



**COMM 209: Communication & Media
Economics (4 units)**

**Spring 2020 – Monday, Wednesday (3:30-
4:50pm)**

Section: 20402R

Location: ASC 204

Instructor: Prof. Ernest Wilson

Office: ASC 103

Office Hours: 2-3pm, Monday, and by appointment

Contact Info: ernestw@usc.edu

Teaching Assistant: Yue Yang

Office Hours: 11 am – 12 pm, Tuesday and
Wednesday, and by appointment

Contact Info: yang033@usc.edu

I. Course Description

This course introduces microeconomic and macroeconomic principles analyzing contemporary issues in communication and media industries from an economic perspective. The course begins with introductory lectures on economic principles and political economy for communication and media, then applies these principles first to three core industries/platforms – motion pictures, television, and streaming– then to the music and publishing industries. Each industry will be analyzed in a series of lectures focusing on its history, political economy, recent evolutions and current issues. Political economy is the discipline that explores and explains how markets intersect with government, and how in media and communication industries stakeholders attempt to translate their commercial power into political influence and vice versa.

II. Overall Learning Objectives and Assessment

The purpose of this course is to teach communication students about some of the most important issues across the core media industries by examining critical political and economic factors that shape them. The course will increase the economic literacy of the participants and provide a consistent set of core questions and concepts – a tool kit – to help analyze, innovate, lead, and be successful in these and other industries. The students will leave the class equipped to understand the political and economic dynamics that are shaping the evolution of communication and media.

III. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

REQUIRED BOOKS

1. Iger, R. (2019). *The Ride of a Lifetime: Lessons Learned from 15 Years as a CEO of the Walt Disney Company*. Penguin.
2. Starr, P. (2004). *The creation of the media: Political origins of modern communications*. New York: Basic Books.
3. Taplin, J. (2017). *Move fast and break things: How Facebook, Google, and Amazon have cornered culture and what it means for all of us*. Pan Macmillan.
4. Turow, J. (2017). *Media Today: Mass Communication in a Converging World* (6th edition). NY: Routledge.
5. Wheelan, C. (2019). *Naked economics: Undressing the dismal science*. WW Norton & Company.

Other readings are on reserve at the USC Libraries, or are available online. For instance, the USC Library provides full access to current articles of the New York Times. There will be additional short readings distributed in class, or posted on Blackboard, on current events bearing an evolutionary impact on the industries analyzed.

IV. Assignments, Assessment and Grading Breakdown

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Attendance. Students are expected to attend each class on time. Late arrival for more than 15 minutes after the usual class time will result in “absence”.

2. Class Participation. Students are expected to attend class having completed all assigned readings and are also expected to make informed contributions to lecture, discussion sections, and online activities.

3. Short exam 1 + 2. There will be two assignments that combine various questions on class materials, including readings, lectures, and sections. Both would take place during regular class hours in the regular classroom. **Exam # 1 will be on March 2 and Exam # 2 on April 8.**

5. Group project. Students will conduct research in groups on a topic related to this course. The final presentations will take place during the final few weeks of classes (**April 22 and April 27**), and they must include visual aids and a short paper to be submitted via email to the instructors.

GRADING

attendance	10%	
course participation	10%	Including self-introduction
short exam #1	20%	
short exam #2	20%	
group project	40%	20% for group presentation, 20% for written brief

Grading Scale and Standards

A = 94-100%	A- = 90-93	B+ = 87-89	B = 83-86
B- = 80-82	C+ = 77-79	C = 73-76	C- = 70-72
F = 59% and below			

Grades will be assigned as follows:

- A+/A outstanding, insightful work and analysis, showing an understanding beyond the basic course material
- A-/B+ above average work, demonstrates effort and understanding
- B/B- average work, needs improvement on ideas and argument
- C+/C shows little effort, lacks clarity and/or argument
- C- and below meets the bare minimum, shows little understanding of material

If you have concerns regarding a grade on a given assignment, you must first wait 24 hours (cooling off period) before appealing it in writing, stating the reasons why you feel the grade is inaccurate. All concerns should be addressed within 7 days of receiving the graded assignment. After that, no appeals will be accepted for review and the grade will be considered final. "Incompletes" are strongly discouraged and will only be given if the student makes specific arrangements with the instructor before the end of the semester.

Special Accommodations

Any student requesting academic accommodations 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 me 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.

ESL Student Accommodations

Please inform me as soon as possible if you require special accommodations based on your understanding of the English language.

Academic Integrity

When taking this class, you enter into a contract that states that all the work you are turning in is your own and no one else's, and that you have not turned in any work for which you have received credit in another class. Do not take this policy lightly!

The School of Communication is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and ethical support. It endorses and acts on the SCampus policies and procedures detailed in the section titled "University Sanction Guidelines." These policies, procedures and guidelines will be enforced. It is important that you be aware of and avoid plagiarism, cheating on exams, submitting a paper to more than one professor, or submitting a paper authored by anyone other than yourself. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus, Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards."

Violations of this policy will result in a failing grade in the course, and be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. If you have any doubts about any of these practices, you must confer with the professor.

V. Class Policies

1. Academic Rigor

You should come to every class prepared to learn and to commit significant time outside of class toward mastery of the material and completion of the assignments in a way that demonstrates analytical and creative aptitude. You should expect to be graded according to your demonstrated mastery of the material as reflected on your assignments, including weekly class preparation and discussion.

2. Completion of Assignments

Assigned papers, exercises and exams must be completed on time; they will be marked down if submitted after the due date (1/2 letter grade deduction per day). Please note: make-up exam accommodations are not permitted. Papers must be typewritten with a readable font. Papers should include proper citations and bibliographies in APA format.

3. Discussion protocol

The classroom should be a safe space for the open exchange of ideas and the exploration of various ideological issues. Heated debate is encouraged, but not at the expense of denigrating other students. Please refrain from making sarcastic or hostile comments when others are speaking, dominating every class discussion, and otherwise undermining the unfettered exchange of ideas.

4. In-class use of laptops, smartphones, and electronic devices

Students are encouraged to NOT use laptop computers and other devices such as tablets, e-readers and smartphones during lectures. Recording (audio, video, or both) of class sessions is also prohibited. Failure to follow the directions in this regard can subject students to the same range of penalties to which they might be subject for failing to follow any other requirements regarding classroom attendance and participation. Violations of this policy are, by definition, examples of extremely unprofessional behavior and therefore will adversely affect final grades.

5. Email Communications

The professor will make all types of announcements and assignments through the email addresses (ernestw@usc.edu, yang033@usc.edu) as well as Blackboard systems. Email will be, apart from class meetings, our principal means of communication and notification. All students will be expected to keep up to date on developments and will be responsible for all assignments notified via email.

6. Communicating/Meeting with the Professor

The Professor will be readily accessible via email: ernestw@usc.edu . Before our course begins, you are free to contact me to discuss the class generally or the reading materials specifically. Once our course begins, you are welcome to visit the Professor before or after class, and always by email at the aforementioned address. Meetings during regularly scheduled office hours are on a first-come, first-served basis. Notice will be given in-class and via email for those rare occasions when office hours are suspended. The Professor reserves the right not to accommodate unannounced office drop-ins.

7. Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing anonymous online evaluations. You will be notified by email when the evaluations are open, typically in the last two or three weeks of the semester. Summary results are available to you and the public.

VI. Tentative Course Schedule

Please be advised that this syllabus is subject to change – and probably will change – based on the progress of the class, news events, guest speakers, etc.

JANUARY

1/13 1 **INTRODUCTION**

- “The Media is Broken” D. Brooks, *New York Times*, 12/27/19, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/26/opinion/media-politics.html>
- “Big Money and America’s Lost Decade, *New York Times*, P Krugman, 12/27/19
- Global Entertainment & Media Outlook 2019-2023, PwC, <https://www.pwc.com/us/en/idstries/tmt/library/global-entertainment-media-outlook.html>
- “Disruption into Transformation” EY Consultants, www.ey.com/en_gl/tmt/how-do-you-turn-disruption-into-transformation

1/15 2 **POLITICAL ECONOMY**

- Turow, *Media Today*, Chapters 1, 5 (“Controls on Media Content Government Regulation, Self-Regulation, and Ethics”)
- “10 takeaways from INMA’s global digital platforms-publisher analysis”, R. Whitehead, Digital Platform Initiative Blog, 14 Oct. 2019, <https://www.inma.org/blogs/Digital-Platform-Initiative/post.cfm/10-takeaways-from-inma-s-global-digital-platforms-publisher-analysis>

1/22 3 **PRESENTATION BY JONATHAN TAPLIN**

- Taplin, J. (2017). *Move fast and break things: How Facebook, Google, and Amazon have cornered culture and what it means for all of us*. Pan Macmillan.
- *Podcast*, <http://theconversation.com/media-files-media-companies-are-mad-as-hell-at-tech-giants-and-dont-want-to-take-it-anymore-but-what-choice-do-they-have-126352> (Podcast)

1/27 4 **CONTEXT: COMMUNICATION @ CENTER**

- “The One-Trillion Dollar Global Talent Gap: What It Is, and What We Can Do About It” Working Paper, E Wilson

- Explore the website (usctthirdspace.com) to understand communication's position in today's political economy and the workforce.

1/29 5 **POLITICAL ECONOMY**

- “Defining Characteristics of Political Economy Analysis” www.soas.ac.uk/cedep-demos/000_P527_PEPP_K3736-Demo/unit1/page_13.htm
- “The Study of the Political Economy of the Media in the 21st Century” J. Wasko, *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics*, Vol. 10, 3. doi:10.1386/macp.10.3.259_1
- “Media Firms as Economic & Business Entities” *the Economic and Financing of Media Companies*, Richard G. Picard, Chapter 1.

FEBRUARY

2/3 6 **HOW MARKETS WORK**

- *Naked Economics* Wheeler, chapters 1,2,5,6, 7
- *Introduction to Media Economics*, Chapter 1
- *Media Today*, Turow, Chapter 3.

2/5 7 **MARKET CRITIQUES**

- *Communication Revolution*. R. McChesney, pp. 1-37
- “Market Failure”: <https://www.econlib.org/library/Topics/College/marketfailures.html>
- “Market Failure” definition from Investopedia: <https://Investopedia.com/terms/m/marketfailure.asp>
- “Dollars and Sense”, Ellen Frank, <http://dollarsandsense.org/archives/2004/1104dollar.htmlz>
- T. Rogan, “Why Amartya Sen Remains the Century’s Great Critic of Capitalism” AEON, <https://aeon.co/ideas/why-amartya-sen-remains-the-centurys-great-critic-of-capitalism>

2/10 8 **POLITICS: INSTITUTIONS & INSTRUMENTS**

- “Three Faces of Power” Daniel Little, <https://understandingsociety.blogspot.com/2010/ten/lukes-on-power.html>
- “We Can’t Let Silicon Valley Regulate Itself, Nandita Sampath, *Berkeley Public Policy Journal*, 2/4/19
- “Regulation and the Economy”, Jones

2/12 9 **POLITICS: GROUPS & STRUCTURES**

- M.G. Roskin, & R. Cord, J. Medeiros, W. Jones “Interest Groups” Chapter Ten, Political Science: An Introduction,
<https://www.pearsonhighered.com/assets/samplechapter/0/2/0/5/0205075940.pdf>

2/17 10 **TECHNOLOGY & MARKETS**

- “Law and Political Economy: Toward a Manifesto”, *Law and Political Economy*, <https://lpeblog.org/2017/11/06/law-and-political-economy-toward-a-manifesto/>
- “The Role of Technology in Political Economy: Part 3”, Y Benkler, July 27, <https://lpeblog.org/2018/07/27/the-role-of-technology-in-political-economy-part-3/>

2/19 11 **THE HISTORY OF MEDIA MARKETS**

- *Communication Revolution: Critical Junctures and the Future of Media*, Robert McChesney, pp. 118-138
- *The Creation of the Media: Political Origins of Modern Communications*, Paul Starr, Chapters 1-6

2/24 12 **TRENDS IN MEDIA HISTORY**

- *Digital Disconnect*, McChesney, pp.63-82
- Starr, *The Creation of the Media*, Chapters 7-12

2/26 13 **THE PRACTICE OF MEDIA & ECONOMICS: Panel**

- The views from a small start-up to a medium/large company; guest speaker: Cheryl Farrell
- Turow, *Media Today*, 157-167

MARCH

3/2 14 **Exam # 1**

3/4 15 **MEDIA IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE**

- Sue Gardner, “Public Broadcasting: Its Past and its Future”, Knight Foundation, 2017.
- <https://knightfoundation.org/public-media-white-paper-2017-gardner>
- “Public TV stations KCET and KOCE to merge”, LA Times, April 25, 2018, <https://www.latimes.com/business/hollywood/la-fi-ct-koce-kcet-merger-20180425-story.html>; retrievable through USC libraries
- E. J. Wilson III, “Digital Media, Modern Democracy and our Truncated National Debate”, in A. Schejter, ed., *And Communications for All*

- E. Goodman, “Public Service Media 2.0”, Chapter 14, Schejter, ed., And Communications for All

During class: PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA: Panel

- Speakers from NPR, KPCC, KCET/KOCE (PMGSC),

3/9 16 **CINEMA: WALT DISNEY**

- *The Ride of a Lifetime*, R. Iger
- “Third Space & the Entertainment Business: A Case Study of Disney-Pixar” CTST, Jonathan Taplin & Ernest Wilson
- Turow, Media Today, Chapter 12

3/11 17 **STREAMING: NETFLIX**

- “The Streaming Era Has Finally Arrived”, Brooks Barnes, New York Times, 11/18/19
- “The Great Steaming Space-Time is Coming” James Poniewozik, NYT, 11/30/19
- “Netflix was Only the Start: Disney... Brooks Barnes, NYT, 11/19/19
- “Netflix Valuation”, Fortune, 7/31/19, Shawn Tully,
<https://fortune.com/2019/07/31/netflix-valuation-model-free-cash-flow/>

3/16 18 **NO CLASS. SPRING BREAK**

3/18 19 **NO CLASS. SPRING BREAK.**

3/23 20 **MARKETS AND INCLUSION**

- “The Economics of Diverse Movies” – YouTube:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BMkKLej7yvk&t=3s>
- “How Social Media Exacerbates the Racial Divide”,
<https://www.marketplace.org/2017/11/01/how-social-media-propaganda-exacerbates-racial-divide/>
- Annual Reports on Diversity and Inclusion in Entertainment, Stacy Smith,
<https://annenberg.usc.edu/research/aii>
- “Getting from Diversity to Inclusion in Economics”, M. Daly,
<https://www.frbsf.org/economic-research/files/el2018-15.pdf>

3/25 21 **MARKETS AND INCLUSION [PANEL]**

3/30 22 **THE ECONOMICS OF GLOBAL MARKETS**

- The Digital Glocalization of Entertainment, P. Sigismondi, Chapters 1, 10.
- “China’s Social Media Landscape” J. Jin, <https://cn-en.kantar.com/media/social/2018/china-social-media-landscape-2018/>
- “China’s Film Industry”, Deloitte, <https://www2.deloitte.com/cn/en/pages/technology-media-and-telecommunications/articles/chinese-culture-entertainment.html>

APRIL

- 4/1 23 **PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA:**
- “Report on Financial and Market Sustainability”, Public Media Group of Southern California
- 4/6 24 **HOLLYWOOD & SILICON VALLEY: New Intersections**
- *Social Media Entertainment: The New Intersection of Hollywood and Silicon Valley*, pp. 19-64, S. Cunningham, D. Craig,
- 4/8 25 **Exam # 2**
- 4/13 26 **Annenberg Programs And Media Economics**
- Company Portfolios and Reports
 - M2{2} speakers
 - Lessons Learned from Annenberg Students
- 4/27 27 **THIRD SPACE THINKING RE-VISITED**
- Chapter Six, from Third Space Thinking, E. Wilson
- 4/29 28 **MEDIA IMPLICATIONS OF 2020 ELECTIONS: Panel**
- Where the Candidates stand on Media issues, such as Social Media – Policies relevant to the subject: POLITICO 1/12/20 <https://www.politico.com/2020-election/candidates-views-on-the-issues/technology/social-media/>
- 4/22 29 **STUDENT GROUP PRESENTATIONS**
- 4/27 30 **STUDENT GROUP PRESENTATIONS**

4/29

31 **MEDIA ECONOMICS: MULTIPLE FUTURES****Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems****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 Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” 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.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355– 24/7 on call

<https://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling/>

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call

<https://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault/>

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

https://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report/

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity |Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

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.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710

<https://uscса.usc.edu/>

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

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.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Annenberg Student Success Fund

<https://annenbergsuccessfund.usc.edu/current-students/resources/annenbergscholarships-and-awards>

The Annenberg Student Success Fund is a donor-funded financial aid account available to USC Annenberg undergraduate and graduate students for non-tuition expenses related to extra- and co-curricular programs and opportunities.

Breaking Bread Program [undergraduate students only]

<https://undergrad.usc.edu/faculty/bread/>

The Breaking Bread Program is designed to provide individual undergraduate students with an opportunity to meet and have scholarly discussions with faculty members outside of the normal classroom setting. Through this program, students and faculty enjoy good company and great conversation by literally “breaking bread” over a meal together and USC will pick up the tab! Your meal event can take place anywhere outside of the normal classroom setting. Your venue can be a restaurant or eatery on or off-campus.