**DSM 596: CAPSTONE**

4 Units

**Summer 2021 – Tuesdays – 6:00-10:10 PM**

**Section:** 21786

**Location:** Online

**Instructor: Freddy Tran Nager**

**Office Hours:** Monday & Friday afternoons by appointment

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

**I. Course Description**

To culminate your DSM experience, you will plan and develop a digital project of your choice, along with an online campaign plan to promote it. Projects may take the form of a platform (website or app), creative-content series (such as a vlog or podcast), digital publication (white paper or e-book), or strictly a campaign. You may work solo or with Capstone classmates.

The project should reflect topics and techniques you acquired in the DSM program, while also drawing on in-depth research and your creativity. Just as importantly, it must provide real value to you or to others — no "throwaway projects" or hypothetical clients/products.

The final project should feature professional-level production quality for presentation online and to key stakeholders.

**II. Learning Outcomes**

Over the course of 12 weeks, you will acquire expertise and experience in the following:

* Critically analyzing the market and key stakeholders.
* Substantiating all choices and decisions with authoritative research.
* Defining goals and KPI's to gauge the project's short- and long-term performance.
* Fully developing a digital project with professional-level production quality.
* Planning an online campaign to promote the project.

**III. Course Structure**

The course will be split between Zoom and Blackboard. We will meet weekly on Zoom for status updates, student presentations (with an emphasis on speaking), and class discussions. On Blackboard, you will share your progress and provide constructive recommendations to your classmates. Multiple graded assignments will help keep your project on track.

**IV. Project Options**

Choose one of the following digital projects.

* **White Paper/Research Paper:** Write an analytical report for professionals or professors that provides insights into digital social media based on your in-depth research. The paper should be approximately 50 pages and feature strong graphics and design.
* **E-book:** Write an e-book of at least 50 pages and publish it on Amazon. The book may cover any topic, but must draw on in-depth research. It can be substantially more creative in style and content than a white paper.
* **Platform:** Create a website or app prototype for transactions or interactions, such as ecommerce, gaming, or socializing, to name a few. It may not be a personal resumé or portfolio site, but it may serve a company, charity, or cause. Websites must be built using WordPress, Joomla, or Drupal; apps must be prototyped on Thunkable; either must include a brand guideline and user policies.
* **Campaign:** Plan and launch a campaign using social networks, influencers, e-newsletters, crowdfunding platforms, and/or other digital media to solve a problem or achieve a goal on behalf of a company, charity, or cause.
* **Content Series:** Create a series of digital media — videos, podcasts, articles, etc. — on one topic, and post the series on the platforms of your choice. Series must comprise at least 5 items, each a minimum 500 words or 10 minutes (for TikTok, create 10 videos).

In addition, for every project but the campaign, you must plan a supplemental online campaign to promote it. This plan should include a schedule, allocated hours, budgets, KPI's, and goals.

**No "Throwaway Projects":** Your project must be based on real subjects — no hypothetical companies or products. In addition, it should have lasting value for you or another party, and be something you will proudly share on LinkedIn and with clients, employers, or investors.

**V. Assignments**

The following are brief summaries; complete instructions will be posted on Blackboard.

* **Reading Discussion** (5 points)**:** Analyze the assigned reading, *Amaze*, on Blackboard.
* **Idea** (10 points): Describe your project, its purpose, and a SMART goal.
* **Research** (10 points): Identify at least 20 authoritative sources (a combination of primary and secondary, with expert interviews strongly encouraged) to support the following analyses, which you will do in your next assignment.
  + **PEST Landscape Analysis** — political, economic, social, and technological factors and trends that could support or impede your project
  + **Stakeholders Analysis** — customers, competitors, company insiders, and other members of your community, with extra emphasis on user.
* **Plan** (25 points): Conduct PEST and stakeholders analyses using your research. Based on your key findings, write an overall project plan, guidelines, and content scripts/outlines. In addition, plan a campaign to promote your project with dates, media, messages, budgets, KPI's, and a SMART goal.
* **Project** (40 points): Develop and launch your final project.
* **Peer Review** (10 points):Provide constructive criticism to classmates, not just praise. Your feedback will be evaluated based on quality and quantity.

**VI. Grading**

**a. Breakdown of Grade**

| Assignment | Points | % of Grade |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Reading Discussion | 5 | 5 |
| Idea | 10 | 10 |
| Research | 10 | 10 |
| Plan | 25 | 25 |
| Project | 40 | 40 |
| Peer Review | 10 | 10 |
| **TOTAL** |  | **100%** |

**b. Grading Scale**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 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**

* A's and A-minuses must be earned by "going the extra mile" to produce professional-caliber work that could be presented to a client, employer, or investor. A-level work features high production quality with no mistakes, draws on in-depth research of authoritative sources, reflects strong understanding of course/program materials, and demonstrates high-level creativity, critical thinking, and communication skills. Recommendations will be provided on request only to students who earn a solid A.
* B's are awarded for graduate-school caliber work featuring in-depth research of authoritative sources, critical thinking, and strong understanding of course/program materials. The ideas and production quality would need to be stronger to succeed in a professional context.
* C's are given to undergraduate-caliber work, reflecting insufficient critical thinking, superficial research, and/or flawed production quality.
* D's and lower are given to amateurish work, marked by insufficient research, many errors, incomplete sections, and/or superficial analysis.
* F's are meted out to work that shows little understanding of course/program materials, little to no research, poor writing, and/or plagiarized sections. Note that plagiarism may also be subject to disciplinary measures.

**d. Grading Rubrics**

Assignments will be graded on the following criteria, without a fixed percentage, since unacceptable quality in any one area (writing, research, etc.) can undermine an entire project. Conversely, exceptional quality in one area may contribute to an overall positive impression.

* **Critical Thinking:** In communication there are few right answers: so-called "best practices" that work for one entity might fail for another — or even for the same entity at another time. Consequently, graduate students should not just answer the questions; they should also question the answers, including any methods and data. (Academic journal articles are not immune from critical analysis.) Assignments must describe "why" and "how," not just "what," and will be evaluated on the quality of the reasoning.
* **Professional Writing and Presentation:** All work should be treated as submissions to a professional publication or awards show. All errors should be eliminated by proofreading meticulously, using Microsoft spelling and grammar check, and/or Grammarly.com (recommended). For help with fluency or simply polishing work, contact Annenberg's Graduate Writing Coach: <http://cmgtwriting.uscannenberg.org/>
* **Research and References:** No guessing, generalizations, or stereotypes (including such demographic stereotypes such as "Millennials") — all work must be supported by research from authoritative sources, such as academic journals, major news publications, and credible experts. Please vet your sources. Guidelines:
  + Start with the USC online library and consult the USC librarian.
  + Go beyond third-party sources. Conduct focus groups, surveys, and interviews, particularly of subject-matter experts.
  + Never cite Wikipedia; rather, refer to the sources listed in the Wikipedia article.
  + The body of papers must include reference notes, either parenthetical, such as (Duffy 2017), or in the form of footnotes.
  + Bibliography entries must include COMPLETE source information, not just a URL. Chicago Style preferred (<https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org>), but you may use any format that includes ALL the following: COMPLETE author names (not just the last name and first initial — please respect authors), article/chapter titles, the name of the publication, dates of publication, original URLs (not USC library), and the dates a particular website was accessed.
* **Application and Execution:** Work will also be assessed on the accuracy of statements and data, and how well various frameworks and tools are applied.
* **Creativity:** A-level work features distinctive ideas and strategic approaches, as well as inspired writing, design, and technical production in creative samples.

**VII. Readings**

Required:

* *Amaze: The Art of Creating Magical Experiences* by Ferdinando Buscema & Mariano Tomatis
* *Copyediting With An Attitude* by Freddy Tran Nager (provided free in class)

The following are not required but highly recommended:

* *Made To Stick* by Chip Heath & Dan Heath
* *Platform Revolution* by Geoffrey Parker, et al
* *UX Strategy* (Second Edition) by Jaime Levy (available in the USC Library)
* *Presentation Zen* (Third Edition) by Garr Reynolds (available in the USC Library)
* Moz, "Beginner's Guide To Content Marketing," <https://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-content-marketing>

Digital development resources:

* WordPress Support, <https://wordpress.com/support/>
* Google Web Fundamentals, <https://developers.google.com/web>
* Annenberg Digital Lounge, <http://annenbergdl.com>

**VIII. Course Schedule**

Class 1, May 25: Introductions

* goal setting
* presentation tips
* assignment: read *Copyediting With An Attitude*
* assignment: read *Amaze*, pages 15-105, and share your analysis on Blackboard
* assignment: project idea presented in class next week

Class 2, June 1: Research

* project idea presentations
* assignment: read *Amaze*, pages 107-211, and share your analysis on Blackboard
* assignment: research plan presented in class next week

Class 3, June 8: Analysis

* research plan presentations
* PEST and stakeholders
* assignment: project plan drafts presented in class June 22 & 29; final project plans uploaded to Blackboard July 6

Class 4, June 15: Planning

* budgeting
* scheduling

Class 5, June 22: Plan Presentations, Part 1

Class 6, June 29: Plan Presentations, Part 2

Class 7, July 6: Updates

* final project plans due on Blackboard
* assignment: project beta versions shared on Blackboard July 20

Class 8, July 13: Updates

Class 9, July 20: Project Peer Reviews

* no Zoom meeting; share and discuss project beta versions on Blackboard
* assignment: final projects submitted and presented August 10

Class 10, July 27: Updates

Class 11, August 3: Updates

Class 12, August 10: Final project presentations

**IX. Policies And Procedures**

* **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/](http://click.comms.usc.edu/?qs=0fbd1ed553faac6309c6c676c4b7fb7169a0e3ad65fcffb1b6b2d167364cd09ac325cca46bb3f3be790f29a94981a857259b347c1291f314)). These rules will be strictly enforced, and violations will be met with the appropriate disciplinary sanction.
* **Attendance:** You are encouraged to attend every class, arrive on time, and stay for the entire class. This is the best way to engage with the course and keep up to date with class activities and assignments. Should you need to miss a class, notify the instructor in advance (except, of course, in the case of emergencies). You are responsible for obtaining what you missed from recorded Zoom sessions, classmates, and Blackboard.
* **Zoom etiquette**: Although you are not obligated to turn your camera on, we highly recommend it. Wear appropriate clothing and use appropriate backgrounds. Keep your microphone off except for discussion or questions. Also, *be present*: all phones must be turned off and put away in class and team meetings. Try to avoid interactions with housemates during class; if such interactions are unavoidable, step away from your camera (or turn it off). You may eat during class, but not when guest speakers are presenting; however, you may not consume alcohol immediately before or during class.
* **Electronics:** All Annenberg students must have a computer for accessing classes. Refer to the [**Annenberg Digital Lounge**](http://www.annenbergdl.org/) for more information. To connect to USC’s Secure Wireless network, visit USC’s [Information Technology Services](http://itservices.usc.edu/wireless/support/). Phones may not be used for any activity other than Zoom during class.
* **Respect:** Treat classmates, the instructor, and speakers with courtesy. You may certainly question ideas — that is encouraged in the learning environment — but never criticize the person. 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 deserve respect. For this reason, you must respect the opinion of others, regardless of how much you disagree.
* **Appointments:** If you have questions or concerns, whether academic, career, or personal, you should contact the instructor to arrange a meeting time by email (fnager@usc.edu). In emergencies, please see the support systems below.
* **Returning to campus**: Although we are starting the semester with online instruction only, conditions may improve, and courses listed as hybrid will give an opportunity to students to attend class in person. This will happen only by following the strictest health guidelines and safety protocols on the [Trojans Return](https://coronavirus.usc.edu/students/) page.

**Academic Conduct**

* *Plagiarism:* 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](https://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).
* *USC School of Journalism Policy on Academic Integrity:* The following is the USC Annenberg School of Journalism’s policy on academic integrity and repeated in the syllabus for every course in the school:

“Since its founding, the USC School of Journalism has maintained a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found plagiarizing, fabricating, cheating on examinations, and/or purchasing papers or other assignments faces sanctions ranging from an ‘F’ on the assignment to dismissal from the School of Journalism. All academic integrity violations will be reported to the office of Student Judicial Affairs & Community Standards (SJACS), as per university policy, as well as journalism school administrators.”

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 or Learning Lab, without approval of the instructor.

**VIII. Support Systems**

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

[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](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](http://www.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 and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call*

[studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](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](https://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](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](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](https://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](https://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](http://dps.usc.edu/)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

*USC American Language Institute*

[ali.usc.edu](https://ali.usc.edu/)

English language instruction, assessment, and resources to support the academic and professional success of non-native speakers of English pursuing degrees at USC.

**X. Capstone Instructor**

Freddy Tran Nager has over three decades of business experience, including 27 years in digital media. In 1994, he served as Editor of one of the web's first entertainment sites, *AMP: MCA Records Online*. He subsequently joined ad agency Saatchi & Saatchi as Senior Copywriter on Toyota interactive media. He has since worked on numerous digital campaigns and projects for a diverse array of clients, from startups to Fortune 500 companies, charities to influencers. Freddy founded and currently runs the marketing-and-media consultancy Atomic Tango LLC ([https://atomictango.com](https://atomictango.com/)). A second-generation Trojan, he received his MBA from USC and his BA from Harvard, and has taught graduate courses at Annenberg since Fall 2012. He welcomes connections on LinkedIn at [FreddyNager.com](http://www.freddynager.com).