/4-3/8 | Creative development |  |  |
| Dates: 3/11-3/15 | Spring Break |  |  |
| Week 10  Dates: 3/18-3/22 | Creative development |  |  |
| Week 11  Dates: 3/25-3/29 | Creative work submitted for client approvals |  | Creative executions due |
| Week 12  Dates: 4/1-4/5 | Creative adjustments and implementation |  |  |
| Week 13  Dates: 4/8-4/12 | Campaign analysis | Campaign Analysis & Recommendations due Exam Week |  |
| Week 14  Dates: 4/15-4/19 | Campaign analysis;  Planning The Annenberg Agency |  |  |
| Week 15  Dates: 4/22-4/26 | Campaign analysis;  Planning The Annenberg Agency; USC Course Evaluations | Peer evaluation due next week |  |
| FINAL EXAMS  Dates: 5/1-5/8 | Takeaways and recommendations |  | Campaign Analysis & Recommendations due;  Peer evaluation due |

**IX. Policies and Procedures**

* **Attendance:** You must attend every class session, arrive on time, and stay for the entire session (missing more than 10 minutes counts as a half absence). Makeup assignments will be given for any excused absences, such as illnesses or athletic commitments. Should you need to miss a class, notify the instructor in advance (except, of course, in the case of emergencies), and obtain what you missed from classmates and Blackboard. Two unexcused absences may result in failure to pass the course. Note: coming to class while ill, or using a phone or computer (except during work periods), will be counted as an absence, since you are in attendance but not truly present.
* **Deadlines:** Without an exceptional circumstance and permission from the instructor in advance, late assignments will not be accepted.
* **Critical Thinking:** In communication there are few "right" answers: what works for one company might fail for another — or even for the same company at another time. Assignments must describe "why" and "how," not just "what," and will be evaluated on the quality of the reasoning.
* **Professional Writing:** Since this is a graduate program in communication, your writing and document production quality will be factored into all assignment grades, so please proofread to eliminate all errors. If you need help with fluency or simply polishing your work, contact Annenberg's Graduate Writing Coach: <http://cmgtwriting.uscannenberg.org/>
* **Respect:** Treat classmates and speakers with courtesy. You may certainly question and criticize ideas — that is encouraged in the learning environment — but never criticize the person. Also, *be present*: **all phones must be turned off and put away — no exceptions**.

**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/>).

*Academic Integrity*

Any student found plagiarizing, fabricating, and/or purchasing papers or other assignments faces sanctions ranging from an ‘F’ on the assignment to dismissal from the school. All academic integrity violations will be reported to the office of Student Judicial Affairs & Community Standards (SJACS), as per university policy, as well as 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

*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

*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

*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

*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

*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

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs*

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. 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

*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

*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

*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

**X. About Your Instructor**

Freddy Tran Nager has nearly 30 years of professional experience in advertising, entertainment, and digital media, working with a diverse array of clients, including Lexus, Royal Caribbean, and the National Lampoon, to name a few. He began his career as a copywriter at MCA Records/Universal Music Group, where he directed one of the world's first entertainment websites in 1994. He subsequently joined major ad agency Saatchi & Saatchi as Sr. Interactive Copywriter, where he worked on the award-winning Toyota website and other digital media. Freddy currently runs the creative-strategy consultancy Atomic Tango LLC and is a partner in the branding agency Ad Victorem. A second-generation Trojan, Freddy received his MBA from USC and his BA from Harvard. He has taught at Annenberg since 2012.