



CMGT 528

Web Strategies for Organizations

Spring 2023, Thursdays, 2 pm - 4:50 pm

Classroom: ASC 331

Section: 21737D

Number of Units: 4

Instructor: Sarah Dzida

Contact: dzida@usc.edu

Professor's Office Hours: Immediately after class or by appointment only.

Catalogue Description

Assess organizations' online needs, to examine the use of the Internet in terms of electronic commerce and global pressures, and design Web page strategies.

EXPANDED COURSE DESCRIPTION

Websites and digital experiences permeate our daily lives, and often, we do not think about how they came into being. The truth is that there are many people involved in deciding what, how and why we experience things online. These people across all kinds of organizations utilize strategies, tactics, methodologies and processes to achieve goals specific to their businesses. They spend a lot of time thinking about how to get people to do things and persuading their bosses, executives and other teammates that their strategy is the right one. Then, they work at making those strategies an organizational and customer reality.

This course is an introduction into the UX design process and mindset through content strategy. We will explore how it is used to create the digital products and worlds that influence our lives. We will also learn how a strategist uses it to make the persuasive arguments that transform their companies.

Learning Outcomes

The topic of web strategies is vast and diverse; it is a lifelong endeavor. This course is an introduction to specific ideas, strategic tactics and professional expectations that students will most likely encounter and utilize regardless in their future career. These include:

- Building a web strategy to present to stakeholders via the design process
- Doing strategic UX tactics to create a strong and validated roadmap for a digital product
- Conducting user research questionnaires and interviews on actual humans
- Identifying and validating problems and hypotheses
- Developing a web strategy around a hypothetical RFP

- Becoming accustomed to the design process
- Practicing writing and design for the web and other professional documents
- Honing presentation, persuasion and storytelling skills

About Your Instructor

Sarah Dzida is the founder of an independent strategic consulting studio. She aids teams around the world in building useful, usable and delightful digital products. With over 100 projects in her portfolio, she's worked with all kinds of teams and across many different industries from real estate to martial arts and international enterprises to local startups. Her work for Lexus received recognition from the 47th Creativity International Awards and her interactive storytelling work for Walmart earned praise from the CommArts 2020 Interaction Awards. In addition to her professional work, Sarah writes articles, essays and poetry. They've been featured online, in print and at the Architecture + Design Museum in Los Angeles. Her UX and design writing appears in professional magazines and is used in curriculums around the country. She earned her masters degree in professional writing from USC.

Required & Recommended Reading

UX Strategy: Product Strategy Techniques for Devising Innovative Digital Solutions (2nd Edition) Jaime Levy. O'Reilly Media, 2021 (free via the USC library)

Recommended references:

- Annenberg Digital Lounge, <http://annenbergdl.com>
- Baymard Institute for ecommerce, <https://baymard.com/>
- Content Marketing Institute, <https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/>
- Google Web Fundamentals, <https://developers.google.com/web>
- Avinash Kaushik, Occam's Razor, <https://www.kaushik.net/avinash/>
- Ellen Lupton & Jennifer Phillips, *Graphic Design: The New Basics* (free via USC library)
- Garr Reynolds, *Presentation Zen*, 3rd Edition, 2019 New Riders (free via USC library)
- WordPress Support (WordPress basics will not be taught in class; you must master them on your own), <https://wordpress.com/support/>

In addition, various articles will be assigned and discussed. See the Lecture Schedule or Blackboard for details.

Methods of Teaching / Class Rules

Your professor is here to teach but more so she **will** emulate the professional expectations you will actually encounter in the workplace.

This means students are expected to:

- **Meet deadlines/Manage your time:** Keep up with and complete course work in order to meet project deadlines. Without an exceptional circumstance and the instructor's permission, late assignments will not be accepted.
- **Feed your curiosity and set expectations:** It is your responsibility to raise questions, concerns or other issues in a timely manner. Not asking is **NOT** an excuse. If you do not

ask, then your instructor will assume you have all the information you need and the consequences will be of your making.

- **Be an active learner and problem-solver:** Make use of the professor's mentorship and expertise. Actively utilize the resources both at USC and elsewhere to produce great work. In class, engage in critical thinking and problem-solving to improve your work. Don't wait for the answer or way to be placed right in front of you. Seek it out!
- **Be creative and original:** A-level work features distinctive strategies and ideas that stand out from common practices, as well as inspired writing and production design. This would be also completely original; it is NOT plagiarized or goes against the academic code of conduct at USC. It WILL NOT be tolerated. See the Academic Conduct section for more information.
- **Be present and attentive:** Arrive to class on time AND stay for the entire period without being disruptive. Other distracting or disruptive behaviors will NOT be tolerated.
- **Be respectful:** Treat classmates, the instructor, and speakers with courtesy. You may certainly question and criticize ideas — that is encouraged in the learning environment — but never criticize the person. We are a community and each of us deserves respect. For this reason, respect the opinions of others, regardless of how much you disagree. In addition, respect means not using your phone at any time during class.
- **Produce professional-caliber work:**
 - **Writing & presentations:** All work should be treated as submissions to a client. All errors should be eliminated by proofreading meticulously, using Microsoft editing tools and/or Grammarly.com (strongly recommended). For help with fluency or simply polishing work, contact Annenberg's Graduate Writing Coach: <http://cmgtwriting.uscannenberg.org/>
 - **Critical Thinking:** In communication there are few right answers: so-called "best practices" for one entity might fail for another — or even for the same entity at another time. Consequently, professional strategists and graduate students should not just answer the questions. They must describe "why" and "how," not just "what," and will be evaluated on the quality of the reasoning.
 - **Research and References:** No guessing, generalizations, or stereotypes (such as "Millennials"). Support your work with research from authoritative sources, such as academic journals, major news publications, and credible experts.

This is by no means an exhaustive or complete list. The above criteria will be part of what determines whether you have "A" or "B" level work. The criteria is without a fixed percentage because unacceptable quality in one can undermine an entire project. If you have questions or concerns, then ask them. If you do not ask them, be prepared for any issues that arise to be handled in a manner similar to professional circumstances no matter what.

OTHER POLICIES

- **Synchronous session recording notice:** Live class sessions may be recorded and made available through Blackboard (including transcriptions). Please remember that USC policy prohibits sharing of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment. You are responsible for the appropriate use and handling of these recordings under existing S-Campus 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 sanction.
- **Virtual classes:** Be aware that classes may take place online via Zoom in the event of illness, COVID or professional obligations that prevent the professor from being in the classroom. Should we have a virtual class, you must attend as you would an in-person session. You are not obligated to turn your camera on, but you are encouraged to do so to make yourself an active part of the class and enhance your networking. Wear appropriate clothing and use appropriate backgrounds. Keep your microphone

off except for discussion or questions. Also, *be present*: all phones must be turned off and put away in class and team meetings. Try to avoid interactions with housemates during class. If such interactions are unavoidable, step away from your camera (or turn it off) to avoid distracting your instructor and classmates.

- **Attendance:** You should make every effort to attend all classes, arrive on time, and stay for the entire class. Should you need to miss a class, notify the instructor in advance (except, of course, in the case of emergencies). You are responsible for obtaining what you missed from classmates and Blackboard.
 - You are expected to attend class in person unless alternative arrangements have been made due to illness, medical reasons, or the need to isolate or quarantine due to COVID-19.
 - Should you experience COVID-19 symptoms, **stay home**. Do not come to an in-person class if you are feeling ill. Nothing is worth risking your health, your instructor's health, or the health of your peers.
- **Computers:** All Annenberg students must have a computer for accessing classes from home. However, computers and all other electronics may not be used in the classroom without permission of the instructor. Refer to the [Annenberg Digital Lounge](#) for more information. To connect to USC's Secure Wireless network, visit USC's [Information Technology Services](#).
- **Smartphones and other devices:** These must be turned off/kept on vibrate and hidden from sight for the duration of class. If a student is expecting an urgent call, please inform the instructor.
- **Digital Programs and Design Program Support** None will not be taught in class; you must master them on your own. This is often what will happen in the real world.
 - <http://www.annenbergdl.org/>

Grading Scale and Assignments

This following is a breakdown of your grade:

	Component	Percentage
Participation	Adherence to Class Rules	5%
	Introduction & Acknowledgement	1%
	Peer Feedback Project 1	2%
	Peer Feedback Project 2	2%
Project 1 Discovery Your Strategy	Weekly Assignments (8)	20%
	Strategy Deck	15%
	Presentation	10%
Project 2 Design Your Strategy	Weekly Assignments (3)	10%
	Updated Strategy Deck	15%
	Final Presentation	10%

	Component	Percentage
	Key Experience Prototype	10%
Total		100%

Project 1: Discovery Your Strategy (45%)

A local Los Angeles-based small business hires you to help build out their digital audience engagement and awareness through a blog. In the first half of class, we will build out a web strategy for our client. Using UX tools and a UX mindset, we will complete weekly assignments that will build up to the strategy deck.

- **Weekly Assignments:** Choose Your Business, Content Audit, Persona, User Questions, User Interviews, Competitive Audit, Brand Identity Mood Board, Prioritized Feature List.
 - **I may not comment on them; but I will check your progress weekly and provide examples of excellent work for you to learn from.**
- **Strategy Deck:** Each of your weekly assignments will eventually be put together into a strategy deck which you will present to the class.
- **Presentation:** This is the actual presentation; how persuasive are you in getting your strategy recommendations across?

Project 2: Design Your Strategy (45%)

Once your discovery is complete, it's time to make your strategy a reality! The purpose of this class is not to build out a full website launch or redesign. Rather, the goal is to show how the strategy will work in real-life digital applications AND how you will continue pushing the strategy forward in an updated roadmap.

- **Weekly Assignments:** Sitemap, user flows, and wireframes/mockups.
 - **I may not comment on them; but I will check your progress weekly and provide examples of excellent work for you to learn from.**
- **Final Strategy Deck:** You will update your deck with the work from the rest of the semester.
- **Final Presentation:** This is the actual presentation; how persuasive are you in getting your strategy recommendations across?
- **Prototype:** This a high-fidelity prototype that accurately depicts the visual, written and interactive components of one of your key strategic user flows from entry to exit points.

Participation (10%)

Attendance alone won't earn participation points. You must contribute to discussions. You must show that you are engaging with the material and reading. You must demonstrate that you are learning through questions, feedback, etc. As such, the following will affect your grade:

- **Adherence to the Class Rules:** Does the professor see you contribute to discussions? Do you engage in the material and reading by asking questions? Is your feedback aiding your classmates? Are you doing more than the assignments asks? How well are you adhering to professional expectations and responsibilities as outlined in the Methods of Teaching/Class Rules section of this syllabus?
- **Peer Feedback:** Help your classmates grow by giving constructive criticism on Blackboard.

Grades

Grades will range from A through F; the class does not use number grades.

Letter Grade	Description
A/A-	Excellent: A's and A-'s are only earned by "going the extra mile" to produce professional-caliber work that could be presented to a client, employer, or investor. A-level work features high production quality with no mistakes, draws on in-depth research of authoritative sources, reflects strong understanding of course/program materials, and demonstrates high-level creativity, critical thinking, and communication skills. Recommendations will be provided on request only to students who earn a solid A in the course.
B	Good: B's are awarded for graduate-school caliber work featuring in-depth research of authoritative sources, critical thinking, and strong understanding of course/program materials. The ideas and production quality would need to be stronger to succeed in a professional context. Solid B's are considered the base level grade of this course.
C	Fair: C's are given to undergraduate-caliber work, reflecting insufficient critical thinking, superficial research, and/or flawed production quality.
D	Marginal: D's and lower are given to amateurish work that indicates only the most rudimentary level of understanding, marked by insufficient research, many errors, incomplete sections, and/or superficial analysis.
F	Failing: F's are meted out to work that shows little understanding of course/program materials, little to no research, poor writing, incomplete sections, and/or plagiarism. Note that plagiarism may also be subject to disciplinary measures.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Integrity:

The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, compromises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university's mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see [the student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship 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 or Learning Lab, without approval of the instructor.

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Support Systems:

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

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX) - (213) 740-5086

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.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 740-0411

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion - (213) 740-2101

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

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) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call
Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice - (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

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.

Annenberg Student Emergency Aid Fund

<https://annenbergscholarships.usc.edu/current-students/resources/annenbergscholarships-and-awards>

Awards are distributed to students experiencing unforeseen circumstances and emergencies impacting their ability to pay tuition or cover everyday living expenses. These awards are not intended to cover full-tuition expenses, but rather serve as bridge funding to guarantee students' continued enrollment at USC until other resources, such as scholarships or loans, become available. Students are encouraged to provide as much information in their application, as well as contact their academic advisor directly with questions about additional resources available to them.

Class Structure & Schedule

Class sequence, dates, topics and guest speakers are subject to change as the semester proceeds. Any major revisions will be promptly announced in class and/or by email.

	Topics/Activities	Readings	Homework
Wk 1 Jan 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction • What is the design process? • What is a UX mindset? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UX Strategy, Chapters 1-2 • “The Golden Rules of UX” by Sarah Dzida 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce self on Blackboard • Read & acknowledge syllabus • Choose business & get instructor approval
DISCOVER YOUR STRATEGY			
Wk 2 Jan 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Your Business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UX Strategy, Chapter 3 & Chapter 8 • “How to Find and Do Things in a Discovery Phase” by Sarah Dzida 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do a content inventory and audit.
Wk 3 Jan 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Your Users Pt 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The Tricky Business of Close vs Open Ended Questions” by Sarah Dzida • “The Art of Asking Questions” by Sarah Dzida 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a provisional persona • Create a user interview
Wk 4 Feb 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Your Users Pt 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UX Strategy, Chapters 4-5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview 3-5 users
Wk 5 Feb 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Your Competition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UX Strategy, Chapter 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a competitive audit and analysis
Wk 6 Feb 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define Your Brand & Features 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review selected style guides 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a brand identity • Create a prioritized feature list
Wk 7 Feb 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storytelling and Presentations 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish up presentations
Wk 8 Mar 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post presentation comments on Blackboard for each classmate.
DESIGN YOUR STRATEGY			
Wk 9 Mar 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design Your Information Architecture Pt 1 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post link to your site • Sitemap • User flow
Wk 10 Mar 16	Spring Recess		

	Topics/Activities	Readings	Homework
Wk 11 Mar 23	• Design Your Information Architecture Pt 2	UX Strategy, Chapter 7	• Design wireframes for your key experiences and flows
Wk 12 Mar 30	• Build a Prototype		• Work on final project
Wk 13 Apr 6	• Content Strategy and Writing for the Web	• UX Strategy, Chapters 9	• Work on final project
Wk 14 Apr 13	• Designing for Conversion & Success	• UX Strategy, Chapter 10	• Work on final project
Wk 15 Apr 20	• Final Presentations		• Work on final deck • Post presentation comments on Blackboard for each classmate.
Wk 16 Apr 27	• Final Strategy Decks and Prototypes Posted to Blackboard		