

DSM 596: Final Project Capstone 4 Units

Fall 2022 | Monday | 6:30 – 9:20 p.m.

Section: 21891D

Location: ANN 409ABC

Instructor: Caroline Leach

Office Hours: Tuesday 12 – 2 p.m. or by appointment

<https://calendly.com/carolineleach/usc-annenberg-office-hours>

Contact Info: leachc@usc.edu

Course Description

To culminate the DSM experience, in this course you will plan and develop a digital product of your choice, along with a digital campaign plan to promote it.

You will use the skills and knowledge you have acquired during your time in the DSM program to develop and produce a platform (website or app), creative content series (such as a podcast or vlog), digital publication (white paper, research paper, or ebook), or strictly a campaign. You may work solo or with Capstone classmates.

The process includes ideating, researching, planning, pitching, creating, launching/publishing, and evaluating 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 and 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
- Apply basic project management techniques to create and follow a realistic project timeline
- Develop a project plan that is actionable at the ready-to-execute level
- Bring a project to full execution with professional-level production quality
- Plan an online campaign to promote the project
- Evaluate the success of the project post-execution according to previously specified criteria

Course Notes

The grading type for the course is a letter grade. Weekly slides, when used, will be posted on the course Blackboard site. Because this is a capstone course, the first half of each class session will be with the whole class for instruction, discussion, small group activities, and guest speakers. The second half of each class session will often be peer review in small groups and/or one-on-one advisory meetings with the instructor, scheduled individually.

Policies and Procedures

a. 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. No forms of discriminatory behavior will 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.

b. 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.

c. 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 and a scheduling link are noted on page 1 of this syllabus. If you cannot meet during office hours, you can arrange 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 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.

d. Synchronous Session Recording Notice

If any live class sessions are held via Zoom, recorded, and made available to students through Blackboard, please remember that USC policy prohibits sharing of any synchronous or 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/>). These rules will be strictly enforced, and violations will be met with the appropriate disciplinary action.

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

Capstone Project Options

Choose one of the following digital projects. If you have an idea for a project that is not listed, you are welcome to suggest it.

- **Research Paper/White 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 at least 30 pages and feature strong graphics and design.
- **eBook:** Write an ebook of at least 30 pages and publish it on Amazon. The book may cover any topic, and it 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 should be built using WordPress, Joomla, or Drupal; apps should be prototyped on Thunkable; either must include brand guidelines 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 digital campaign to promote it. This plan should include a schedule, allocated hours, budget, goals, and KPIs.

Description of Assignments

Six assignments will determine your final grade:

1. **Ideas** (10 points): Develop 3 distinct potential project ideas. In at least a 3-page or 3-slide writeup, for each idea explain WHY you selected it and provide answers to these questions:
 - a. What is the name of the idea?
 - b. What is the problem or topic you want to explore, and why?
 - c. What is the description of your idea?
 - d. What is a SMART goal for your idea?

2. **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.
 - a. **PEST Landscape Analysis** – political, economic, social, and technological factors and trends that could support or impede your project
 - b. **Stakeholders Analysis** – customers, competitors, company insiders, and other members of your community, with extra emphasis on users

3. **Plan** (20 points): Conduct PEST and Stakeholders Analyses using your research. Based on your key findings, write a project plan of approximately 5 – 7 pages, which must include at a minimum:
 - a. A description of the actual project you are developing, including the project name
 - b. A project management plan (using the tools you learn in weeks 1-4)
 - c. Content scripts/outlines
 - d. Formalized and realistic success criteria/KPIs
 - e. A communication/campaign strategy to bring awareness to your project, with dates, media, messages, budget, SMART goals, and KPIs

As part of this assignment, you will give a 5-minute presentation of your plan in class.

4. **Peer Reviews** (10 points): Provide constructive feedback during class to classmates. Your feedback will be evaluated based on quality and quantity.

5. **Project** (25 points): Develop and launch your final project. Provide URLs to your project as a Blackboard upload, and/or upload the project itself.

6. **Evaluation** (25 points): Reflect on what you have learned from the process of bringing your project into existence, and how it relates to the skills and knowledge you have acquired through the DSM program. In an evaluation of approximately 5 – 7 pages:
 - a. 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
 - b. Your grade will be determined by the quality of your post-launch analysis/reflections

In our last class meeting on the final exam date, 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 a good opportunity for feedback, particularly if you wish to continue working on your project after the course ends. You should attend this class meeting, whether or not you are presenting.

Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Ideas	10	10
Research	10	10
Plan	20	20
Peer Review	10	10
Project	25	25
Evaluation	25	25
TOTAL		100%

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

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 Rubrics

Assignments will be graded on the following criteria, without a fixed percentage, because unacceptable quality in any one area (e.g., writing, research) 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. 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).
- **Research and References:** Do not guess, generalize, or use stereotypes. 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 Manual of Style is preferred (<https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org>), but you may use any format that includes ALL of the following:
 - COMPLETE author names
 - Article/chapter titles
 - Name of the publication
 - Dates of publication
 - Original URLs (not USC library)
 - 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.

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.

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.

Add/Drop Dates for Session 001 (15 weeks: 8/22/22 – 12/2/22)

Link: <https://classes.usc.edu/term-20223/calendar/>

Friday, September 9: Last day to register and add classes for Session 001

Friday, September 9: Last day to drop a class without a mark of “W,” except for Monday-only classes, and receive a refund for Session 001

Friday, September 9: Last day to change enrollment option to audit for Session 001

Friday, September 9: Last day to change a Pass/No Pass to a letter grade for Session 001

Friday, September 9: Last day to purchase or waive tuition refund insurance for fall

Tuesday, September 13: 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 7: 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, November 11: Last day to drop a class with a mark of “W” for Session 001

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

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). *This syllabus is subject to change based on the progress of the class, events, and guest speaker availability.*

	Topics Daily Activities	Readings Homework	Deliverable Due Dates
Week 1 Date: 8/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class introduction Range and types of projects 		
Week 2 Date: 8/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project ideation processes Research methodologies Presentation tips 		
Week 3 Date: 9/5	Labor Day Holiday No Class		IDEAS DUE (Thu 9/8)
Week 4 Date: 9/12	Scrum project management	READ: Noah Dyer – ScrumButt1 & 2 READ: Scrum of One	
Week 5 Date: 9/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budgeting Image acquisition WordPress 		RESEARCH DUE
Week 6 Date: 9/26	Industry expert session 1 (TBC)		
Week 7 Dates: 10/3	Project plan presentations		Project Presentations (1H) PROJECT PLAN DUE
Week 8 Date: 10/10	Project plan presentations		Project Presentations (2H) Fall Recess: October 13 and 14
Week 9 Date: 10/17	Updates and individual meetings		
Week 10 Date: 10/24	Industry expert session 2 (TBC)		
Week 11 Date: 10/31	Updates and individual meetings		
Week 12 Date: 11/7	Project peer reviews		PEER REVIEWS
Week 13 Date: 11/14	Industry expert session 3 (TBC)		
Week 14 Date: 11/21	Updates and individual meetings		Thanksgiving Recess: Nov 23-27
Week 15 Date: 11/28	Updates and individual meetings		PROJECT LAUNCH DUE USC Course Evaluations
STUDY DAYS Dates: 12/3-12/6			
FINAL EXAM PERIOD Date: 12/12	PRESENTATION EVENT Get feedback on your project from colleagues, faculty, and industry experts		EVALUATION DUE

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

a. Academic Conduct

- **Plagiarism** – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, “[Behavior Violating University Standards](#).” 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://annenbergscholarships.usc.edu/current-students/resources/annenbergscholarships-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.