USC Annenberg

USC Iovine and Young Academy
Arts, Technology and the Business of Innovation

JOUR/ACAD 255: Advancing Journalism with Human-Centered Design
Units: 04
Fall 2020–MW–3:00-4:50pm

Meeting Times: 4 hours of lecture/lab a week
Location: TBD

Instructor: Laura Davis
Office: ANN 205D
Office Hours: By Appointment
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Instructor: Matthew Manos
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IT Help: https://iovine-young.usc.edu/ait/index.html
Hours of Service: 8:30am - 5:00pm
Contact Info: iyhelp@usc.edu, 213-821-6917

Catalogue Description

Employing a human-centered design framework, students research and develop novel solutions to experience, collaboration, and culture issues that pervade newsrooms worldwide.

Course Description

Journalists are bound by a basic mission of the profession: Having an informed and engaged citizenry is a cornerstone of a healthy democracy. The elements comprising the Fourth Estate have undergone a paradigm shift in recent years, though, and the result has been that fewer Americans effectively utilize mainstream news outlets. Although many journalists may consider this a predicament outside their purview, the reality is that we are all duty-bound to solve this problem.

Fortunately, there is a path forward, and it is based on a relatively simple concept: In order to effectively inform the public, journalists must provide information that is useful, relevant and in a format that people actually want to consume. That is easier said than done, however: Newsroom habits and culture often stand in the way, and journalists aren't trained in human-centered methods for solving problems for their audience. This course provides students with the knowledge and skills to ideate solutions that will help improve the coverage that they and their peers provide to the global community.

For the successful news organizations of the future, the principles of product thinking and human-centered design will be part of the fabric of the organization. Putting the audience at the center of each journalistic endeavor is the new path forward. Whether you want to be a reporter or a newsroom developer, your journey to leading the way on that path starts in this class.

Learning Objectives and Outcomes

The goal of this course is for students to learn and apply the principles of human-centered design in a newsroom setting. The Annenberg Media Center, a student-led newsroom, will act as our lab for discovering problems, conducting field research, pitching to stakeholders, getting feedback, iterating and implementing solutions. By the end of this course, still will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the business and product problems that plague journalism
- Apply the fundamentals of human-centered design to journalism, adhering to a process that's aimed at solving problems, not selling solutions
- Adapt fundamental journalistic principles to a new media ecosystem, retaining what's important and leaving behind attitudes, habits and practices that no longer make sense
- Identify design challenges for newsrooms and find solutions by conducting field research, brainstorming, pitching, seeking and incorporating feedback and iterating

Course Notes

This is a hands-on, intensive course that requires participation in class and planning outside of class, as many assignments depend on people not in the course whom you will interview, pitch to and get feedback from. You cannot put off assignments until the night before they are due and should plan to do much of your homework in the Media Center, observing and asking questions.

Prerequisite(s): Open only to News and Information Innovation students, Iovine and Young Academy students, and Journalism students.
Co-Requisite(s): TBD.
Concurrent Enrollment: TBD.
Recommended Preparation: TBD.

Required Materials/Readings
This course is guided by the IDEO guide, which can be downloaded for free at
https://www.designkit.org/resources/1. All other readings will be provided by your professor and are listed
in the week-by-week class breakdown.

Supplemental Materials
In addition to the readings provided as links in the week-by-week schedule and the IDEO guide, you should
be familiar with the news of the day. Please read, view or listen to the daily reports of the news
organizations listed below not only for the news, but also how each platform reports, writes and delivers
the news.

- Los Angeles Times: latimes.com
- The New York Times: nytimes.com
- BuzzFeed News: buzzfeed.com/news
- NBC News: nbcnews.com

Follow @BuzzFeedNews, @AP and @WashingtonPost on Twitter

Download these apps and sign up for push alerts:

- Associated Press
- BuzzFeed News
- New York Times

Watch at least one national and local newscast every day: NBC Nightly News, CBS Evening News, ABC World
News, KABC, KCBS/KCAL, KNBC, KTLA, KTTV

Listen to NPR
KPCC/Southern California Public Radio

Add these news organizations on Instagram and watch their Stories:

- The Guardian
- CNN
- New York Times

In addition to keeping up with the news in detail, staying current on industry trends is vital to this class and
your evolution as a journalist. You should budget time each day to read about industry developments. The
below newsletters come strongly recommended.

Newsletters:

- Pew Research Center Daily Briefing of Media News: http://bit.ly/readthisdaily
- API's Need to Know: http://bit.ly/readAPItoo
- Nieman Lab: http://bit.ly/andniemantoo

Description and Assessment of Assignments
Students should be prepared for roughly 8 hours/week of work outside of the designated class time. The
class relies on readings and lectures in the opening weeks and depends on your critical thinking and
responses to the readings. To further incentive you to do them, there will be quizzes. About a third of the
way through, you will begin assignments that require you to apply the principles and practices of the
human-centered design process to a real-world environment via the Annenberg Media Center. You must
interact with Media Center stakeholders and Annenberg Media audience members to complete your

assignments, and you will be graded on the application of the principles and the thoroughness with which you carry out the practices. A breakdown of the key assignments is provided below:

Annenberg Media Audit: Students will complete a comprehensive audit of Annenberg Media in order to evaluate its coverage and distribution as an audience member. In addition, students will identify areas for improvement. This deliverable will include a written report of 7-10 pages, and must include a visual supplement to the audit, key customer mindsets/profiles, documentation from the audit, and 3-5 direct quotes from interview subjects.

Design Challenge: Using the worksheet in the IDEO guide (p. 165), and informed by the results of your comprehensive audit of Annenberg Media, frame your design challenge. This will be submitted as a 1-page "creative brief".

Field Research: Students will conduct research based on the design challenge. This field work must include both passive and active forms of field research. The field research will be documented and synthesized in 5-7 pages, and must include photographic documentation, a visual map of the space of the field research, and a synthesized report of results.

User Experience Design Strategy Sprint: Students will complete a User Experience (UX) design strategy sprint. The sprint must include a 2-3 page synthesized overview of the process of the sprint along with the following: a user journey map, identified pain points of the end user, and initial strategic recommendations for improvement.

Collaboration Design Strategy Sprint: Students will complete a Collaboration design strategy sprint. The sprint must include a 2-3 page synthesized overview of the process of the sprint along with the following: a completed collaboration canvas, identified pain points of the end user, and initial strategic recommendations for improvement.

Culture Design Strategy Sprint: Students will complete a Culture design strategy sprint. The sprint must include a 2-3 page synthesized overview of the process of the sprint along with the following: a culture statement for the existing Annenberg Media culture and an initial draft of values and a culture statement for the future Annenberg Media culture.

Feedback: Select one of the Design Strategy sprints you have completed, identify 3-5 key stakeholders from Annenberg Media, and present the result of your sprint for feedback. Submit a 1 page overview of the synthesized feedback.

Iteration: Based on the feedback that you have received from the 3-5 key stakeholders, perform an iteration of the solution. Submit a 1 page overview of the iteration, including a description of the concept's evolution and how the evolved work was informed by the results of the feedback assignment.

Final Pitch: Identify newsroom stakeholders from Annenberg Media and prepare a pitch presentation that is tailored to that specific group. The final pitch will include the process of your overall human-centered design work, but will specifically focus on the design strategy sprint, feedback, and iterations. The pitch must be 10 slides and speak to the problem, customer, current experience, and improved experience. Students must present the pitch, and turn in a "leave behind" version that can be read and understood without the students presence.

Final Article: In addition to the final pitch, students must also submit a final article. The article is written to describe the process behind the pitch in greater detail. This submission must be 5-7 pages.

Grading Breakdown

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Annenberg Media Audit	100	10%
Design Challenge	25	2.5%
Field Research	100	10%
User Experience Design Strategy Sprint	75	7.5%
Collaboration Design Strategy Sprint	75	7.5%
Culture Design Strategy Sprint	75	7.5%
Feedback	75	7.5%
Iteration	75	7.5%
Final Pitch	200	20%
Final Article	100	10%
Participation	100	10%
Total	**1,000**	**100%**

Grading Scale
Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

A   95-100
A-   90-94
B+   87-89
B   83-86
B-   80-82
C+   77-79
C   73-76
C-   70-72
D+   67-69
D   63-66
D-   60-62
F   59 and below

Assignment Submission Policy
Unless otherwise noted, all assignments must be submitted as a PDF presentation. For assignments delivered in class (such as presentations), the work must be completed before the commencement of the class session in which the assignment is due. For assignments that are designated for virtual submission, one team member is expected to submit the assignment to Blackboard (unless otherwise specified) by COB (6:00pm) the day the assignment is indicated as due.

Grading Timeline
Grades and feedback for all assignments will be returned to students within one week of submission.

Academy Attendance Policy
The Academy maintains rigorous academic standards for its students and on-time attendance at all class meetings is expected. Each student will be allowed two excused absences over the course of the semester for which no explanation is required. Students are admonished to not waste excused absences on non-critical issues, and to use them carefully for illness or other issues that may arise unexpectedly. Except in the case of prolonged illness or other serious issue (see below), no additional absences will be excused. Each unexcused absence will result in the lowering of the final grade by ⅓ of a grade (e.g., an A will be lowered to A-, and A- will be lowered to a B+, etc.). In addition, being tardy to class will count as one-third of an absence. Three tardies will equal a full course absence.

Students remain responsible for any missed work from excused or unexcused absences. Immediately following an absence, students should contact the instructor to obtain missed assignments or lecture notes and to confirm new deadlines or due dates. Extensions or other accommodations are at the discretion of the instructor.

Automatically excused absences normally many not be used for quiz, exam or presentation days. Using an excused absence for a quiz, exam or presentation, such as in the case of sudden illness or other emergency, is at the discretion of the instructor.

In the case of prolonged illness, family emergencies, or other unforeseen serious issues, the student should contact the instructor to arrange for accommodation. Accommodation may also be made for essential professional or career-related events or opportunities. All accommodations remain at the discretion of the instructor, and appropriate documentation may be required.

Additional Policies
Assignments will be accepted after the deadline with the following grade penalties. Do not ask for extensions; the below are the extensions.

● Submission in the 24 hours after the deadline 10% deduction
● Submission between 24 and 48 hours after the deadline 20% deduction
● Submission between 48 hours and 3 days after the deadline 50% deduction
● Submission more than 3 days after the deadline 100% deduction

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/Due Dates
Week 1	What is the history and nature of journalism's relationship with the audience, and how did the internet change that?	Reading: American Press Institute, "The elements of journalism"; Clay Shirky, "Newspapers and Thinking the Unthinkable"; Peter Hamby, "'The news is dying, but journalism will not': How the media can prevent 2020 from becoming 2016"; James Tyner, "Dear news media: Create news for people who have never read a newspaper"	Pre-semester reading: Joshua Meyrowitz, chs. 3-4 of "No Sense of Place"; Clay Shirky, ch. 3 of "Here Comes Everybody"; Jennifer Brendel, "A serious problem the news industry does not talk about"; Om Malik, "Media's Blame Game"; Emily Bell and Taylor Owen, "The Platform Press: How Silicon Valley reengineered journalism"
Week 2	"The news is dying, but journalism will not": Journalism is fundamentally a set of principles, independent of any particular format. How does format relate to our understanding of what journalism is and how can we challenge that?	Reading: Pew Research Center, "For Local News, Americans Embrace Digital but Still Want Strong Community Connection"; Pew Research Center, "Civic Engagement Strongly Tied to Local News Habits"; Joshua Benton, "Why do some people avoid news? Because they don't trust us — or because they don't think we add value to their lives?"; Medill Local News Initiative, "It's not page views, it's regular habit that matters most for news outlets"; American Press Institute, "Paying for news: Why people subscribe and what it says about the future of journalism (overview)"	Week 1 reading
Week 3	Do people actually read and pay for the news? Not as much as we'd like, but they should. How can you change that?	Reading: Pages 1-58 of IDEO guide: https://www.ideo.org/approach	Week 2 reading

Week 4	How some newsrooms are putting audience-first principles into practice. Who are they serving with their products and what are they leaving out? What other obligations do journalists have? In-class examples: Mindy Marquez and Rich Hirsh, "How recasting the "online producer" job helped the Miami Herald focus on audience and mission"; David Rodriguez, "KPCC studied how to cover the 2020 census so you don't have to"; Kara Bloomgarden-Smoke, "'The New York Times' Focuses on 'Smarter Living'"	Reading: Pages 61-62, 65-66, 71-73 of IDEO guide Harry Backlund, "Is Your Journalism a Luxury or Necessity?"	Week 3 reading
Week 5	Intro to design thinking and human-centered design	Homework: Audit Annenberg Media and evaluate its coverage and distribution as an audience member. Identify areas for improvement.	Week 4 reading
Week 6	How to determine a design challenge; assign challenges from within the Media Center	Homework: Using the worksheet in the IDEO guide (p. 165), frame your design challenge.	Annenberg Media audit
Week 7	How do to field research	Homework: Develop field research questions using IDEO worksheet (p. 166) based on your design challenge	Design challenge
Week 8	Conduct field research (no class)	Conduct field research based on your design challenge and write up your results	Field research questions
Week 9	User Experience Design Strategy Sprint: Students will be given a specific User Experience challenge in the Annenberg Media Newsroom to address.	Homework: Complete the User Experience Design Strategy Sprint.	Field research report

Week 10	Collaborations Design Strategy Sprint: Students will be given a specific Collaboration challenge in the Annenberg Media Newsroom to address.	Homework: Complete the Collaboration Design Strategy Sprint.	UX sprint deliverables
Week 11	Culture Design Strategy Sprint: Students will be given a specific Culture challenge in the Annenberg Media Newsroom to address.	Homework: Complete the Culture Design Strategy Sprint.	Collaboration sprint deliverables
Week 12	Implementation: Getting feedback	Homework: Pick one of your sprints and get feedback from stakeholders	Culture/org design sprint deliverables
Week 13	Implementation: Iterating	Homework: Iterate upon the results of your sprint by incorporating feedback	Feedback
Week 14	Implementation: Pitching	Homework: Identify newsroom stakeholders and prepare a pitch presentation Reading: Ch. 1 of Diffusion of Innovations (Rogers)	Iteration
Week 15	Mock pitches	Refine your pitch and continue to practice; invite stakeholders to pitch session. Write an article about your project.	Pitch deck and stakeholders
FINAL EXAM	Present your pitch		

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 Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call
engemannshc.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
https://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault/
 Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services provides immediate therapy services for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (e.g., sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking). (wording from the site)

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) | Title IX - (213) 740-5086
equity.usc.edu, 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.

USC Policy Reporting to Title IX (213) 740-5086
https://policy.usc.edu/reporting-to-title-ix-student-misconduct/
The university encourages individuals to report prohibited conduct to the *Title IX Office*. Individuals can report to the university *Title IX Coordinator* in the *Office of Equity and Diversity.*

Bias Assessment Response and Support - (213) 740-2421
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
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 Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710
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
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.