



DSM 596: Capstone Project

4 Units

Spring 2021 – Tuesdays – 6:30 – 9.20pm

Section: 21890

Location: ASC 331 and ONLINE (HYBRID)

(See Blackboard for Zoom link and password)

Instructor: Dr. Morten Bay

Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:00am-12.45pm

(Signing up for office hours is required. Please go to

<https://bay-usc.youcanbook.me> to sign up.)

Office hours meeting link: <https://usc.zoom.us/j/8092941798>

Individual project meetings are held outside office hours.

Contact Info: mortench@usc.edu

Course Description

In this project course, you will use the skills and knowledge you have acquired during your time in the DSM program to develop and produce a product, a campaign, a report or a research paper in the digital/social media space. The process includes pitching, conceptualization, launching/publishing, and evaluation of the final project. You will also be briefly introduced to the art of project management. 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.

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 stakeholder 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-execute level, including realistic success criteria
- Bring a project to full execution
- Evaluate the success of the project post-execution according to previously specified criteria

Policies and Procedures

A respectful learning environment

This class consists of students with diverse identities from a very wide range of backgrounds and cultures. Intellectual freedom is a priority in class discussions, but **any form of sexism, racism, xenophobia, homophobia, ableism or other forms of discriminatory behavior on the basis of**

gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability 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 out in class sessions on these grounds. If done in a respectful manner, this will **not diminish** your standing in class, but **will improve it**.

Please see below for instructions on how to contact the Office of Equity and Diversity, the Title IX Office, The Office of Disability Services and Programs and how to report incidents of harassment and/or bias.

Pronouns and names

You have an absolute right to demand that your chosen pronouns are respected. Since it is still not standard to list preferred pronouns on university rosters, please enable your instructor to respect any specific pronoun choices by submitting this information via email before classes start or as early as possible after that. Your instructor's pronouns are He/him/his.

If your preferred name does not match the name in the university's registration system, please inform your instructor in a similar manner.

Faith/Belief-based accommodations

Please inform your instructor as early as possible if the suggested schedule in this syllabus conflicts with your faith or belief system so accommodations can be made.

Honoring Native Lands

By participating in this course, you implicitly accept the land acknowledgment below. If you are not comfortable with this for any reason, please notify your instructor as quickly as possible.

This course acknowledges the Gabrielino-Tongva peoples as the traditional land caretakers of Tovaangar (the Los Angeles basin and So. Channel Islands), and pays respect to the Honuukvetam (Ancestors), 'Ahihirom (Elders) and 'Eyoohiinkem (our relatives/relations) past, present and emerging. Along with the Tongva, we also recognize the Chumash, Tataviam, Serrano, Cahuilla, Juaneno, and Luiseno People, for the land that USC also occupies around Southern California. The course is taught in respectful consideration of the many legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and settlement that preceded its establishment as an opportunity for students.

Communication

Feel free to email me anytime with any concerns or questions. Please allow for 24 hours response time on weekdays, 48 hours on weekends. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, I am more inundated with emails than usual. If you have NOT heard back from me within 48 hours of sending your email, it may have been caught by an overzealous spam filter or drowned in a

sudden wave of unrelated email, and you should follow up with me. Also feel free to use any DM mechanism on the social media accounts mentioned above, however I make no guarantees for response time on those.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

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

Description and Assessment of Assignments

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

1. **Project proposal (due 9/28)**
2. **Project presentation and/or submission (due 11/30 - TBC)**
3. **Project evaluation report (due 12/9)**

Project Proposal (Due 9/28) is a paper with a maximum length of 5 pages (including references, front matter etc.) that 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 2/23 – SO START THINKING ABOUT IT NOW. YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO SWITCH PROJECTS AFTER 2/23!

Project Presentation and/or submission (Due 11/30 - TBC)

On 11/30 (TBC), you will have the opportunity to present your project to the rest of the class and a panel of invited professors and industry professionals. This is voluntary, but is a good opportunity for feedback, particularly if you wish to continue working on your project after the course ends, but also to improve your evaluation report. Please note that the originality of your idea and/or its success at launch, will **NOT** influence your grade to any large extent. It is the presentation, planning and potential execution 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.

For those of you who choose to conduct a research project or write a report, it is also the execution and the process that you will be graded on but note that because this option requires a lot of writing, there will be less required of your evaluation paper.

Project Evaluation (Due 12/9) In the project evaluation paper, you will reflect on what you have learned from the process of bringing your project or report into existence, and how it relates to the skills and knowledge you have acquired through the DSM program. You will hold up your project's achievements to the criteria you set in the project description and reflect on why the final execution 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. Please note that requirements such as length and format for the evaluation report depends on your project and will be determined through discussions with the instructor.

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.

What type of Capstone project can I do?

Below are some suggestions for projects in several categories with some subcategories. 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 your projects must be obtained directly from the instructor and that such approval is at the instructor's discretion.

While not able to closely monitor your project throughout the entire process, the instructor's job is to be your guide, steering you around obstacles that cannot be circumvented within the time frame of the course and enabling as many as your ambitions as possible. The decision about what project you wish to pursue should therefore be made after individual consultation with the instructor.

Reports

Research project

For those of you who are more curious than creative and might be interested in taking an academic route (such as a Ph.D. or a research job) after graduation, it is possible 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. Your project deliverable will be an academic paper aimed at publication in a journal, which can improve your chances of acceptance into, for example, a Ph.D. program, or land a job in research. You will still have to write a brief evaluation paper about the process, but the requirements will be less than for those who are not writing papers or reports. If this has your interest, reach out to your instructor who will serve as an academic advisor and guide you through the entire process. Try to do so as early in the semester as possible, preferably even before classes start.

White paper / Industry report / Policy brief

You may also engage in efforts similar to the ones described under "Research paper" to produce an Industry report, white paper or a policy brief. The same conditions apply, but your paper will be

focused on industry matters. The target audience would be executives in need of information about a given subject or find themselves in a policy decision process. You will be required to present a finalized product, which includes considerations of graphical layout, infographics, etc. The report 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. Any deviations from this rule are at the instructor's discretion and must be approved **before the due date for the project proposal**.

Products

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 the WordPress CMS (not Wordpress.com) to make support from your instructor as effective as possible. 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 to make support from your instructor as effective as possible. Note that it is NOT recommended to design the app in Adobe xD, as exporting from the latter to app-building platforms is quite laborious. If you must use xD, you should limit it to outlines and be prepared to export all your design elements separately for later import into Thunkable.

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
- Instagram/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. Some subcategory suggestions have been combined to fit the type of campaigns that run on each platform. For example, if you choose to launch a campaign on Facebook, you might also apply that campaign to Instagram to show that you can master the breadth of campaigning on multiple platforms. For a crowdfunding campaign, you will set up a project on IndieGoGo and draw attention to it through a social media campaign.

Multi-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.

Grading

Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Project proposal (due 9/28)	100	20
Project submission/execution (due 11/30 - TBC)	100	40
Project evaluation report (due 12/9)	100	30

Participation	100	10
TOTAL		100%

Grading Scale

This is the standard grading scale suggested by USC Annenberg. However, the grading scale is created at the discretion of the instructor and the final scale for this course will be calculated based on the performance of the entire class and with consideration of external conditions and circumstances emerging during the semester.

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

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.

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. If you think a score or a grade is missing or inaccurate, you are responsible for notifying the Instructor via email **within one (1) week** of a score posting. The email must include a compelling reason/argument for why you believe your score or grade is inaccurate. Do NOT sign up for office hours to discuss your grade before having completed this step. After reviewing your email, any further action is at the discretion of the instructor. 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.

Assignment Submission Policy

All submissions are due at 11:59pm on the due date and must be submitted through Blackboard/Turnitin in .DOC or .PDF format.

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

Saturday, November 13: Last day to change between letter grade or Pass/No pass in a letter graded course for Session 001.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown (Subject to change)

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.

The classes in this course are a mix of class meetings and one-on-one Zoom advisory meetings with the instructor, scheduled individually. In the schedule below, ‘CLASS’ is an indication that the entire class meets that week (and it is mandatory!).

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings/Preparations	Deliverable/Due Dates
Week 1 Dates: 8/24	CLASS Introduction		
Week 2 Dates: 8/31	Individual meetings on initial project ideas and project proposal		
Week 3 Dates: 9/7	CLASS Scrum project management 1	READ: Noah Dyer – ScrumButt 1	
Week 4 Dates: 9/14	CLASS Scrum project management 2	READ: Noah Dyer – ScrumButt 2 READ: Scrum Of One: How to Bring Scrum into your	

		One-Person Operation: LINK	
Week 5 Dates: 9/21	Individual meetings		
Week 6 Dates: 9/28	Individual meetings		Project proposal due
Week 7 Dates: 10/5	CLASS Industry expert session 1 (TBC)		
Week 8 Dates: 10/12	CLASS Industry expert session 2 (TBC)		
Week 9 Dates: 10/19	Individual meetings		
Week 10 Dates: 10/26	Individual meetings		
Week 11 Dates: 11/2	Individual meetings		
Week 12 Dates: 11/9	Individual meetings		
Week 13 Dates: 11/16	Individual meetings		
Week 14 Dates: 11/23	Individual meetings		
Week 15 Dates: 11/30	Presentation (TBC)		Product/report launch
STUDY DAYS Dates: 12/4-12/7			
FINAL EXAM DAYS: 12/8-12/15			12/9 Evaluation report due

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. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

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.

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.

b. Support Systems

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

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

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

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, 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.symplcity.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

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

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.

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.