



USC | **ANNENBERG**  
School for Communication & Journalism

## **COMM 375: Business & Professional Communication FALL 2019**

**Instructor:** Paula D. (Patnoe) Woodley  
**Section:** MW, 3:30 - 4:50 p.m., ANN 409ABC  
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**Office Hours:** Monday & Wednesday  
Directly after class or by appointment.  
We can meet over the phone or  
Skype on other days, just get on my schedule!

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The overall goal of this course is to develop your professional communication skills and knowledge of workplace scenarios. While we will cover communication theory to improve your understanding business communication, the bulk of our time will be spent focused on gaining applied communication written and verbal skills. This course is designed for juniors and seniors, but is open to all students. While not a prerequisite, it is advised that students entering this course have taken a public speaking class.

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

At the conclusion of this course, you will have gained the confidence and skill to deliver excellent presentations, be comfortable and successful in interviews, and write clear and concise business communications (including first-rate cover letters and resumes). Additionally, the course activities, readings and guest speakers will include brainstorming and negotiation skills, dealing with difficult individuals, communicating with empathy and power, and understanding workplace cultures. Combined, and with dedication from the student, these lessons will enhance each student's ability to communicate effectively, act professionally, and thrive in his or her future career. Your assignment prompts will be specific and often complex; I require strict adherence to the specific details of each assignment. For major assignments, a rubric will be provided that details the point allocation and expectations.

### **REQUIRED COURSE TEXT**

- Adler, R. B., Maresh-Fuehrer, M., Elmhurst, J. M. & Lucas, K. (2019). *Communicating at Work (12<sup>th</sup> Ed.)*, McGraw-Hill.
- Additional required readings will be posted on Blackboard or provided in class.

### **OPTIONAL READING MATERIALS**

- Toogood, G. N. (revised 2017). *The New Articulate Executive*, McGraw-Hill.
- Lenciono, P. (2012). *The Advantage*, Jossey-Bass (Wiley).

### **COURSE POLICIES**

1. The deadline for any assignment, reading, or presentation is at the beginning of the class that it is due. *These deadlines will come up often: do not fall behind or you will have difficulty catching up.*
2. **Electronic Devices:** *Bring paper and a pen to class.* In order to create the best possible learning environment, I ask you to please turn off your cell phones and put away your laptops/tablets when you enter our classroom. There may be specific class sessions in which electronic devices will be allowed.
3. **Late Assignment Consideration:** Extensions are never guaranteed nor should they be expected for any reason (even good ones). I will consider an extension only under the following conditions: the student requests an extension *before* the assignment is due, and the student has a *verifiable* emergency. Please do not rely on my good nature. I insist on fairness for all students, so exceptions and extensions are rare.

Should I offer you an extension, please take the new due date seriously.

4. **Missed Presentations or Exams:** The extension policy is the same as it is with late assignments. We will not have time for make-up presentations during class time. The student must arrange out of class time to present individually to me or to take your exam during my office hour. Please note if you fail to attend class on the day you are scheduled to present (and have not made prior arrangements with me), you will receive an irrevocable failing grade on the presentation.
5. **Email and Blackboard:** You are expected to check the course Blackboard and emails every week for additional readings or special activity information.
6. Participation points given for class activities cannot be made up if the student misses class.
7. Any student who misses more than *four class sessions* may fail the course.
8. You must complete **all** assignments to pass the course.

### **COURSE STANDARDS**

1. Consistent attendance, punctuality and active class participation are essential to your success and will affect your grade. I expect contributions to the class discussion to be courteous and clearly demonstrate the student has *read the course materials*.
2. Missing class is no more acceptable than it would be to miss work. Excessive absences and tardiness will adversely affect your grade.
3. Check our class Blackboard site every day for class announcements. I post announcements frequently throughout the semester. The announcements are also sent to your USC email address. You are responsible for keeping up to date.
4. Many topics are addressed in a single class session. It is **your** responsibility to obtain materials from a missed class from Blackboard and a classmate. If you still have question, I will be happy to assist.
5. Presentations and papers must be the original work of the student and not used for any other course. Violation of this policy is an Academic Integrity Violation.
6. Questions about grades should be addressed in a timely manner, within two weeks of receiving the grade.
7. *Proofread your work!* I mark down for typos of all types.
8. **Important note:** *Do not rely on class lectures to present the content found in the assigned readings. You are expected to come to class prepared so that the activities and guest speakers will prove valuable and enrich your learning experience.*

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY**

The Annenberg School of Communication & Journalism is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and ethical support. Presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words is plagiarism; it is a serious academic offense met with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* [policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b](http://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, [policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct). The policies, procedures, and guidelines protect your rights, as well as those of the faculty. It is particularly important that you are aware of and avoid plagiarism, cheating on exams, fabricating data for a project, submitting a paper to more than one professor, or submitting a paper authored by anyone but yourself. If you have doubts about any of these practices, consult with a faculty member or the Director of Undergraduate Studies.

### **ADA COMPLIANCE STATEMENT**

Any student academic accommodation based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to your instructor (or TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is 213-740-0776.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

*All assignment prompts will be posted on Blackboard; assignment summaries are listed below. While I will discuss each assignment in class, I will not pass out a printed document. It is your responsibility to locate the assignment prompt. As there are several assignments in this course, please look ahead and make note of the due dates.*

**Introductory Presentation:** This short presentation allows me to see your current public speaking skills. Topic and format will be announced in class.

**Informative Presentation:** This presentation, given in teams of two, will consist of noteworthy current events or new trends. I will approve each topic, as only one team per topic is allowed. You may pick your own partner or I can select one for you.

**Group Assignment:** The class will be broken into three groups (that I select); each group will be provided with a different course topic. All members of the team will develop and prepare an engaging and informative presentation.

**Informational Interview:** For this project, you will interview an individual that currently holds a job that you are considering. The interviewee must hold a position that you would be qualified for within three years after graduation (i.e. no management positions). You will write a 1-2 page report of your experience and orally share key points with your classmates. This assignment is more time-consuming than it looks. *Start early!*

**Job Package:** Your completed job package is the key to a successful job search. For this assignment, you will locate a job listing, develop a cover letter, resume and obtain references. Be prepared to edit multiple times!

**Persuasive Presentation:** You will individually prepare and deliver a presentation with PowerPoint (or similar) to a foundation with the intent of persuading them to fund your charity. As with any persuasive presentation – particularly those requesting donated funds in support of a cause – knowledge of the issue, the environment and the non-profit organization is key.

**Exams & Quizzes:** There will be two quizzes and final exam that will consist of any combination of multiple choice, short answer and essay questions taken from your readings, class lectures, discussions, and activities. Additionally, if I determine that students are not completing the assigned readings, you can expect unannounced quizzes.

## **GRADING**

*Constructive feedback is critical to learn and grow. Therefore, I annotate written work quite extensively because your ideas are worth considering, and because your writing technique should be as polished as possible by the time you graduate. Please invest in your own learning and growth by taking the time to reflect on this feedback and incorporating the comments into future work.*

To achieve a “C” or better on written assignments, you must write at a level appropriate for a university student, i.e., with strong concepts, correct grammar, and attention to the smallest details of the prompt. “C” grades are given when the work shows a minimal understanding of the material and a marginal fulfillment of the requirements. A “B” represents above average work that demonstrates adequate insight and effort, very few errors, and close attention to the requirements. An “A” represents excellent work, free of typos, each required element completed, and thoughtful, meaningful content. If you are disappointed by a grade, I would be happy to discuss your work with you and help you improve for the next assignment. Remember, university professors grade based on achievement, not for effort.

	<b>Point Value</b>	<b>% of Final Grade</b>
<b>Formal Presentations</b>		
Introductory	10	2%
Group Project	50	10%
Informative Presentation	60	12%
Persuasive Presentation	80	16%
<b>Written Assignments</b>		
Job Package	50	10%
Informational Interview	50	10%
<b>Exam &amp; Quizzes</b>	150	30%
<b>Participation Points</b>	50	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	500	100%

### **SYLLABUS**

**Readings should be completed prior to class the day they are scheduled.**

*This schedule is subject to change. Check Blackboard (BB) frequently for newly assigned readings, recorded lectures, PowerPoint decks, and announcements.*

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Session Topic(s)</b>	<b>Assignment Due/Notes</b>	<b>Readings</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Aug. 26</b>	Course Introduction		
	<b>Aug. 28</b>	Presentation Boot Camp I Organizing your presentation		1) Adler, et al., Ch. 1, 9 2) Check BB for readings and class handouts
<b>2</b>	<b>Sept. 2</b>	LABOR DAY – NO CLASS		
	<b>Sept. 4</b>	<u>Introductory Presentations</u>	<b>Presentations</b>	
<b>3</b>	<b>Sept. 9</b>	Presentation Boot Camp II Delivery with confidence		1) Adler, et al., Ch. 10, 11
	<b>Sept. 11</b>	Resumes	<b>Partner selection and topic proposal for informative presentation due</b>	1) Adler, et al., pgs. 408-421 2) Check BB for readings and class handouts

4	Sept. 16	Presentation Boot Camp III Informative presentations/review		1) Adler, et al., Ch. 12, plus 9, 10, 11 (review)
	Sept. 18	Writing for Business + Cover Letters	<b>Online writing exercises</b> <i>After you complete the exercises, notify PW in an email (before the start of class) with the subject line:</i> <b>Completed Writing Exercises</b>	1) Adler, et al., Appendix II, pgs. 400-423 2) OWL Business Writing handouts (BB)
5	Sept. 23	<b><u>Resume &amp; Cover Letter Clinic</u></b>	<i>Bring 2 printed copies of your resume and a pen with colored ink (not black). Cover letters are not required.</i>	
	Sept. 25	<i>Job Talk or Activity TBD</i>	<b>Quiz #1</b>	
6	Sept. 30	<b><u>Informative Presentations (1)</u></b>	<b>Presentations</b> <i>Business casual attire</i>	
	Oct. 2	<b><u>Informative Presentations (2)</u></b>	<b>Presentations</b> <i>Business casual attire</i>	
7	Oct. 7	Working in Groups & Teams		1) Adler, et al., Ch. 7
	Oct. 9	Interviewing		1) Adler, et al., Ch. 5, 6, Appendix I, pgs. 390-399 2) See all articles in the Interviewing folder on BB
8	Oct. 14	Interpersonal Skills		1) Adler, et al., Ch. 5
	Oct. 16	Problem-solving, brainstorming, and creativity techniques		1) Readings posted on BB in Creativity folder
9	Oct. 21	<i>Job Talk or Activity TBD</i>	<b>Quiz #2</b>	

	<b>Oct. 23</b>	<b><u>Mock Interviews</u></b> Special Guest Interviewers: <i>Freddy Nager</i> <i>Atomic Tango</i> <i>Helene Sparangis</i> ASCJ Career Center	<b>Job Package</b> <i>Post to Blackboard</i> <i>Bring your resume.</i> <i>Business attire required!</i>	1) Practice with the Interviewing worksheet and review materials from lecture and readings
<b>10</b>	<b>Oct. 28</b>	Networking		1) Articles on BB in Networking folder
	<b>Oct. 30</b>	Communication, Cultures and Work	<b>TEAM 1 Presentation</b>	1) Adler, et al., Ch. 2
<b>11</b>	<b>Nov. 4</b>	Workplace Communication I: Listening	<b>TEAM 2 Presentation</b>	1) Adler, et al., Ch. 3
	<b>Nov. 6</b>	Workplace Communication II: Verbal & Nonverbal Messages	<b>TEAM 3 Presentation</b>	1) Adler, et al., Ch. 4
<b>12</b>	<b>Nov. 11</b>	Strategies for Effective Persuasive Presentations		1) Revisit Adler, et al., Ch. 9 and 12 (persuasive presentations)
	<b>Nov. 13</b>	Meetings		1) Adler, et al., Ch. 8
<b>13</b>	<b>Nov. 18</b>	<b><u>Persuasive Presentations</u></b>	<b>Presentations</b> <i>Business attire required</i>	
	<b>Nov. 20</b>	<b><u>Persuasive Presentations</u></b>	<b>Presentations</b> <i>Business attire required</i>	
<b>14</b>	<b>Nov. 25</b>	<i>1-on-1 meetings w/ PW all day</i>	Schedule/Location TBA	
	<b>Nov. 27</b>	<i>Thanksgiving extra day off!</i>	<i>Have a great holiday!</i>	

15	Dec. 2	<i>Your Personal Brand</i> Special Guest: <b>Michele Lando</b> CEO/Skilset Communications		
	Dec. 4	<u>Informational Interview</u>	<b>Informational Interview</b> <i>Post to Blackboard</i> <i>Brief oral and written report</i>	
	Dec. 16	<b>FINAL EXAM</b> 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.	<b>Final Exam</b>	

### **STUDENT SAFETY & SUPPORT**

The University cares about your mental and physical health and well being. The list below provides contact information for services should you need them.

- *USC Emergency* – Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime.
  - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call
  - [dps.usc.edu](https://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](https://emergency.usc.edu)
  - If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, <http://emergency.usc.edu> will provide all updates. You may also register with <https://trojansalert.usc.edu/>.
- *USC Department of Public Safety* – Non-emergency assistance or information.
  - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call - [dps.usc.edu](https://dps.usc.edu)
- *Student Health Counseling Services*
  - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call - [engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling](https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling)
  - Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.
- *Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP)*
  - (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call - [engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp](https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp)
  - Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.
- *National Suicide Prevention Lifeline* - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call - [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)
  - Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- *Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) | Title IX*
  - (213) 740-5086 - [equity.usc.edu](https://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](https://titleix.usc.edu)
  - Information about how to get help or help a survivor of harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following

- protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations.
- *Bias Assessment Response and Support*
  - (213) 740-2421 - [studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support)
  - Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions for appropriate investigation and response.
- *The Office of Disability Services and Programs*
  - (213) 740-0776 - [dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu)
  - Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.
  - DSP provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange accommodations - [http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html)
- *USC Support and Advocacy*
  - (213) 821-4710 - [studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa)
  - Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.
- *Diversity at USC*
  - (213) 740-2101 - [diversity.usc.edu](http://diversity.usc.edu)
  - Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.
- For students who need help with scholarly writing, USC Dornsife offers services for all students:
  - The Writing Center (at USC Dornsife), <http://dornsife.usc.edu/writingcenter/>
  - Students whose primary language is not English, the *American Language Institute* can help, <https://ali.usc.edu>.