



**PR 351B: Strategic Public Relations Media  
and Content  
4 Units**

**Fall 2021 – Wednesdays – 3-6:20 p.m.**

**Section:** 21205D

**Location:** ANN 308

**Instructor: Jenn de la Fuente**

**Office Hours:** By appointment only. You may schedule office hours at <https://calendly.com/jrosebud>

Office hours can be conducted via Zoom.

**Contact Info:** [jdelafue@usc.edu](mailto:jdelafue@usc.edu), cell (916) 538-2133

(Please do not call or text my cell phone on weekends or late at night.)

### **Course Description**

In this class, we will examine media that is created and published by today's public relations practitioner. New platforms have enabled brands, organizations and individuals to become publishers and directly engage their audiences. This class examines strategies and tactics needed to be an effective publisher including digital content created for social and owned media channels.

This course is designed to teach students about the array of public relations tools available to them, with particular emphasis on writing, digital content creation and production of communications collateral. Students will be exposed to audience research and segmentation, social media and digital communications writing, multi-media content creation, feature writing, newsletter preparation, basic principles of design, writing for the ear, creating and making presentations and brainstorming. Case histories will illuminate the use of these tools and examples of materials will be used extensively throughout the course. This is a lab course; a great deal of hands-on activities such as writing, graphic design, video production and oral presentations will be assigned.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

Students will leave this course prepared to:

- Research, write and edit professional-quality social media content, videos, newsletters, and PR controlled content for external and internal audiences.
- Execute basic promotional video production for product demonstrations, crisis response and other PR driven scenarios.
- Execute basic design and layout; understand design software.
- Produce visual elements such as photos, graphics, infographics, special effects and motion graphics.
- Identify and communicate with an array of audiences.

### **Course Elements**

In-class writing, content creation and video production assignments

- Take-home writing and content creation assignments
- Midterm
- Final project
- Participation
- Reading

## Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Reading assignments will be posted to Blackboard throughout the semester, along with handouts and other readings.

## Description and Assessment of Assignments

In addition to take-home and in-class writing and design assignments, there will be a midterm and a final project. There will also be weekly group presentations as described below.

### *Case study presentations*

Students are encouraged to read the weekly trade publications AdWeek and PRWeek, or spend time observing PR campaigns in whatever field they are interested in. Each student will be required to present an analysis and critique of brand storytelling campaigns either from those publications or based on a current campaign of your choosing. The presentations will be done by two students each week starting on week 3. The presentation should be at least 5 minutes long and include:

- Summary of the campaign
- Thoughts on the strategy and target audiences
- Campaign messaging/storytelling
- Discussion of all campaign elements including breaking down the production
- Overall critique and suggested changes

## Grading

### a. Breakdown of Grade

| Assignment  | % of Grade  |
|---|-------------|
| Video Projects  | 15%         |
| Assignments   | 20%         |
| Midterm   | 20%         |
| Class Participation (includes in-class assignments and discussions) | 10%         |
| Final Project   | 35%         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>100%</b> |

### b. Grading Scale

|                |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 95% to 100%: A | 80% to 83%: B- | 67% to 69%: D+ |
| 90% to 94%: 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” projects** have writing near professional quality; one or no mistakes; clearly proofread and edited material. All required elements included (catchy headline, solid lead, varied vocabulary; supporting facts/figures; quotes as required). Excellent organization and flow; original thinking. Showed creativity in packaging/distribution method. High end of scale: publishable today as is.

**“B” projects** have two to five spelling, grammar or AP Style mistakes. One or more required elements missing or poorly displayed (i.e., boring headline; confusing lead, etc.). Shows potential as a good writer. Adhered to inverted pyramid. High end of scale will have at least one extraordinary element such as astonishing lead or little-known facts or pithy quote. Some creativity shown. Publishable with medium editing.

**“C” projects** have more than five errors (spelling, grammar, AP style). Poorly edited and/or proofread. May have adhered to inverted pyramid but strayed at beginning or end. Hackneyed elements such as trite headline or uninteresting lead. Little or no facts/figures included. Passive rather than active verbs become the norm. Little or no creativity shown. Publishable with major editing.

**“D” projects** have more than 10 errors (spelling, grammar). Needs to be completely rewritten. Poorly organized with little or no understanding of journalistic style/standards. Needs to work with writing coach.

**“F” projects** are not rewritable, late or not turned in.

### d. Grading Timeline

Assignments will be graded and returned within two weeks from the time they were turned in. All feedback will be sent to the student via e-mail. Allow about two to three weeks for feedback from your final project.

### Assignment Submission Policy

A. All assignments are due on the dates specified. Lacking prior discussion and agreement with the instructor, late assignments will automatically be dropped one grade (10 points). Assignments that are two weeks late will be dropped two grades (20 points). No late assignments will be accepted after two weeks and are an automatic zero.

B. Assignments must be submitted via email or Blackboard. Your instructor will provide instructions on how to submit your assignments.

### Laptop Policy

All undergraduate and graduate Annenberg majors and minors are required to have a PC or Apple laptop that can be used in Annenberg classes. Please refer to the [Annenberg Digital Lounge](#) for more information. To connect to USC's Secure Wireless network, please visit USC's [Information Technology Services](#) website.

### Add/Drop Dates for Session 001 (15 weeks: 8/23/21 – 12/3/21)

Link: <https://classes.usc.edu/term-20213/calendar/>

**Friday, September 10:** Last day to register and add classes for Session 001

**Friday, September 10:** Last day to change enrollment option to Pass/No Pass or Audit for Session 001

**Friday, September 10:** Last day to purchase or waive tuition refund insurance for fall

**Tuesday, September 14:** Last day to add or drop a Monday-only class without a mark of “W” and receive a refund or change to Pass/No Pass or Audit for Session 001

**Friday, October 8:** Last day to drop a course without a mark of “W” on the transcript for Session 001. Mark of “W” will still appear on student record and STARS report and tuition charges still apply. [Please drop any course by the end of week three (or the 20 percent mark of the session) to avoid tuition charges.]

**Friday, October 8:** Last day to change pass/no pass to letter grade for Session 001. [All major and minor courses must be taken for a letter grade.]

**Friday, November 12:** Last day to drop a class with a mark of “W” for Session 001

**Important note to students:** *Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change - and probably will change - based on the progress of the class, news events, and/or guest speaker availability.*

### **Week 1 – August 25 – Presentation of Syllabus; Overview of Class Projects**

The syllabus will be presented along with the course description and expectations. We will explore what content creation means for today’s public relations practitioner, how and when it is used, and what forms we will be addressing in class. There will be an overview of final term projects and a quick writing assignment.

Also, we will talk about the importance of storytelling and telling a good story. What makes a story compelling?

**In-class assignment:** Write about your favorite food. Why is it your favorite food? Does it have a special meaning, a sentimental story, or a cultural or family significance? This will be a timed assignment, about 10-15 minutes.

**Homework assignment:** Write a resume cover letter convincing me why you are the ideal candidate for my entry-level job opening. Assume that the employer (me) has reviewed your resume and is deciding whether or not to interview you. How will you introduce yourself with the written word? How will your cover page stand out from the many in my email box? What will get me to read yours? (This will not be given a letter grade; you will get credit for class participation upon turning this assignment in.)

Also, bring to the next session an example of a piece of content you consider to be “well written.” You should be prepared to discuss why you believe your chosen piece is well written. **PLEASE NOTE: you are not doing a big report; I am looking for a general discussion of content, but your comments should center on those elements that led to your choosing this piece.**

### **Week 2 – September 1 – What Constitutes “Well Written?”**

This class will examine the fundamentals of good writing. Is it an exact science? Do we adhere to the strict “inverted pyramid” format you learned in 209 and 351a? The structure of good storytelling will be examined for long-form content, blog posts, and short social media content. Each student will present her/ his selected piece of content from the homework assignment and explain why he/she considers it to be well written. From that discussion, we’ll devise the *Tenants of Good Writing* for this course.

**In-class writing assignment:** In small groups, critique your classmates’ cover letters and offer suggestions.

**Homework assignment:** Rewrite your cover letter and incorporate the feedback from your classmates and from your instructor.

Also, find and bring to next session a piece of content from any source of controlled media.

### **Week 3 – September 8 – Know Thy Audience**

**\*\*CASE STUDY PRESENTATIONS BEGIN!\*\***

Discussion of last week's in-class writing assignment. To be effective writers and content creators, it is important to understand who you are communicating to and their demographic characteristics. Students will learn how to research and segment audiences.

We'll explore how GenZ, GenY, GenX differ from Baby Boomers; how age, ethnicity, gender, geography, sexual orientation and culture factor into messaging; and which audiences you will likely encounter in conducting public relations efforts in the field.

***In-class assignment:*** Working in assigned teams, utilize one of the team members' content from the homework assignment to dissect that piece of content's specific audience and present your findings to the class.

***Homework:*** Taking the piece of content you brought to class, identify the audience it targets. Then, rewrite the headline and main structure of the copy to take the same content/topic and target it to a completely different audience. You will be asked to hand in the original content in next week's class.

Find and bring to the next class a persuasive article.

#### **Week 4 – September 15 – Feature and Persuasive Writing and the Power of the Word**

Review last week's in-class assignment and compare and contrast how audiences were addressed in the content you selected. The written word is very powerful. It can shape *and change* minds. Persuasive writing can initiate action and change. Persuasive, well-written ideas are the essence of multi-media content. We will first review some of the examples of persuasive writing that you brought to class and discuss what makes them – and other forms of communication – persuasive. Also, building on the principles learned in 351A, we will discuss the nuances of feature writing. We'll discuss human-interest articles, editorial and opinion pieces, humor, irony and an array of feature writing techniques.

***In-class assignment:*** Practice writing strong, compact persuasive copy: develop three to five messages (about two to four sentences in length) for two separate organizations identified by the instructor.

***Homework assignment:*** Write a 400-word persuasive article on a topic of your choice. Also, bring an example of a well-written company blog post to class.

#### **Week 5 – September 22 – Online accessibility / Writing content for online and social media.**

Did you know that a large portion of internet content is inaccessible to people with disabilities? Disabilities aren't limited to things like deafness or blindness – they can be temporary (like a broken hand that renders you unable to use a keyboard, or the classic situation where you're in a room where you can't turn your volume on and you don't have headphones on hand). We'll discuss the importance of making your content web accessible, not only on websites but also on social media. Our guest speaker is an expert on web accessibility and will offer tips and insight on alt text, best practices for videos, and other things you may not have been aware of.

We will review the differences between writing that is meant to live online vs. traditional writing consumed in the physical world. Emphasis will be on content and overall design, with some very basic review of technical challenges and requirements. TikTok, Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat stories, Instagram and IG Stories, and other social media and online platforms play an important role in communications. We'll examine an array of digital communications to find out what works and what doesn't. We will examine how different organizations – non-profits, consumer brands, advocacy groups – use social

media platforms to achieve strategic PR goals. We will explore purpose, audience and voice of social media engagement across different platforms and organization sectors.

**Guest speaker:** Alexa Heinrich, web accessibility expert, therealalexa.com

***In-class assignment:*** Practice writing short Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and blog posts for the assigned organizations. Posts must include original content, curated links and multi-media embeds. Also, bring an example of a newsletter to class. It can be an electronic or printed.

### **Week 6 – September 29 – Controlled Media: Newsletters and Brochures**

Due to digital advances in both production and printing, online newsletters and brochures are thriving. What are they? Why do they work? Who reads them? When don't they work? How are the digital consumption habits changing the style and content of newsletters and brochures? We will review the newsletters you brought to class and discuss them as a group. We will discuss the fundamentals of newsletter design, layout and distribution.

***In-class writing assignment:*** Create an online newsletter article. Audience and topic: TBD.

***\* Be prepared discuss the details for your final project during this class session.***

### **Week 7 – October 6 – Midterm**

Speed is of the essence sometimes in PR. The world we live in requires practitioners to be able to develop content and get it out quickly across many platforms, since conversations, promotions, and crisis occur in real time.

Part 1 - write a 450-word feature on a subject to be assigned by the instructor.

Part 2 - write a 30, 110- and 220-word count versions of the feature.

### **Week 8 – October 13 – Principles of Layout and Design – InDesign Tutorial**

This session was developed to help you communicate with professional designers in the language they understand and to prepare you for working with them.

***In-class workshop:*** We will learn some of the basic elements of design during this hands-on workshop. You'll learn InDesign, how to import photos/images, work with text and how to select and use color. You will design do a mock design in class.

### **Week 9 – October 20 – Design, Continued**

There are various programs out there that help you with design, such as Canva and Adobe Spark. But if you find you're starting to see some of the same graphics over and over again because these programs are in heavy use, you'll have to learn some basics in Photoshop and Illustrator (or similar paid programs, such as the Affinity Designer suite). We'll go over some basics in both these programs to help you step up your design game and make simple graphics.

***In-class assignment:*** The annual Relevance Report from the USC Center for Public Relations identifies emerging issues and forecasts topics and trends impacting society, business, and communications in the coming year. The lecture features and highlights the report from PR industry leaders, and USC

academics. Write and design a piece that showcases the top 5-7 takeaways from the 2021 Relevance Report.

### **Week 10 – October 27 – Data Visualization**

During this class session, we also will explore visual literacy and we will discuss and understand why it is important to visualize data and how best to apply the various tools used to do it.

***In-class assignment:*** We will design an infographic in small groups.

***Homework assignment:*** Create an infographic on a topic of your choosing.

### **Week 11 – November 3 – Video Production I: Storyboarding**

For this class session, we will begin our module on Video Production by starting with the storyboard. Most PR videos don't just evolve; they are based on careful planning. Students will be given a scenario and will work in groups of two to draft a video script.

***In-class assignment:*** You'll create a storyboard with a classmate.

***Homework assignment:*** Finalize your video script and be prepared to produce the video in the next class.

***Homework:*** Work on your term project. Review sections from online iMovie video tutorials on both on LinkedIn Learning and on AnnenbergDL.org

### **Week 12 – November 10 – Video Production II. Shooting**

This class we will demonstrate video shooting techniques and present an array of equipment and tools for shooting video with your smart phone!

**Guest speakers:** TBD

***Homework assignment:*** You will create a short video based on the script you planned in the previous class.

### **Week 13 – November 17 – Web/digital considerations**

At some point, you'll have to manage a client's site or create one on your own. What are the best ways to manage this? We'll build upon the ideas you learned in 351a and consider other ways to build a digital presence. Also, if you want to create a portfolio for yourself, how should you go about doing it and what should go in it?

### **Week 14 – November 24 – NO CLASS**

Enjoy your Thanksgiving holiday!

### **Week 15 – December 1 – Bringing it all together**

Open lab, planning for final project.

**Homework:** Continue development of final project. Finalize your term project.

## **Final Exam Period – Monday, December 13, 2-4 p.m. – Presentation of Term Projects & Final Term Projects Due**

### **Policies and Procedures**

#### **Additional Policies**

If you must miss a class, please give ample notice to your instructor via email. You will be responsible for catching up on any missed material and make any arrangements you need to catch up in class.

No late assignments will be accepted unless you have a medical emergency or other excused absence. Documentation for any excused absence must be provided.

#### **Communication**

Please make sure to check your USC email regularly. It will be the primary means of communication between you and your instructor. If you have any questions, please feel free to email your instructor or come speak to your instructor before or after class or make an appointment.

#### **Internships**

The value of professional internships as part of the overall educational experience of our students has long been recognized by the School of Journalism. Accordingly, while internships are not required for successful completion of this course, any student enrolled in this course that undertakes and completes an approved, non-paid internship during this semester shall earn academic extra credit herein of an amount equal to 1 percent of the total available semester points for this course. To receive instructor approval, a student must request an internship letter from the Annenberg Career Development Office and bring it to the instructor to sign by the end of the third week of classes. The student must submit the signed letter to the media organization, along with the evaluation form provided by the Career Development Office. The form should be filled out by the intern supervisor and returned to the instructor at the end of the semester. No credit will be given if an evaluation form is not turned into the instructor by the last day of class. Note: The internship must be unpaid and can only be applied to one journalism or public relations class.

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

#### **a. 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](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).

##### *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.



## **b. 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 and 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. 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. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

*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 Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710*

[uscса.usc.edu](http://uscса.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.

### **About Your Instructor**

Jenn de la Fuente is a web developer with a graphic design background. She has run her own business, Rosebud Designs, since 2009 and developed a variety of print and web collateral for a range of clients, from nonprofits to small businesses. Her specialty is creating custom WordPress websites, and she has teamed up with other design firms and design businesses to create solutions for clients such as Invisible People, Rancho La Puerta, Heal the Bay, 826 Los Angeles, and 826 National. Before starting her business, Jenn worked in sports journalism as a reporter, copy editor, page designer, and web producer for a variety of newspapers: the Orange County Register, The News Journal (Wilmington, Delaware), and The Sacramento Bee. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Print Journalism from USC Annenberg, graduating in 2000, and has taught at Annenberg since 2014. She is an avid sports fan, longtime Trojan football season ticket-holder, a huge L.A. Kings fan, as well as a hockey player and curler.