![USC Annenberg]

DSM 596: Final Project Capstone
4 Units

Spring 2022 | Wednesday | 6:00 – 8:50 p.m.
Section: 21891D
Location: ANN 209

Instructor: Caroline Leach

Office Hours: Wednesday 5:00 – 6:00 p.m.
https://calendly.com/carolineleach/dsm-596-office-hours

Meeting Area: ANN 209

Contact Info: leachc@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

Course Expectations/Policies

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access

An inclusive, welcoming, and accessible environment as well as intellectual freedom are priorities in this class and in class discussions. Please be respectful. Any form of racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia or other forms of discriminatory behavior on the basis of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or class will not be tolerated. Please speak up if you have concerns about anything said in the classroom, either during the class or by contacting the instructor privately.

Attendance

Students are strongly encouraged to attend class sessions. This is the best way to engage with the course and keep up to date with class activities and assignments.

It is recognized that personal circumstances will sometimes arise that preclude class attendance. In such circumstances, the student is responsible for obtaining the materials presented in missed classes. If you will be missing a class session, please let the instructor know in advance via email.

Communication

Students are encouraged to contact the instructor outside of class, as needed to support your academic success, via office hours, email, and/or Slack.

Office Hours
Office hours are 5:00 – 6:00 p.m. Pacific Time on Wednesday in the assigned classroom for this course or via Zoom. If you cannot meet during office hours, you can arrange to meet with me at another time by sending an email with your request.

Email
Please check your USC email on a regular basis, for periodic updates about this class. You are also encouraged to email me with questions on any topic you would like to discuss. In general, I will respond to emails within 24 hours or sooner.

Slack
This class may use Slack as a communication and collaboration tool. I will respond to DMs.

Use of Technology in the Classroom
To make the most of our learning environment, please keep mobile devices on silent and put away during class time, unless you are experiencing an emergency. There will be time during class breaks to check mobile devices. If you are using your laptop during class time, please restrict content to what is being addressed in the class session.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

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

The following are not required but are highly recommended (all are available in the USC Library):
- *Made to Stick* by Chip Heath & Dan Heath
- *UX Strategy* (Second Edition) by Jaime Levy
- *Presentation Zen* (Third Edition) by Garr Reynolds

Description and Assessment of Assignments

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

1. **Project Proposal (due 2/16)**
2. **Project Presentation and/or Submission (due 5/4 – TBC!)**
3. **Project Evaluation Report (due 5/11)**

Project Proposal

This 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 2/16 – SO START THINKING ABOUT IT NOW. YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO SWITCH PROJECTS AFTER 2/16!

Project Presentation and/or Submission

On 5/4, 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, and it is a good opportunity for feedback, particularly if you wish to continue working on your project after the course ends, and 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, and note that because this option requires a lot of writing, there will be less required of your evaluation paper.

Project Evaluation

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

To earn a good participation grade, you should be attentive and engage with the class discussion. A lot of class activity will be workshopping and giving feedback on your classmates' projects. Your level of engagement in these activities will weigh heavily when determining your participation grade.

What Type of Capstone Project Can You 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, 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 PhD 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.

White Paper | Industry Report | Policy Brief
You may also engage in efforts similar to the one described under "Research Paper" to produce an Industry Report, White Paper, or a Policy Brief. The same conditions apply, and your paper will be focused on industry matters. The target audience would be executives in need of information about a given subject or who 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 friendly). Advertising sites or corporate sites can be for an actual/real, a made-up, or a 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 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/Instagram
- Twitter/Facebook
- LinkedIn
- YouTube channel
- Twitch channel
- Crowdfunding campaign

Note: These campaigns can be for an actual/real, a made up, or a self-owned product or 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 job seeker. 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 <u>essential</u> that you understand that the focus is <u>not</u> 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 <u>must **NOT** take up any of the time</u> you dedicate to completing the course. The content should already exist or be created outside of class. For eBooks, for example, it is the <u>launching and marketing</u> 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 <u>enough content available</u> at launch (e.g, a series should have at least 5 items, each a minimum of 500 words or 10 minutes; for TikTok, create 10 videos).

Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Project Proposal	100	20
Project Submission | Execution	100	40
Project Evaluation Report	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 Timeline

For effective learning, students should receive timely feedback on assignments and exams. Therefore, every attempt will be made to grade assignments 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 the instructor 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 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time on the due date and must be submitted through Blackboard/TurnItIn in .DOC or .PDF format.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Important note to students: This syllabus is subject to change – and probably will change – based on the progress of the class, events, and/or guest speaker availability, where relevant. Students should consult the University [Registration Calendar](#) for dates associated with add/drop deadlines, fees, and grading options.

Class meetings include instructional time for the whole class (generally the first half of class) and one-on-one advisory meetings with the instructor, scheduled individually (generally the second half of class).

	Topics | Daily Activities	Readings | Homework	Deliverable | Due Dates
Week 1 Date: 1/12	• Class introduction • Range and types of projects		
Week 2 Date: 1/19	• Project ideation processes • Research methodologies • Presentation tips		
Week 3 Date: 1/26	Scrum project management 1	READ: Noah Dyer – ScrumButt1	

	Topics | Daily Activities	Readings | Homework	Deliverable | Due Dates
Week 4 Date: 2/2	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 Date: 2/8 **OPTIONAL**	Introduction to image acquisition for apps and websites and editing with Photoshop *Sit in with Dr. Morten Bay's capstone class*		
Week 5 Date: 2/9	Budgeting		*Dr. Morten Bay's capstone class has the option to sit in*
Week 6 Date: 2/15 **OPTIONAL**	Introduction to WordPress *Sit in with Dr. Morten Bay's capstone class*		
Week 6 Date: 2/16	Project Proposal Presentations		**Project Proposal Due**
Week 7 Date: 2/23	Project Proposal Presentations		
Week 8 Date: 3/2	Industry expert session 1 (TBC)		
Week 9 Date: 3/9	Updates and individual meetings		
Dates: 3/14-3/18	**No Classes**		**Spring Break**
Week 10 Date: 3/23	Industry expert session 2 (TBC)		
Week 11 Date: 3/30	Updates and individual meetings		
Week 12 Date: 4/6	Updates and individual meetings		
Week 13 Date: 4/13	Updates and individual meetings		
Week 14 Date: 4/20	Updates and individual meetings		**USC Course Evaluations**
Week 15 Date: 4/27	Updates and individual meetings		**Product/Report Launch**
STUDY DAYS 4/30 – 5/3	Updates and individual meetings		
FINAL EXAM PERIOD Date: 5/4	**Presentation Event** Get feedback on your project from your colleagues, USC faculty members and industry experts		
FINAL EXAM PERIOD Date: 5/11	**Class Ends**		**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." 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.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 Student Accessibility Services - (213) 740-0776
osas.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
uscsa.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/annenberg-scholarships-and-awards
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.