

USC Annenberg

USC Iovine and
Young Academy
*Arts, Technology and the Business
of Innovation*

**JOUR/ACAD 255: Advancing Journalism with
Human-Centered Design**

Units: 04

Spring 2023 – Tues. – 2:00-5:20pm

Meeting Times: Lecture/Lab

Location: IYH 214

Instructor: Laura Davis

Office: ANN 205D

Office Hours: By Appointment

Contact Info: lauraeda@usc.edu.

Timeline for reply: within 48 hours.

Instructor: Steve Child

Office: IYH 214

Office Hours: By Appointment

Contact Info: child@usc.edu

Timeline for reply: within 48 hours.

IT Help: <https://iovine-young.usc.edu/ait/index.html>

Hours of Service: 8:30am - 5:00pm

Contact Info: iyhelp@usc.edu, 213-821-6917

Catalog Description

Employing a human-centered design framework, students research and develop novel solutions to experience, collaboration, and culture issues that pervade newsrooms worldwide.

Course Description

Journalists are bound by a basic mission of the profession: Having an informed and engaged citizenry is a cornerstone of a healthy democracy. The elements comprising the Fourth Estate have undergone a paradigm shift in recent years, though, and the result has been that fewer Americans effectively utilize mainstream news outlets. Although many journalists may consider this a predicament outside their purview, the reality is that we are all duty-bound to solve this problem.

Fortunately, there is a path forward, and it is based on a relatively simple concept: In order to effectively inform the public, journalists must provide information that is useful, relevant and in a format that people actually want to consume. That is easier said than done, however: Newsroom habits and culture often stand in the way, and journalists aren't trained in human-centered methods for solving problems for their audience. This course provides students with the knowledge and skills to ideate solutions that will help improve the coverage that they and their peers provide to the global community.

For the successful news organizations of the future, the principles of product thinking and human-centered design will be part of the fabric of the organization. Putting the audience at the center of each journalistic endeavor is the new path forward. Whether you want to be a reporter or a newsroom developer, your journey to leading the way on that path starts in this class.

Learning Objectives and Outcomes

The goal of this course is for students to learn and apply the principles of human-centered design in a news and information setting. Local news will serve as our topic of focus, and will act as our challenge prompt for discovering problems, conducting field research, pitching to stakeholders, getting feedback, iterating and implementing solutions. By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the business and product problems that plague journalism
- Apply the fundamentals of human-centered design to journalism, adhering to a process that's aimed at solving problems, not selling solutions
- Adapt fundamental journalistic principles to a new media ecosystem, retaining what's important and leaving behind attitudes, habits and practices that no longer make sense
- Identify design challenges for local news and find solutions by conducting field research, brainstorming, pitching, seeking and incorporating feedback and iterating

Course Notes

This is a hands-on, intensive course that requires participation during class and planning outside of class, as many assignments depend on people not in the course whom you will interview, pitch to and get feedback from. You cannot put off assignments until the night before they are due.

Prerequisite(s): Open only to News and Information Innovation students, Iovine and Young Academy students, and Journalism students.

Co-Requisite(s): TBD.

Concurrent Enrollment: TBD.

Recommended Preparation: TBD.

Required Materials/Readings

This course is guided by the *Exponential Listening* Toolkit, which can be downloaded for free at <https://gumroad.com/l/listeningtoolkit>. All other readings will be provided by your professor and are listed in the week-by-week class breakdown.

Supplemental Materials

In addition to the readings provided as links in the week-by-week schedule and the *Exponential Listening* toolkit, you should be familiar with the news of the day. Please read, view or listen to the daily reports of the news organizations listed below not only for the news, but also how each platform reports, writes and delivers the news.

- Los Angeles Times: latimes.com
- The New York Times: nytimes.com
- BuzzFeed News: buzzfeed.com/news
- NBC News: nbcnews.com

Follow @BuzzFeedNews, @AP and @WashingtonPost on Twitter

Download these apps and sign up for push alerts:

- Associated Press
- BuzzFeed News
- New York Times

Watch at least one national and local newscast every day: NBC Nightly News, CBS Evening News, ABC World News, KABC, KCBS/KCAL, KNBC, KTLA, KTTV

Listen to NPR

KPCC/Southern California Public Radio

Add these news organizations on Instagram and watch their Stories:

- The Guardian
- CNN
- New York Times

If you are not currently following a news source from your hometown, you should do so in a way that works for you, whether it's by downloading their app, following them on Instagram, checking their website, etc.

In addition to keeping up with the news in detail, staying current on industry trends is vital to this class. You should budget time each day to read about industry developments. The below newsletters come strongly recommended.

Newsletters:

- Pew Research Center Daily Briefing of Media News: <http://bit.ly/readthisdaily>
- API's Need to Know: <http://bit.ly/readAPItoo>
- Nieman Lab: <http://bit.ly/andniemantoo>

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Students should be prepared for roughly 8 hours/week of work outside of the designated class time. The class relies on readings and lectures in the opening weeks and depends on your critical thinking and responses to the readings. About a third of the way through, you will begin assignments that require you to apply the principles and practices of the human-centered design process. You will be graded on the

application of the principles and the thoroughness with which you carry out the practices. A breakdown of the key assignments is provided below:

Desk Research: Students will complete a comprehensive online audit of their assigned local news outlet in order to evaluate its coverage and distribution as an audience member. In addition, students will identify areas for improvement. This deliverable will include a written report of 7-10 pages, and must include a visual supplement to the audit (i.e. screengrabs, mockups to showcase areas of improvement, etc.), demographic information, historical information, reflections as a consumer of the news, and any additional documentation and insights from the audit. 100 points.

Students will be assessed based on: rigor (proof of regularity in checking the outlet, and thorough research), readability and comprehensiveness, inclusion of all requested information, thoughtful analysis and recommendations.

Field Research and Problem Statement: Students will conduct field research to guide the creation of a problem statement. The field research will be documented and synthesized in 5-7 pages. The report must include 3-5 direct quotes from the interviews. Students will also produce a one page “creative brief” to define the problem and design challenge. 125 points (100 points for the Field Research Report; 25 points for the Problem Statement).

Students will be assessed based on: clarity of sources and evidence, differentiation from the desk research report, readability and comprehensiveness, inclusion of all requested information, thoughtful analysis and problem statement/accompanying “creative brief” (include high-level insights from both the desk research and field research to support your problem statement and design challenge).

Human-Centered Design Sprint 01-03: For each of our three design sprints, students will be required to submit a 2-3 page synopsis of the process of the sprint, along with the specified deliverables for each sprint. The topics of each sprint include:

- Sprint 01: Persona Development, Stakeholder Mapping, Empathy Mapping
- Sprint 02: Journey Mapping (for consumers and journalists)
- Sprint 03: Rapid Prototyping (low-fidelity)

Each sprint is worth 75 points, for a total of 225 points.

Feedback Report: Select one of the Design Strategy sprints you have completed, identify 3-5 key stakeholders of the local news outlet, and present the results of your feedback. Submit a 1 page overview of the synthesized feedback. 75 points.

Students will be assessed based on: readability and comprehensiveness, inclusion of all requested information, thoughtful analysis of the feedback (including proper application of human-centered design and critical thinking).

Iteration Report: Based on the feedback that you have received, perform an iteration of the solution. Submit a 1 page overview of the iteration, including a description of the concept’s evolution and how the evolved work was informed by the results of the feedback assignment. 75 points.

Students will be assessed based on: readability and comprehensiveness, inclusion of all requested information, and novelty of the iteration (show proper adjustments for realistic implementation).

Final Pitch: Prepare a pitch presentation for your local newsroom. The final pitch will include the process of your overall human-centered design work, but will specifically focus on the design strategy sprint, feedback, and iterations. The pitch must be 10 slides and speak to the problem, customer, current experience, and

improved experience. Students must present the pitch, and turn in a “leave behind” version that can be read and understood without the students’ presence. 200 points.

Final Article: In addition to the final pitch, students must also submit a final article. The article is written to describe the process behind the pitch in greater detail. This submission must be 5-7 pages. 100 points.

Grading Breakdown

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Desk Research	100	10%
Field Research and Problem Statement	125	12.5%
Human-Centered Design Sprint 01	75	7.5%
Human-Centered Design Sprint 02	75	7.5%
Human-Centered Design Sprint 03	75	7.5%
Feedback Report	75	7.5%
Iteration Report	75	7.5%
Final Pitch	200	20%
Final Article	100	10%
Participation	100	10%
Total	1,000	100%

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

Assignment Submission Policy

Unless otherwise noted, all assignments must be submitted as a PDF presentation. For assignments delivered in class (such as presentations), the work must be completed before the commencement of the class session in which the assignment is due. For assignments that are designated for virtual submission, one team member is expected to submit the assignment to Blackboard (unless otherwise specified) by COB (6:00pm) the day the assignment is indicated as due.

Grading Timeline

Grades and feedback for all assignments will be returned to students within one week of submission.

Academy Attendance Policy

The Academy maintains rigorous academic standards for its students and on-time attendance at all class meetings is expected. Each student will be allowed two excused absences over the course of the semester for which no explanation is required. Students are admonished to not waste excused absences on

non-critical issues, and to use them carefully for illness or other issues that may arise unexpectedly. Except in the case of prolonged illness or other serious issue (see below), no additional absences will be excused. Each unexcused absence will result in the lowering of the final grade by $\frac{1}{3}$ of a grade (e.g., an A will be lowered to A-, and A- will be lowered to a B+, etc.). In addition, being tardy to class will count as one-third of an absence. Three tardies will equal a full course absence.

Students remain responsible for any missed work from excused or unexcused absences. Immediately following an absence, students should contact the instructor to obtain missed assignments or lecture notes and to confirm new deadlines or due dates. Extensions or other accommodations are at the discretion of the instructor.

Automatically excused absences normally may not be used for quiz, exam or presentation days. Using an excused absence for a quiz, exam or presentation, such as in the case of sudden illness or other emergency, is at the discretion of the instructor.

In the case of prolonged illness, family emergencies, or other unforeseen serious issues, the student should contact the instructor to arrange for accommodation. Accommodation may also be made for essential professional or career-related events or opportunities. All accommodations remain at the discretion of the instructor, and appropriate documentation may be required.

Additional Policies

Assignments will be accepted after the deadline with the following grade penalties. Do not ask for extensions; the below are the extensions.

- Submission in the 24 hours after the deadline 10% deduction
- Submission between 24 and 48 hours after the deadline 20% deduction
- Submission between 48 hours and 3 days after the deadline 50% deduction
- Submission more than 3 days after the deadline 100% deduction

Course Notes

We care about each of our students and consider it our responsibility to create a welcoming, inclusive environment for everyone, especially for students from historically underrepresented or marginalized backgrounds. This is a larger societal responsibility, as well as a particular responsibility tied to our role as journalists. Everyone who enters our classroom space (IRL or virtual) should feel it is for them and should feel comfortable expressing themselves, their identities and their lived experiences. Affirming everyone in a journalism classroom is an important step toward creating more diverse newsrooms, and more diverse newsrooms are better able to reflect the realities they cover. Accuracy is often referred to as the "first law of journalism," and a newsroom that includes a variety of perspectives, experiences and identities is going to produce more accurate work and contribute to a more inclusive and thoughtful society.

You are expected to treat all your classmates with respect and reflect on your own thoughts and behaviors in the classroom and when you are doing your work for class. None of us is perfect, and we should all do our best to have thoughtful and empathetic discussions in class.

As we begin the semester, this course will be conducted completely online taught by two instructors. As we are a relatively small group, you are still expected to participate in class. Students who can not have their camera on for any reason should reach out to the professors. In addition to Zoom, email and Blackboard.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

W	Session 01	Session 02	Readings & Homework	Deliverables
01	<p>Welcome: Syllabus overview, class and professor introductions.</p> <p>Teams and news outlet selections revealed.</p>	<p>The Historical Context: What is the history and nature of journalism's relationship with the audience, and how did the internet change that? What particular challenges do local newsrooms face? What is the significance of "local" in design, and the practice of design strategy?</p>	<p>Reading: American Press Institute, "The elements of journalism"; James Tyner, "Dear news media: Create news for people who have never read a newspaper"; New York Times, "A Future Without the Front Page"; Los Angeles Times, "Editorial: An examination of The Times' failures on race, our apology and a path forward"</p>	<p>Pre-semester reading: Clay Shirky, ch. 3 of "Here Comes Everybody"; ; Penelope Abernathy, "The Expanding News Desert: The News Landscape in 2020: Transformed and Diminished" (including subchapters: Vanishing Newspapers, Vanishing Readers and Journalists, The New Media Giants, Entrepreneurial Stalwarts and Start-Ups)</p>
02	<p>The Principles of Journalism: Journalism is fundamentally a set of principles, independent of any particular format. When we rethink journalistic approaches, there are certain values and principles that we must keep.</p>	<p>The Format of Journalism: Journalistic norms have historically been partly defined by formats that are separate from the profession's principles. What are the real reasons for these formats and how can we rethink them in our modern media landscape?</p>	<p>Reading: Pew Research Center, "For Local News, Americans Embrace Digital but Still Want Strong Community Connection"; Pew Research Center, "Civic Engagement Strongly Tied to Local News Habits"; PEN America, "Executive Summary for Losing the News: The Decimation of Local Journalism and the Search for Solutions"; ; Penelope Abernathy, "The Expanding News Desert: Journalistic Mission: The Challenges and Opportunities for Ethnic Media"</p>	<p>Week 1 reading</p>
03	<p>Journalism's Shifting Business Model: Do people actually read and pay for the news? Not as much as we'd like, but they should. How can you change that?</p>	<p>Paying for News: Subscription- and member-focused business models might lead to better news products, but what are the consequences when good information is expensive and dubious information is free?</p>	<p>Reading: <i>Exponential Listening Toolkit</i>, https://gumroad.com/l/listeningtoolkit</p> <p>Design Education's Big Gap: Understanding the Role of Power, George Aye on Medium: https://medium.com/great-good-studio/design-educations-big-gap-understanding-the-role-of-power-1e1756b7f08</p>	<p>Week 2 reading</p>

04	<p>Human-Centered: How has Human-Centered Design advocated for participation and representation in design? What has Human-Centered Design gotten right? Where has Human-Centered Design gone wrong?</p>	<p>Audience-First: How some newsrooms are putting audience-first principles into practice. Who are they serving with their products and what are they leaving out? What other obligations do journalists have? In-class examples: Mindy Marquez and Rich Hirsh, "How recasting the "online producer" job helped the Miami Herald focus on audience and mission"; David Rodriguez, "KPCC studied how to cover the 2020 census so you don't have to"; Knight Lab, "How Newsday Launched Community News Alerts on Mobile. A Case Study in Product Thinking"</p>	<p>Watch: How Designers Destroyed the World - Mike Monteiro, at USI, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qIcM21l61TE</p> <p>Watch: Liz Jackson, Honoring the Friction of Disability at AIGA Design Conference 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZhiu-jGbdE</p> <p>Harry Backlund, "Is Your Journalism a Luxury or Necessity?"</p>	Week 3 reading
05	<p>Human-Centered Design In-Action, Day 01: Madness to the Method; a short design sprint.</p>	<p>Human-Centered Design In-Action, Day 02: Method to the Madness; a reflection on the mechanics of the short design sprint.</p>	Finalize desk research on the local news outlet you have been assigned to.	Week 4 reading
06	<p>Problem Statements: How to determine and frame a design challenge; creating a scope of work</p>	<p>Knowns and Unknowns: How to recognize bias in a design challenge; mapping knowns and unknowns in a design challenge</p>	Develop field research questions, and be prepared to present your work for feedback.	Desk Research

07	Field Research 101, Day 01: Professors walk the class through their own unique approaches to field research, and each facilitate a short activity.	Field Research 101, Day 02: Lab time for students to prepare for the field research in Week 08; students workshop their questions.	Finalize prep for field research.	Field Research Questions
08	Conduct field research (no class)	Conduct field research (no class)	Conduct field research based on your design challenge and write up your results	
09	Human-Centered Design Sprint 01: Persona development; stakeholder mapping; empathy mapping	Ideation: Introduction to Blue Sky thinking and ideation; ideation sprint; work-in-Class time; 1:1 Meetings with Matthew and Laura	Completion of Sprint 01: User Persona(s), Stakeholder Map, and Empathy Map.	Field Research and Problem Statement Report
10	Wellness Day (no class)	Human-Centered Design Sprint 02: Journey Mapping (from the perspective of the consumer); journey Mapping (from the perspective of the journalist)	Completion of Sprint 02: Journey Maps (consumer and journalist).	Human-Centered Design Sprint 01 Deliverables
11	Human-Centered Design Sprint 03: Rapid Prototyping; Introduction and Work-in-Class time	Prototyping, Continued: Work-in-Class time; 1:1 Meetings with Matthew and Laura	Completion of Sprint 03: Low-Fidelity Prototype.	Human-Centered Design Sprint 02 Deliverables
12	Implementation: Getting Feedback: What kind of reception can you expect in a newsroom when trying to implement new ideas?	Implementation: Responding to Feedback: Strategies for incorporating the concerns of a newsroom without compromising your product's principles.	Pick one of your sprints and get feedback from stakeholders	Human-Centered Design Sprint 03 Deliverables
13	Implementation: Iterating: Three types of iteration: intuitive, business needs, user needs	Implementation: Pitching: Professors walk the class through their own unique approaches to pitching, and each facilitate a short activity.	Iterate upon the results of your sprint by incorporating feedback	Feedback Report

14	Work-in-Class Day: 1:1 Meetings with Laura and Matthew	Wellness Day (no class)	Identify newsroom stakeholders and prepare a pitch presentation Reading: Ch. 1 of Diffusion of Innovations (Rogers)	Iteration Report
15	Mock pitches: Student teams present their work during 1:1 feedback sessions with Laura and Matthew	Mock pitches, continued.	Refine your pitch and continue to practice; invite stakeholders to pitch sessions. Write an article about your project.	Initial Pitch Deck
FINAL	Final Presentations			Final Pitch Deck and Article

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

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” 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.

Support Systems:

Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

engemannshc.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 Services (RSVP)

-213-740-9355 (WELL)

<https://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault/>

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services provides immediate therapy services for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (e.g., sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking). (wording from the site)

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) | Title IX - (213) 740-5086

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help a survivor of 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.

USC Policy Reporting to Title IX (213) 740-5086

<https://policy.usc.edu/reporting-to-title-ix-student-misconduct/>

The university encourages individuals to report prohibited conduct to the *Title IX Office*. Individuals can report to the university *Title IX Coordinator* in the *Office of Equity and Diversity*.

Bias Assessment Response and Support - (213) 740-2421

studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions for appropriate investigation 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 Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710

studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa

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.