



TENTATIVE SYLLABUS
Business and Professional Comm (20578R)
Fall 2020

11:00-12:20 Tues/Thurs via ZOOM

NOTE: ACTIVITIES and DATES MAY CHANGE

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Welcome to Business and Professional Comm! This class will introduce you to many of the concepts, strategies, and skills of working as a communication professional in a business environment. We will learn the written and oral communication skills that are used by business executives and we will also explore the business environment, including the management and organization of businesses and the challenges that they face in today's complex environment. This class is designed to be interactive, positive, and dynamic. We will work together throughout the semester to prepare the class as a whole, and each and every student as individuals, to become confident, effective, and dynamic communication professionals who are conversant regarding business practices and competent in written and oral communication. Please note that the schedule may change to accommodate the needs and desires that arise due to the pandemic and its impact on the class. In addition to my own concern and policies about distance learning, let me begin by providing you with the Pandemic Notifications that are Annenberg and USC policy for the coming semester:

PANDEMIC NOTIFICATIONS (PLEASE READ):

- **Synchronous session recording notice**
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.
- **Going back to Campus**
Although we are starting the semester with online instruction only, conditions may improve. In such case, courses listed as hybrid will give opportunity to students to attend class in person. This will happen only by following the strictest health guidelines and safety protocols. These are

listed in the [Trojans Return](#) page. Please take the time to read this ahead so that you are prepared in case it is possible to return to in-person instruction.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS DURING DISTANCE LEARNING:

- **Participation**

Participation is part of your grade, and this class involves weekly synchronous in-class discussions. In the beginning of each class session, students will raise issues and share information about current business events and trends. This participatory aspect of the class is vital to your learning of this evolving field. Please be aware that being present and participating in this discussion is a mandatory part of this class. If you are planning to be unavailable during class time, please contact me immediately so that we can work out an alternative plan, or consider enrolling in another class. This class is designed to be synchronous and interactive. For your information, USC's general guidelines on participation during the pandemic include the following statement: The current modality of teaching includes synchronous and asynchronous lessons, assignments, exercises, and evaluation processes, and each affords different types of participation. In a synchronous zoom environment, when proper, participation is synchronous. This may include talking, when appropriate, during a zoom meeting, or using the chat function to generate or participate in discussions. Blackboard offers different types of participation, including participating in forums and completing asynchronous assignments.

- **Attendance policy**

As this is a participation based class, attendance is necessary. If you anticipate any difficulty with attendance, please contact me immediately so that we can work out an alternative plan, or consider enrolling in another class. The following guidelines are noted, but this class does have in-person, synchronous requirements for participation. USC's guidelines suggest: Students are strongly encouraged to attend live sessions via Zoom. This is the best way to engage with the course and keep up to date with class activities and assignments. However, there will be no penalty for failing to attend live sessions, and students who miss live sessions will be able to keep up with the class by reviewing class recordings and engaging through asynchronous class activities and assignments. Note that university guidelines dictate that faculty should only maintain normal attendance, participation, and assessment expectations for students when the class time falls within reasonable learning hours in the student's time zone, defined as 7:00am to 10:00pm in the student's time zone.

- **RESPECT FOR ONE ANOTHER:** The distant nature of these learning environments may prompt us to forget that we are a community and that each of us and our ideas deserves respect. For this reason, it is imperative that you remember to **respect the opinion of others**, regardless of how much you disagree.

- **Zoom etiquette**

Although you are not obligated to turn your camera on, we highly recommend it. Please wear **appropriate clothing**. Please keep your **microphone off** during zoom class, except when you're asked to unmute for discussion or questions. Please use **appropriate backgrounds**.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

THIS CLASS INVOLVES DISCUSSION. BE PREPARED

Business and Professional Communication is designed to introduce you to skills and practices that will help you communicate and develop communication strategies as a business professional, for yourself in business contexts, for your business, or for your clients and stakeholders. In today's professional (and personal) world, communication is one of the most vital skills to develop. Your effectiveness in communicating concepts, instructions, ideas, feelings, and thoughts are key to your success, especially in business. This semester, we will explore how to communicate in written and oral form. We will look at the standard practices for communicating within and across business sectors. We will explore issues and events that influence and affect business and, with these, we will examine how business professionals communicate strategically when events occur. We will practice some of the fundamentals of business writing, including memoranda, email, business letters, and we will discuss how to be persuasive and engaging in these writings. Additionally, we will explore oral presentation as it exists in different professional contexts and settings.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Understand business communication concepts that serve as a basis for effective spoken and written communication in a business setting.
- Understand how to approach internal and external interactions strategically and how to plan for these meetings and events.
- Develop an understanding of the need to specialize communication approaches to the specific needs of the situation and the participants, stakeholders, or audiences.
- Learn how to ask good questions and provide meaningful answers to questions in a business setting.
- Develop the fundamental skills of business communication techniques and the ability to be effective in writing business documents.
- Learn to use standard formats, techniques, and documents to gain credibility in business settings.
- Develop an understanding of the business environment, priorities, and languages that are integral to that ecosystem.

GRADING Percentages will be calculated by taking the total points earned in the course and dividing by total possible points.

A: 92.6 – 100

A-: 90 – 92.5

B+: 87.6 – 89.9

B: 82.6 – 87.5

B-: 80 – 82.5

C+: 78 – 79.9

C: 72.6 – 77.9

C-: 70 – 72.5

D+: 67.6 – 69.9

D: 62.6 – 67.5

D-: 59.6 – 62.5

F: Under 59

REQUIRED TEXT:

Ragas (2017). *Mastering Business for Strategic Communicators*. Emerald Publishing

OPTIONAL TEXT:

Toogood, Granville (2017). *The new articulate executive*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Other readings or videos may be assigned during the semester and will be made available via Blackboard.

GENERAL COURSE POLICIES

Respect: It is well studied that public speaking creates fear and anxiety for many people. One of the goals of this course is for students to gain confidence when speaking in front of others. To achieve this, the class will focus on a positive and supportive environment, curating a safe space for expression. Listening, providing positive, supportive, and constructive feedback are expectations of the class. Students are expected to respect and encourage each other and to learn from the examples and best practices that others exhibit. Disrespectful comments or behaviors will not be tolerated. Please contact me immediately if you feel that the class atmosphere is not respectful toward you or your peers.

Academic Integrity: Your work in this class must be your own. Any attempt to represent others' work as your own will receive a failing grade on the assignment in question (at a minimum) and will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. To learn more about academic integrity and what constitutes academic dishonesty, please see these links: <https://libraries.usc.edu/research/reference-tutorials> <http://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/graduate-students/academic-integrity>

Student Conduct: We will uphold the standards outlined by the Student Conduct code in SCampus (see <http://web-app.usc.edu/scampus>). Talk with me if you are confused or unsure if something could or would be considered cheating or plagiarism. See last page of syllabus for official statement.

Assignment Submission: All assignments will be submitted through Blackboard (<http://blackboard.usc.edu>) via Turnitin. If you are unable for any reason to submit your assignment on time to Blackboard for a technical reason, email me (knorth@usc.edu) your assignment before the deadline.

Deadlines: The due dates for your assignments are strict. Late assignments are not accepted. If you have an emergency, please contact me before the deadline and documentation is required.

Email: During normal business hours (M-F, 9am-6pm) I will respond to emails within 24-48 hours (probably sooner). If you email me outside of those times or if I give you some notice about limited email, it may take me longer to respond. On weekends, I may not respond until Monday. If it has been more than 24 hours and you think I may have missed your email, please send another.

Technology: Phones must be put away during class. Computers may be used if you like, but only for class-related material and note-taking. I may ask you to close all computers at any time, and if computers become distracting, I may change this policy. Computers must be put away during speeches and guest lectures.

Special Accommodations: Academic accommodations are made when students register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please deliver this documentation to me within the first week of the semester, or as soon as possible. DSP (<https://dsp.usc.edu/>) can be reached at ability@usc.edu and (213) 740-0776. See last page of syllabus for official statement.

English as a Second Language or Other Accommodations: Please let me know if you need special accommodations if English is not your primary language or if you are concerned about accommodations for any other reason.

STUDENT RESOURCES

Sexual Assault Policy and Resources. The University of Southern California is committed to fostering a safe campus environment for all members of the university community, free from sexual coercion, violence, and sexual intimidation. The university's sexual misconduct and sexual assault policies have been developed to reaffirm these principles and to provide recourse for individuals whose rights have been violated (the policy is available in

SCampus, Part E: https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/files/2015/11/SCampus-Final-112015_v8.pdf). To learn more about your reporting options and your rights, or to speak with a counselor confidentially, contact the USC Sexual Assault Resource Center/Center for Women and Men at 213-740-4900, or contact Student Counseling Services at 213-740-7711. For more information and resources, including off-campus resources like the Rape Treatment Center, visit the USC Sexual Assault Resource Center website at <https://sarc.usc.edu/resources/>.

Finally, remember that you can contact a campus cruiser at 213-740-4911 for a safety escort.

Stress Management. Students are under a lot of pressure. If you start to feel overwhelmed, it is important that you reach out for help. A good place to start is the USC Student Counseling Services office at 213-740-7711. The service is confidential, and there is no charge. Moreover, they offer drop-in workshops throughout the semester on managing stress and maintaining mindfulness. Additional Academic Support. A number of campus resources exist to support you academically. Contact the Center for Academic Support (<http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/>) at 213-740-0776 or study@usc.edu.

ASSIGNMENTS (subject to change):

1. Class Participation
2. Tell Me Something I Don't Know
3. Email
4. Cover letter
5. Memo
6. MIDTERM
7. Press release
8. Content Schedule and Content Tree
9. User Stories and Personas
10. Reflection Papers
11. Holding Statement and Crisis Public Statement
12. Guest Lecturer Papers
13. FINAL EXAM

All Papers and Presentations will be discussed in class. If you miss the in-class discussion and/or description of the assignment, it is incumbent upon you to find the information. It is your responsibility to acquire information that you miss if you do not attend class. All speeches and in-class presentations are to be accompanied by a written copy of your text. Turn in the written version to Blackboard each week.

Notes on the REFLECTION PAPER: Your reflection papers should include concepts learned in class while reflecting on your strengths and places for improvement. This is an analysis and should motivate you to be introspective.

Participation and Attendance: I expect students to **attend all classes**, other than pre-approved excused absences (illness, religious observance, university-sanctioned activities) or emergencies. An absence will be considered excused if it falls under one of those categories (pre-approved or emergency) and is accompanied by documentation. Any more than two unexcused absences will result in a 1/3 deduction to your final grade (e.g., A to an A-, A- to a B+, B+ to a B, etc...). Also, please be on time. If I notice persistent lateness, particularly if it is disruptive or during speeches, I will deduct points in this category.

COURSE SCHEDULE The assigned readings are meant to be read before the class under which they are listed. This syllabus and schedule may change to accommodate unexpected needs of the class as a whole and, thus, the course may change throughout the semester.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

<p>10% (combo: participation and Tell Me Something)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Class participation• WEEKLY BULLET POINTS: Tell Me Something I Don't Know
<p>60% Papers (5% each)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Email2. Cover letter3. Memo4. Press release5. Content Schedule and Content Tree6. User Stories and Personas7. Holding Statement and Crisis Public Statement8. Product Pitch9. Guest Lecturer Paper10. Guest Lecturer Paper11. Guest Lecturer Paper12. Guest Lecturer Paper
<p>30% EXAMS (15% each)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Midterm• Final

WEEKLY SCHEDULE (subject to change)

MODULE 1: BASIC SKILLS

Week 1 **August 18-20** INTRO and Communicating in a Business Context

Readings: Ragas Part I (Chapter 1) Business Acumen

Topics:

Welcome and review of topics

Why are style and protocol important.

When do you use different types of communication

Week 2: **August 25-27** Organization and Management of Businesses

Readings: Ragas Part II (Chapters 2-4): Comm, Business Acumen, and the C-Suite

Strategy Topic: Working with Executives

Writing Skills: EMAILS

Assignments 1: **Email Correspondence**

+ Tell ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW (3 bullet points)

Week 3: **September 1-3** Financial Considerations: The Board, Investors, and the Press

Readings: Ragas Part III (Chapters 5-6)

Strategy Topic: Finance and Investor Relations

Writing Skills: Cover letters

Assignments 2: **Cover Letter**

+ Tell ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW (3 bullet points)

Week 4: **September 8-10** Human Resources and Internal Communication

Readings: Ragas Part IV Chapter 7-9

Strategy Topic: Human Resources and Employee Engagement

Writing Skills: Memos

Assignments : No skills writing, only:

+ Tell ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW (3 bullet points)

MODULE 2: STRATEGY

Week 5: **September 15-17** Legal Issues, Corporate Strategy, War Rooms

Readings: Ragas Part V Chapters 10-13

Strategy Topic: Corporate Strategy, Innovation, and Legal

Writing Skills: Memos

Assignment 3: **MEMO**

+ Tell ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW (3 bullet points)

Week 6: **September 22-24** Marketing and Branding

Readings: Ragas Part VI Chapter 14-16

Strategy Topic: Marketing, Brand, and Data Analytics

Writing Skills: Press Releases

Assignment: **Guest Lecturer Review Paper (if we have a guest)**

+ Tell ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW (3 bullet points)

Week 7: **September 29-October 1** Corporate Transformations and Pivots

Readings: Ragas Part VIII Chapter 20-22

Strategy Topic: Communication and Corporate Transformations

Writing Skills: Press Releases

Assignment 4: **Press Release**

+ Tell ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW (3 bullet points)

Week 8 **October 6-8** Communicating with Developers; Social Media for Business

Readings:

Strategy Topic: Digital and Social Media for Business, Communicating with Engineers and developers

Writing Skills: Content Schedules and Content Trees

Assignment 5: **Content Schedule and Content Tree**

+ No Tell Me (Midterm week)

OCTOBER 6 (TUESDAY) MIDTERM

MODULE 3: SPECIAL TOPICS with guest lecturers

Note that special topics are subject to change due to availability of guests

All readings and assignments are subject to change

Week 9: **October 13-15** MANAGING PROJECTS AND TEAMS (**Mike Phillips**)

Readings:

Strategy Topic: Managing Projects and Teams, Stand Ups and Scrums

Writing Skills: User Stories and Personas, Wireframes and UX flows

Assignment 6: a) **In class: "Draw this" Product Development**

b) User Stories and Personas

+ Tell ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW (3 bullet points)

Week 10: **October 20-22** LEGAL ISSUES AND ACTIONS (**Michael Overing**)

Readings: TBA

Strategy Topic: Anticipating trouble. Using your legal team. Being an Expert Witness, depositions, court appearances, communicating in a hostile environment.

Writing Skills: How to articulate legal questions

Assignment 7: **Guest Lecturer Review Paper**

+ Tell ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW (3 bullet points)

Week 11: **October 27-29** SCANDALS AND CRISES (**Erik Deutsch**)

Readings:

Strategy Topic: PR, Crisis Communication, dealing with Scandals (and with the media)
Writing Skills: Crisis Communication, Holding Statements, Public Comments
Assignment 8: Crisis Strategy and Holding Statement/ **Guest Lecturer Review Paper**
+ Tell ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW (3 bullet points)

Week 12: **November 3-5**

1. INTERVIEWING FOR JOBS (**Kacey Hays** ConsumerTrack)

Readings:

Strategy Topic: Understanding how to interview and be interviewed

Writing Skills: STAR Method (Situation, Task, Action, Result)

Assignment 9: **Guest Lecturer Review Paper**

2. INNOVATION (**David Arnerich**)

- Readings:
- Strategy Topic: Pitching and Developing new ideas: From Conceptualization to Launch
- Writing Skills: Communicating with Developers

Assignment 10: **Guest Lecturer Review Paper**

+ Tell ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW (3 bullet points)

Week 13: **November 10-12**

ENTERTAINMENT and PITCHING IDEAS (**Gary Pearl**/Jane the Virgin and/or **David Arnerich**)

Readings:

Strategy Topic: Communicating effectively in the Entertainment Industry

Writing Skills: RFPs, "coverage," Promoting shows and celebrities.

Assignment 11: **Guest Lecturer Review Paper**

Assignment 11: **Product Pitch Paper**

+ No Tell Me (last week)

FINAL: Take home exam (Due Finals Week)