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COMM 366: Designing Media for Social Change
Fall 2020, T/Th 11-12:20 online
Section 20567, 4 units

Professor: Alison Trope, Ph.D. (she/her/hers)
Office hours: by appointment; contact: trope@usc.edu

Course partner: Holly Gordon, Chief Impact Officer, Participant Media

Teaching Assistants:
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Course Description:
This course examines media and social change at the intersection of theory and practice. We will investigate and analyze the way social change is catalyzed and communicated through various media platforms. We will gain an historical and multi-media perspective on a variety of design and communication strategies tied to a range of social and cultural issues (including the environment, the arts, medicine and science, education, identity politics, social justice, etc.). We will also look at and hear from organizations and their leaders to gain a real world perspective on these issues. Throughout the semester, we will also learn the basics for designing a communication campaign. We will discuss social marketing, audience research, modes of storytelling and campaign design, and the significance of outreach and evaluation. Over the course of the semester, we will work in teams to create strategic communications for topics and areas that tie into current political discourse and the upcoming election (e.g. immigration rights, policing, criminal justice reform, workers' rights, gender equity, etc.). The course will be divided into **three sections**:

THEORIZING SOCIAL CHANGE & STRATEGY: In this first part of the course, we will explore how social change is defined and has been theorized in a number of arenas—from government to nonprofits, NGOs, and advocacy organizations to business/industry and their use of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to grassroots communities and activism. We will establish a foundational understanding of the various institutional structures, models (issue specific change, individual change, systems change), and policies that create barriers and/or avenues toward social change.

MEDIA AS SOCIAL CHANGE TOOL: Equipped with foundational theories, the next section of the course will explore various media institutions, practices and sites of social change, looking at case studies to understand how narratives get constructed for particular target audiences. We will consider the value of different genres of media and visual culture used for social change (from poster art to documentary to street art to transmedia and social media) storytelling, and counter-narratives specifically in the context of local and disenfranchised communities.

PRACTICE & IMPACT: In this section of the course, we will combine the theoretical, storytelling and visual skills from the first two sections in order to apply them to the praxis of social change and campaign building. The focus in this section will be on media practice, where students will apply some of the strategies used in creating a social change campaign as well as other advocacy-based media. Students will research, develop and pitch a campaign that is engaging, relevant, and has potential impact in relation to a specific social problem.

Learning Objectives
- **Analyze** social change theories and their impact on social, cultural, political problems
- **Evaluate** media's role and impact as a tool for social change (specifically looking at assigned case studies).
- **Assess** the role and value of different media in shaping and instigating social change
- **Synthesize and integrate** media, communication, and social change theory in the context of a specific social/political/cultural problem
- **Research and develop** the building blocks of a social change campaign that will address and potentially impact a specific systemic social/political problem

Course Requirements, Attendance and Participation:
Students are required to do all of the reading, attend all classes, complete all assignments, and participate fully in this course.* There are multiple ways to participate and be part of our class community. In addition to participation in class through asking questions or using the chat function on Zoom, you will be asked to participate in breakout sessions. You may also visit me in office hours or email me to field questions as a form of participation. If circumstances prevent you from attending class, please inform me by email ASAP. You are responsible for accessing and staying abreast of course content, and for communicating with me in a timely manner if you have any obstacles impacting your work and successful completion of the course.

* if time zone prevents synchronous attendance and participation, other arrangements will be made on a case by case basis. Please let me know ASAP.

The ZOOM of It All: Technology Guidelines, Etiquette, and Class Recordings
We're all in this new Zoom world together, and trying our best to make it work. There will likely be some technology fails, lackluster engagement and fatigue. While Zoom will never be the same as our regular in-classroom/in person experiences, we need to collectively find ways to make the teaching and learning the best it can be.

To that end, it is recommended that note-taking be done by hand to maintain attention and engagement during the course—having your screen set on the Zoom lecture/discussion. During class, you should **avoid** multitasking on mobile phones or web surfing. [To understand the reasons for this guidance, you may want to read "Why you should take notes by hand – not on a laptop"and "The Myth of Multitasking."] Although you are not obligated to turn your camera on, I recommend it as one way we can try to replicate an in-person class and create some semblance of community. At the same time, I understand there are many reasons you may not want your camera on. Feel free to discuss your personal circumstances with me at any time.

Please keep your microphone off during zoom class, except when you're asked to unmute for discussion or questions. You may want to use headphones to improve your audio quality. If using virtual backgrounds, make sure the imagery is appropriate.

Live class sessions will be recorded and made available to students through Blackboard (including transcriptions). Please remember that USC policy **prohibits sharing** of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment. As a student, you are responsible for the appropriate use and handling of these recordings under existing SCampus policies regarding class notes (https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-c/). These rules will be strictly enforced, and violations will be met with the appropriate disciplinary sanction.

Classroom Conduct and Respect
All students are encouraged to use the classroom as a safe (and brave) space in which to speak and voice their opinions. We all come to the classroom with different backgrounds and experiences—defined by race, ethnicity, gender, disability, religion, class, ideology, even personality. This diversity can be our greatest strength and an asset as we learn together. My expectation is that you respect not only me and our guests, but also your classmates/peers when they participate in discussion. We may not truly understand another person's perspective, but we can/should listen with acceptance and empathy. Every student should feel comfortable participating and

being part of a productive, engaging dialogue. Given the focus on gender and other facets of identity, this class and the discussions we have may make you feel some discomfort. You may not always agree with me or your peers. This is normal, and part of the learning. If you ever feel that I've misspoken or misrepresented something or you have an emotional response to the material or to something someone in class has said, please reach out to me to discuss. Above all, please be flexible (and forgiving) with me, your peers and yourself as we navigate these issues together.

Communication
You may reach me by email (trope@usc.edu), and I will respond typically within 24 hours. If I don't respond, feel free to nudge me. I receive many emails and sometimes things do fall through the cracks. It's nothing personal. Each class, I will open the Zoom session 5-10 minutes early and stay 5-10 minutes after to replicate the in-person classroom. If you want to chat with me informally at that time, you are welcome or you may set up a time for a one-on-one appointment. For questions or constructive criticism of class at any time during the semester, you may use this anonymous google form. We will do course evaluations at the end of the term.

Course Readings/Required Texts:
All readings will be posted on Blackboard as PDFs or weblinks. In addition to articles and chapters from books, we will regularly draw from the interactive study guide from *Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox for Revolution* (referenced as **BT** in schedule below). If you have trouble opening or reading any of the articles, let me know ASAP.

Course Grading
The final course grade will be based on the following distribution:

Participation	10%
Theory of Change Paper (individual)	20%
Case Studies Report (individual)	20%
Formative research assignment (group)	15%
Vision statement + strategic plan (group)	15%
Final project/deliverable (group)	20%

Grades will be assigned as follows:
A	outstanding, thoughtful and insightful work and analysis, showing an ability to think beyond the basic course material.
	<A grade of A+ (97-100) *may* be given to *individual* assignments in *rare* instances where expectations are exceeded.>
A-/B+	above average work, demonstrating effort and keen understanding of conceptual ideas and their relation to work in the community site
B/B-	average work, needs improvement on ideas and argument
C+/C	shows little effort, lacks clarity and/or argument
C- and below	fulfilling the bare minimum and showing little understanding of the material

Every effort will be made to return assignments within two weeks from due date (or date received).

Each assignment will be worth 100 points and will be converted to a percentage score depending upon the weight assigned to each. Your percentage scores on the assignments will be totaled and translated to a letter grade as per the scale shown below:

A+	= 97-100 (only possible on individual assignments, NOT final course grade)		
A	= 96-94	C	= 76-74
A-	= 93-90	C-	= 73-70
B+	= 89-87	D+	= 69-67
B	= 86-84	D	= 66-64
B-	= 83-80	D-	= 63-60
C+	= 79-77	F	= 59-00

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 10 days of receiving the graded assignment. After that, no appeals will be accepted for review and the grade will be considered final.

Course Schedule

Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change - and probably will change - based on the progress of the class, events, and/or guest speaker availability. Students should consult the Registration Calendar for dates regarding add/drop deadlines, fees, grading options, etc.

NOTE: all due dates are PACIFIC time. If you are in another time zone and require accommodations, let me know.

Topics/Key Questions In-Class Work/Guests	Readings	Deliverables/ Due Dates
Week 1 **Defining Change** *How do we understand how change happens? What is a theory of change? And how does it help?*	**8/18**: course introduction **8/20**: Robert Hornick, "Why Can't We Sell Human Rights Like We Sell Soap?" Oxfam blog, "What Is a Theory of Change and How Do We Use It?" Wesley Morris, "The Reconciliation Must Be Televised" ***Beautiful Trouble (BT)/Theory***: Cultural Hegemony, The Commons, Anti-Oppression	
Week 2 **The Power of Systems Change** *How does change operate in different contexts: individual, organizational, systems change etc.? What are the strategic + structural elements of social change campaign planning?*	**8/25**: Pathways for Change: 10 Theories to Inform Advocacy and Policy Change Efforts Fledgling Fund, "Creative Media Dimension of Impact" **8/27** Charles Atkin & Ronald Rice, "Theory and Principles of Public Communication Campaigns" Review: Four Quadrants of Change OPTIONAL: *Making Waves: A Guide to Cultural Strategy* (report) ***Beautiful Trouble (BT) Principles***: Choose Tactics That Support Your Strategy; *Anyone Can Act*;	**Student survey (skills, interests)**

Week 3 **Framing the "Problem": Creating Emotional Resonance & Amplification** *How do problems get articulated and framed? Who/what does the framing? Which ideas/ perspectives get amplified? How are emotional responses elicited? What are the pitfalls and ethical considerations in eliciting emotion or working to change behavior?*	**9/1** Charlotte Ryan & William Gamson, "The Art of Reframing Political Debates" D.M. McLeod & James Hertog, "Social Control, Social Change and the Mass Media's Role in the Regulation of Protest Groups" Review: Frameworks Institute **9/3** Ryan Milner, "Antagonism: Race, Gender and Counterpublic Contestation" Jen Schradie, "Bringing the Organization Back In: Social Media and Social Movements" ABC NEWS/WASHINGTON POST POLL: The Coronavirus Pandemic and ABC news report *BT Principles*: Consensus, Is a Means Not An End; Don't Mistake Your Group for Society; Choose Your Target Wisely;	**Theory of change paper assigned**
Week 4 **Reporting for/on Social Change** How do journalists report on/about social change? What is the line between journalism and advocacy? How is "witnessing" a part of journalistic practice? What is "citizens' media"?	**9/8** The Elements of Journalism, American Press Institute Wesley Lowry, "A Reckoning Over Objectivity Led by Black Journalists" **9/10** Allissa Richardson, excerpt from *Bearing Witness While Black* *BT Principle*: Do The Media's Work For Them	**Groups/Topics assigned**
Week 5 **Visual Culture, Art & Social Change** Why are visuals so powerful as mechanisms for social change? What visual and design elements are effective and why?	**9/15** T.V. Reed, "ACTing UP against AIDS: The (Very) Graphic Arts in a Moment of Crisis" **9/17** Nicolas Lambert, "Liberation Graphics" from *A People's Art History of the United States*	**Theory of change paper due by or before 5pm 9/18**

	Tim Lewis, "[Ai Weiwei, 'An Artist Must Be An Activist](#)" ***BT Principles:*** [Balance Art and Message](#)	
Week 6 **Ethics of Representation** How is representation and positionality taken into account? How do we ethically handle the representation of the problem, the oppressed/victims, and the solution?	**9/22** View: [Human Flow (Ai Weiwei)](#) **9/24** Melissa Brough, "'Fair Vanity': The Visual Culture of Humanitarianism in the Age of Commodity Activism" Clemencia Rodriguez, "From Alternative Media to Citizens' Media" Review: [Color of Change](#) and [BLD PWR](#) ***BT Principles:*** [Lead with Sympathetic Characters](#); [Think Narratively](#)	**Case Studies Paper assigned**
Week 7 **Public Space and Occupation** How are public spaces used in the context of social change? What types of sites? What types of actions? Why is occupation of space an effective tactic?	**9/29** W.J.T. Mitchell, "The Violence of Public Art: *Do The Right Thing*" Erica Doss, "Contemporary Public Art Controversy: An Introduction" **10/1** Nicolas Lambert, "The Battleground Over Public Memory" + "No Apologies: Asco, Performance Art, and the Chicano Civil Rights Movement" Jesikah Maria Ross, "Pop-Up Public: Participatory Design for Civic Storytelling" ***BT Tactics***: [Occupation](#); [Public Filibuster](#); *[Challenge Patriarchy as You Organize](#); [Mass Street Action](#)*	**Formative research assigned**
Week 8 **Formative Research** Why is formative research the first step in developing a campaign? What are the elements of research? How do you narrow the scope of	**10/6** Charles Atkin & Vicki Freimuth, "Guidelines for formative evaluation research in campaign design" **10/8** Workshop: Research planning	**Case Studies Report due by or before 5pm 10/9**

your problem and let strategy guide you?		
Week 9 **Power of Narrative, Storytelling, and Character** What is the power of story and character in developing and executing a social change campaign? What makes a "good"/effective story?	**10/13** "Kiva and the Power of Story," Stanford Business Case Ella Saltmarshe, "Using Story to Change Systems" Annie Neimand, "How to Tell Stories About Complex Issues" Review: Center for Story-Based Strategy OPTIONAL: Paula J. Massood "Spike Lee's *4 Little Girls*: The Politics of the Documentary Interview **10/15** Andy Goodman, "Storytelling as Best Practice" video (58 min) The Science of Story-building (Medium Collection)	**Formative research due by or before 5pm 10/18**
Week 10 **Networking, Partnerships & Calls to Action** Why are partners important in developing a social change campaign? How do you choose the "right" partner? How can partners supplement and enhance your work?	**10/20** Samantha Wright & Annie Neimand, "The Secret to Better Storytelling for Social Change: Better Partnerships" Annie Neimand, Samantha Wright, Max Steinman & Ann Christiano, "How to Build Better Calls to Action" Sarah Banet-Weiser, Charlotte Lapansky, "RED is the New Black: Brand Culture, Consumer Citizenship and Political Possibility" **10/22** Michael Allen, "Breakdown of *Contagious: Why Things Catch On* by Jonah Berger" Partnerships: Frameworks for Working Together Excerpt from Karen Nelson-Field, *Viral Marketing: The Science of Sharing*	**Vision/Strategic Plan due by or before 5pm 10/25**

Week 11 **Media Channels & Target Audiences** How do you distribute your campaign and messaging? How do you identify and narrow your target audience? Which media channels are the best fit for your campaign? Why?	**10/27** Andrew Marantz, The Virologist John Herrman, "Tik Tok is Shaping Politics, But How?" *Zeynep Tufekci, #Kony2012, Understanding Networked Symbolic Action & Why Slacktivism is Conceptually Misleading* **10/29** Excerpt from *#Hashtag Activism: Networks of Race and Gender Justice* Leah Shafer and Iskandar Zulkarnain, "Immediacy, Hypermediacy and the College Campus: Using Augmented Reality for Social Critique" ***BT Principles**:* *Consider Your Audience;* *Play To The Audience That Isn't There*	**Group check in 10/29**
Week 12 **Measuring Evaluation & Impact** What are the tools to evaluate the impact of a social change campaign? How can we measure social change?	**11/3** Measuring Impact from The Impact Field Guide Fledgling Fund, "Impact paper abridged" Review: Media Impact Project (Norman Lear Center) **11/5** Beth Kanter & Katie Delahaye Paine, Measuring the Networked Nonprofit Beth Karlin, John Johnson, "Measuring Impact: The Importance of Evaluation for Documentary Film Campaigns"	**Group check in 11/5**
Week 13 **11/10-11/12**	ALL FINAL PROJECTS DUE 11/10 Presentations will be by lottery 11/10 (3 groups), 11/12 (3 groups) and 11/17 (5 groups)	ALL FINAL PROJECTS DUE 11/10
STUDY DAYS Dates: 11/14-11/16		

FINAL PRESENTATIONS CONTINUED 11/17	FINAL PRESENTATIONS BY GROUP	FINAL PRESENTATIONS BY GROUP

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:
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