



## **DSM 596: Final Project Capstone (4.0 Units)**

**Fall 2020 - Tuesdays – 6:00pm-8:50pm**

**Section:** 21891D

**Location:** ASC G26 and **ONLINE** (HYBRID/FLEX)

**Instructor:** Dr. Morten Bay

**Office:** Online

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 3.30pm-5.15pm and **by appointment**

(Signing up for office hours is required. Please go to <https://bay-usc.youcanbook.me> to sign up.)

**Contact Info:** mortench@usc.edu

### **I. Course Description**

In this project course, you will use the skills and knowledge you have acquired during your time in the DSM program to produce a product or a campaign in the digital/social media space. Development includes pitching, conceptualization, launching, and evaluation of the final project. Upon completion of the course, you will have launched a tangible, real-life project you can take pride in and use to advance your career by adding it to your profile/portfolio.

### **II. Student Learning Outcomes**

Upon completion of this course, it is expected that you will be able to:

- Apply skills and knowledge you acquired through the DSM program to a real-life project
- Specify a project and analyze the audience and market needs related to it
- Understand and apply basic project management techniques to create and follow a realistic project timeline.
- Create and develop a project proposal that is actionable at the ready-to-launch level, including realistic success criteria
- Bring a project to full execution
- Evaluate the success of the project post-launch according to previously specified criteria

### **III. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials**

All required readings will be posted on Blackboard. There is no textbook in this course.

### **IV. Description and Assessment of Assignments & Assignment Submission Policy**

In addition to your overall participation, there are four deliverables in this class that will determine your final grade:

1. **Project proposal (due 9/22)**
2. **Project presentation (due 11/24)**
3. **Project evaluation report (due 12/9)**

#### 4. Four short video diaries entries (due 10/6, 10/13, 10/20, 10/27)

1 and 3 are papers like you will find in any other course, except the fact that you will **not** be required to follow academic rules and formatting. Instead, your objective is to make the reports look like it belongs in a corporate or organizational setting. You will receive a more in-depth description of what that entails at least two weeks before the deadline for the paper. The papers must be submitted in PDF or DOC(X) format through Blackboard.

Hardcopies or reports in any other formats will NOT be accepted.

**Project Proposal (Deliverable 1 – due 9/22 )** describes your project in as much detail as possible before the execution of the project begins. The document must – at a minimum - include:

1. A description of the actual product, campaign, or research project you are developing
2. Formalized and realistic success criteria/KPIs
3. A project management plan (using the tools you learn in weeks 1-4)
4. A development timeline
5. A communication strategy – how you will bring awareness to your project.
6. An executive summary of a business plan

**PLEASE NOTE THAT YOU MUST FINALIZE YOUR PROJECT SELECTION IN TIME TO SUBMIT A FINISHED PROPOSAL ON 9/22 – SO START THINKING ABOUT IT NOW. YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO SWITCH PROJECTS AFTER 9/22!**

#### **Project Presentation (Deliverable 2 – Due 11/24)**

On 11/24, you will present your project to the rest of the class and a panel of invited professors and industry professionals. At this point, your project should be almost ready to go public on the class-wide launch date of December 1<sup>st</sup>. It may seem odd, but from a grading standpoint, your main project matters the least. The originality of your idea and its success at launch, will **NOT** influence your Deliverable 2 grade to any large extent. It is the presentation and planning of it that matters. In other words, even if your product does not become a smash hit, or if your campaign fails to reach its audience, you can still get a top grade in this course. What matters for your grade is how well you managed the project and brought it to execution, regardless of the outcome at launch (given that the outcome is rarely only a direct result of your efforts).

#### **About your main project – please note:**

As mentioned above, Deliverable 2 is the actual presentation and execution of your project. You are required to choose a project that adheres to one of the main categories below.

Some subcategories are listed under the categories, and you are encouraged to choose one of them for your project. If you have an idea for a project that is not listed as a subcategory, you are welcome to suggest it anyway. Please note that approval of such a project must be obtained directly from the instructor and that such approval is at the instructor's discretion.

**Project Evaluation (Deliverable 3 – Due 12/9)** is even more important than Deliverable 1 and 2. Upon completion of your project, you will have learned a great deal about what it takes to launch a digital initiative of any sort. In the project evaluation you will reflect on what you have learned, and how it relates to the skills and knowledge you have acquired through the DSM program. At the core of this document, however, is your evaluation of how the project launch went. You will hold up your project's achievements to the criteria you set in the project description and reflect on why the launch lived up to, exceeded or failed to live up to your expectations. It is important to note that your grade will be determined mostly by the quality of your post-launch analysis and reflections.

#### **Video Diaries (Deliverable 4)**

Throughout the development process, which will primarily take place in October, you will create four videos of maximum five minutes in length. These videos are simple status reports on what you have worked on and accomplished in your project during the last seven days. A video recorded with your smartphone is sufficient. A

link to the video – or the video file itself – should be e-mailed to the instructor who will then post it in a class forum. Once all the videos are posted, **you must comment on the videos** posted by your classmates, giving them constructive feedback, suggestions or encouragements on how to move forward. More information about this process will follow.

**Participation** Until further notice, this class will be conducted online due to the conditions of the ongoing pandemic. If you want to get a good participation grade, you should be attentive and engage with the class discussion. A lot of class activity will be workshoping and giving feedback on your classmates' projects, both synchronously and asynchronously. Your level of engagement in these activities will weigh heavily when determining your participation grade. While it is not required, it is strongly encouraged that you make use of your device's camera in online sessions or compensate for your visual absence in other ways. If this presents a problem for you for personal or technical reasons, please reach out to the instructor to discuss workarounds.

## **Project categories**

(Subcategories can be found under each category)

### **Website**

- News Site/Blog
- Store
- Portfolio/Ad site
- Corporate website

**Note:** Unless exceptional circumstances are present (such as if you are a highly-skilled coder), the website must be built using WordPress. The chosen WP theme must also be responsive (mobile/tablet-friendly). Advertising sites or corporate sites can be for an actual/real, a made-up, or self-owned company.

### **App**

- Tool
- Content sharing/social network
- Gamification strategy/campaign using app

**Note:** Unless exceptional circumstances are present (such as if you are a highly-skilled coder), the app must be built or designed using Thunkable or Bubble. It is highly encouraged that you consider creating a Progressive Web App (PWA) rather than a native app. PWA's can be launched without submission to Google Play Store or Apple's App Store, whereas a native app requires an approval process that may delay the launch.

### **M-commerce**

- Store app
- Instagram store
- Gamified store
- Mobile-focused web store

**Note:** For M-commerce apps, the same rules apply as the app category above. For Instagram stores, note that a social media campaign of a certain size (see below) will be required to accompany the launch.

### **Social media campaign**

- Instagram / TikTok / Snapchat

- Facebook/IG
- Twitter/Facebook
- LinkedIn
- YouTube channel
- Twitch channel
- Crowdfunding campaign

**Note:** These campaigns can be for an actual/real, a made-up, or self-owned product/company. You can also choose to market yourself as a producer/creator. However, LinkedIn campaigns should be about a company or a project rather than yourself as a jobseeker. The subcategories have been chosen and combined to fit the type of campaigns that run on each platform. For example, if you choose to launch a campaign on TikTok, you must also apply that campaign to Instagram and Snapchat, to show that you can master the breadth of campaigning on visually-oriented social media platforms. For a crowdfunding campaign, you will set up a project on IndieGoGo and draw attention to it through a social media campaign.

## Cross-platform Content

- Podcast
- Vlog
- Content marketing campaign
- eBook

**Note:** For all of these, it is essential that you understand that the focus is not on the quality of the product, but on how you present it digitally and bring attention to it through a digital campaign. In other words, creating the actual content must NOT take up any of the time you dedicate to completing the course. The content should already exist or be created outside of class. For eBooks, for example, it is the launching and marketing of it on, e.g., Amazon that you will be graded on, not the eBook itself. You may have written a work of genius, but in this course, it won't matter if your presentation of it online is lacking. Also important: It is part of a successful content-based product/campaign launch, that there is enough content available at launch. If you can only deliver two podcast episodes as part of your project, you should choose a different category.

## Directed Research

For those of you who may be interested in taking an academic route (such as a Ph.D. or a research job) after graduation, it is also an option to do a research project as your final capstone. Here, the project execution will consist of the actual research effort, for example gathering of empirical data. The evaluation paper will be replaced by an academic paper aimed at publication in a journal. If this has your interest, reach out to your instructor who will guide you through the entire process to discuss how to proceed. Try to do so as early in the semester as possible, preferably even before classes start.

## White Paper

You may also combine research efforts similar to the ones described under "Directed Research" to produce a report/White Paper. Like the directed research paper, such a White Paper will replace the evaluation paper as a deliverable. The White Paper must contain a clear problem statement and contain proposed steps towards a solution. It must address a contemporary issue in digital media, social media, digital marketing, advertising or branding or a general communication phenomenon related to digital media products that can be placed in the categories listed above. Any deviations from this rule are at the instructor's discretion and must be approved before the due date for the Project proposal (Deliverable 1).

## V. Grading

**a. Breakdown of Grade**

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Project Proposal (Due 9/22)	100	20
Project Presentation (Due 11/24)	100	30
Project Evaluation (Due 12/9)	100	30
Video diaries (Due 10/6, 10/13, 10/20, 10/27)	100	10
Participation	100	10
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100%</b>

**b. Grading Scale (TBC)**

94 to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B-	67% to 69%: D+
90% to 93%: A-	77% to 79%: C+	64% to 66%: D
87% to 89%: B+	74% to 76%: C	60% to 63%: D-
84% to 86%: B	70% to 73%: C-	0% to 59%: F

**c. Grading Standards**

Letter Grade	Description
A	Excellent; demonstrates extraordinarily high achievement; comprehensive knowledge and understanding of subject matter; all expectations met and exceeded.
B	Good; moderately broad knowledge and understanding of subject matter; explicitly or implicitly demonstrates good, if not thorough understanding; only minor substantive shortcomings.
C	Satisfactory/Fair; reasonable knowledge and understanding of subject matter; most expectations are met; despite any shortcomings, demonstrates basic level of understanding.
D	Marginal; minimal knowledge and understanding of subject matter; more than one significant shortcoming; deficiencies indicate only the most rudimentary level of understanding.
F	Failing; unacceptably low level of knowledge and understanding of subject matter; deficiencies indicate lack of understanding.

## d. Grading Timeline

### Grading Timeframe and Missing or Inaccurate Score Inquiries/Disputes

For effective learning, students should receive timely feedback on assignments and exams. Therefore, every attempt will be made to grade assignments/exams and post grades within two weeks. Scores for all assignments and exams are regularly updated on Blackboard. You are responsible for notifying the Instructor **within one (1) week** of a score posting if you think a score is missing or inaccurate. Unless a technical error is suspected, you must provide a convincing argument for why you believe your grade should be different, in an e-mail to the instructor. Do NOT sign up for office hours to discuss your grade before having completed this step. Moreover, you only have this period of time to contest a score on an assignment/exam. If you fail to inquire/notify us of any discrepancy, missing score, or contest a score within one week of the date the score is posted, no further changes will be made.

## VI. Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown (TBD)

**Important note to students:** 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, where relevant. Students should consult the Registration Calendar for dates regarding add/drop deadlines, fees, grading options, etc.

**PLEASE NOTE: ADDITIONAL, INDIVIDUAL READINGS MAY BE ASSIGNED TO HELP YOU WITH YOUR PROJECT!**

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings	Deliverable/Due Dates
Week 1 8/25	<p>Introductions. Discussions of first thoughts about projects per</p> <p>Introduction to Agile/Scrum project management.</p>	Layton and Murrow: Scrum for Dummies, P. 1-24 (Available on Blackboard)	
Week 2 9/1	Agile/Scrum II	Layton and Murrow: Scrum for Dummies, P. 25-62	
Week 3 9/8	Agile Scrum III	Layton and Murrow: Scrum for Dummies, P. 63-106	
Week 4 9/15	<p>Agile Scrum IV</p> <p>How to make a good project pitch</p> <p>Class Proposal Workshop – give feedback to your classmates</p>	Layton and Murrow: Scrum for Dummies, P. 107-137	
Week 5 9/22	Proposal presentations		Proposal Due

Week 6 9/29	Proposal feedback from Instructor  Checking in on project management		
Week 7 10/6	Project Workshop/  Expert guest speaker (TBD)		Video Diary 1 Due
Week 8 10/13	Project Workshop/  Expert guest speaker (TBD)		Video Diary 2 Due  [Fall Recess: Thursday, October 15 and Friday, October 16]
Week 9 10/20	Project Workshop/  Expert guest speaker (TBD)		Video Diary 3 Due
Week 10 10/27	Project Workshop/  Expert guest speaker (TBD)		Video Diary 4 Due
Week 11 11/3	One on one sessions		
Week 12 11/10	One on one sessions		
Week 13 11/17	One on one sessions		
Week 14 11/24	Project presentations		[Thanksgiving Recess: Wednesday, November 25 to Sunday, November 29]
Week 15 12/1			Project launch
STUDY DAYS Dates: 12/5-12/8			
FINAL EXAM PERIOD Dates: 12/9-12/16			<b><u>Project evaluation paper due 12/9</u></b>

## VII. Policies and Procedures

### Additional Policies

Diversity and inclusion:

This class consists of students from a very diverse range of backgrounds and cultures. Intellectual freedom is a priority in class discussions, but **any form of sexism, racism, xenophobia, homophobia or other forms of discriminatory behavior on the basis of gender, ethnicity, sexuality or class will not be tolerated. Incidents will be reported to the university immediately.**

Should you be offended or hurt by anything said in the classroom or require any form of trigger warnings, **speak up**. If you are not comfortable speaking up in class, contact the instructor privately to remedy the situation.

The above naturally also applies to things said by your instructor, who is a human being, always learning, and can make mistakes. Do not be afraid to call your instructor. If done in a respectful manner, this will not diminish your standing in class, but will improve it.

### **Technology policies:**

Due to the Hybrid/Flex execution of the course and the pandemic affecting it, the technology policy is more relaxed than usual. However, for in-person meetings, please refrain from using your smartphone for anything but Zoom (if you need audio, for example).

Use of non-relevant electronic technologies such as metal detectors, model trains, vintage transistor radios, curling irons, microscopes, the "Operation" game, thermometers, steam irons, Xboxes, PlayStations, Nintendo consoles, LEGO Technic brick sets, model trains etc. are banned during both in-person and online sessions. Electric guitars are allowed in online sessions as long as your Zoom microphones is muted.

### **Communication**

Your instructor's preferred mode of communication is e-mail, using the address stated above. Please allow 24 hours for responses on weekdays and 48 hours for responses on weekends.

### **Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems**

#### **Academic Integrity Policy:**

The School of Communication maintains a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found responsible for plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, or purchasing papers or other assignments will be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards and may be dismissed from the School of Communication. There are no exceptions to the school's policy.

#### **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](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).

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, without approval of the instructor.



### Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies. See the university's site on **Campus Safety and Emergency Preparedness**.

### **Support Systems:**

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

[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](http://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](http://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* [studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](http://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](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://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*

[usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care\\_report](http://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](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.

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

[campussupport.usc.edu](http://campussupport.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](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.

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

[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://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](https://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

*Annenberg Student Success Fund*

<https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/additional-funding-resources>

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.