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## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course will provide students with a critical examination of issues, theories, historical movements and ideas that are relevant to contemporary design practice. The class will offer a survey of the study of visual communication and human-centered design. Topics in design theory and visual studies will include communication design, architecture, interior design and visual culture as it relates to the expansive field of design.

Students will be introduced to an overview of the history of design with a focus on major movements and schools of thought from 19<sup>th</sup> Century to present. Through discussions, readings, lectures, research assignments and writing responses, students will explore selected themes, engage in critical analysis of selected historical and contemporary works and use case studies to further understand the cultural, social and political implications of design as a visual and cultural language. DES 323 is a GE option and open to all students, non-art/design students who will benefit from an introduction to key formal elements of design and design strategies that are implemented in historical design movements and current practices critical to contemporary communication.

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

**ANALYSIS** - Increase your ability to analyze design (along with art, architecture, fashion, and other cultural production) including describing them with appropriate vocabulary, examining their formal elements, and engaging in research to understand their contexts (both contemporary and historical).

**DESIGN** - Expanding your knowledge about the creative process, as exemplified by the study of specific works in design history and theory, with a focus on understanding various creative modes of design. These theories can be explored

through critical writing, speculative design and applied to any contemporary, creative pursuit.

**CONNECTIVITY** - Deepen your understanding of how political, cultural, and social conditions affect the practice of design. You will have an opportunity to see how various practitioners in the field create work to speak to specific audiences using innovative design (images, typography, and mediums).

**CONTEXT** - Enrich your discernment of design by understanding the theoretical, historical context, and aesthetic decisions behind a range of work.

**ENGAGEMENT** - Increase your understanding of the field of design (along with art, architecture, fashion, and other cultural production) in order to enhance your ability to think critically about design and enrich any creative process through which you engage the world at large.

**Prerequisite(s): None.**

**Co-Requisite(s): None.**

**Concurrent Enrollment: None.**

**Recommended Preparation: None; DES 323 is an introductory course**

### **Required Readings and Supplementary Materials**

- **A COMPANION TO CONTEMPORARY DESIGN Since 1945**, edited by Anne Massey, 2019, John Wiley & Sons (supplied as pdf)
- **GRAPHIC DESIGN THEORY: READINGS FROM THE FIELD** by Helen Armstrong, 2009, Princeton Architectural Press.
- **A HISTORY OF GRAPHIC DESIGN 6TH Edition**, by Philip B. Meggs & Alston W. Purvis, 2016, John Wiley & Sons
- Design Readings online here: <https://readings.design/>
- Digital version of most books can be accessed through your USC Libraries account:  
<https://libraries.usc.edu/>

### **DESCRIPTION AND ASSESSEMENT OF ASSIGNMENTS**

**Syllabi and Class Schedule of Assignments will be posted on Blackboard. Please be aware that any changes made to the syllabus over the semester will be noted in class and on Blackboard. Assignments will be posted on**

**Blackboard and completed assignments will be posted onto Blackboard at the time of the assigned due date.**

## **WRITING ASSIGNMENTS**

**Writing Assignments (2 paragraph minimum):** Written responses to specific texts listed on the syllabus and/or on Blackboard. Readings pertain to the topic of discussion for the week. **It is essential to read the required texts and write your response as they are 35% of your final grade.** For the written responses: provide a summary of the reading, and secondly, your extrapolation/ interpretation of the reading. Questions that might be useful while writing, “How does this text relate to current design culture? How might this theory effect a designer’s practice? What are some of the conflicts the reading proposes?”

**Midterm Presentation (Weeks 8/9 Feb 27-Mar 8th)** Each student will do a 5-10 minute presentation with **5-10 slides on their midterm paper. Slides (decks) should introduce the subject and your thesis, should include selected images/visuals that represent the research, and include analysis or theory as to why it’s important.** Presentations should be saved as PDF and uploaded to the specified “PRESENTATIONS” folder in Blackboard by **Monday February 27<sup>th</sup> before class.** No late presentations will be accepted. Each PDF should be titled “LAST NAME\_FirstName\_presentation”. The order of presentations will be alphabetical by last name. **Samples are provided on Blackboard under the Content tab.**

### **Midterm Paper (5-7 pages) Due Week 11, Monday March 20th:**

Choose a subject of interest in design or a related cultural topic. First, provide a brief description of what the subject is and its significance in culture at large. Think critically about the subject, its significance and context within our global community. The paper should be a visual and critical analysis based on what you research and interpret. A minimum of 4 references (correctly annotated using a bibliography) should be included to support your writing. Investigate other chapters in the books listed for the course. Use these critical texts to support your theory and to bring context (historical, cultural, personal) to the subject.

**NOTE:** For the Writing Assignment and the Midterm, you must use consistent and properly formatted footnotes or endnotes, preferably using the Chicago Manual of Style format that is the standard in the field. If you have any questions about proper formatting, please see the Chicago Manual of Style or its website (<https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>). You will be marked down for inconsistent and/or improperly formatted footnotes. *All writing should be in Times New Roman, or Helvetica 12pt, double spaced.*

**FINAL: Speculative Design with Pitch Deck (Week 17 DUE Wed, May 3rd)**

(5-10 Page pitch deck)

Speculative Design is a critical design practice that often approaches social issues while questioning traditional modes of design. It takes critical practice one step further, towards imagination and visions of possible scenarios. Speculative Design is also known under the following names: critical design, design fiction, future design, anti-design, radical design, interrogative design, discursive design, adversarial design, design art, transitional design.

A pitch deck is a brief presentation that provides an audience with an overview of your design idea, whether it's showcasing a potential product, sharing your projected business model, offering a first look at your design strategy. (Turn in as PDF).

When creating your pitch deck for your speculative design project, be concise. How can you express yourself precisely but with a maximum impact? Keep what you write under 750 words. Use clear and understandable language.

### **Description And Assessment of Assignments**

Syllabi and class schedule of assignments will be posted on Blackboard. Required Readings and Written Response required texts will also be posted. Please be aware that any changes made to the syllabus over the semester will be noted in class and on Blackboard. Assignments will be posted on Blackboard and completed assignments will be posted onto Blackboard at the time of the assigned due date.

**LATE ASSIGNMENTS** will be deducted 10% of allowed points for each class day that it is late. Reading responses will not receive credit for late submissions as they are meant to assist with class discussion.

### **GRADING BREAKDOWN**

#### **Assignment Points % of Grade**

<b>Writing Assignments</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>Midterm Paper &amp; Presentation</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Final Project: Speculative Design</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Attendance / Participation</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

## **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**

**Grading Scale: A indicates work of excellent quality; B of good quality; C of average quality; D of below average quality; and F indicates inadequate work.**

## **Assignment Submission Policy**

It is the student's responsibility to get assignments to the TA instructor if the student is absent. Digital work must be submitted via blackboard, details will be clearly given when assignments are given. Digital version of assignments will be posted via Blackboard.

Assignments to be reviewed will be presented during normal class times. Student must come in prepared to present their work and give input to other students' projects during discussions. When an assignment is due, the project must be clearly labeled and left with the TA instructor. Assignments not presented or turned in by due dates are considered late and will be penalized as described above.

## **Grading Timeline**

Grades will be posted two weeks following submission of work.

## **Additional Policies**

Students will not use laptops or phones during class times. Notes should be taken with pen and paper unless you have an accommodation that specifies use of a laptop or other device.

## **PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**\* NEW for a 4 unit undergraduate class that meets 2X per week**

**Participation is 15% of your grade for the course**

Participation is REQUIRED for every class meeting. You are expected to show up on on time, prepared, and engaged. Students who miss more than 3 classes without a medical excuse or family emergency in writing will receive deduction of half a letter grade for the course; a further half grade will be deducted for each 2 additional classes missed. Students who have more than 5 unexcused absences (i.e., those absences that have not been cleared with professor) will receive a

failing grade for the course. Habitual tardiness is not acceptable. Three tardiest equal one absence, with consequences as above.

\*You must email your instructor ahead of the beginning of the semester if you have any issues attending every class synchronously and using your computer video camera to be visible during class. If you have an issue only for one or two classes, make arrangements before the class begins.

**Behavior Violating University Standards:**

<https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>

Distribution or use of notes or recordings based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes, but is not limited to, providing materials for distribution by services publishing class notes. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the Internet or via any other media. (See Section C.1 Class Notes Policy).

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class. Recording can inhibit future free discussion and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor.

**Course Schedule Weekly Breakdown**

	TOPICS / DAILY ACTIVITIES	READINGS / RESPONSES
<b>WEEK 1</b>	Introduction to the course / Design Theory and History	
M 1.09	Introduction to the class, review syllabus & course outline What is design theory? Form, content, media, medium.	

<p>W 1.11</p>	<p><b>bell hooks</b> Design Culture, Privilege &amp; Alternative Perspectives on Design</p>	<p><b>Required Reading:</b> <a href="#">Design: A Happening Life by bell hooks</a></p> <p><a href="#">"There Is No Design for Everybody"</a> -<i>Fast Company</i> by Mark Wilson</p> <p><b>Recommended</b> <a href="#">There Is No Such Thing As Neutral Graphic Design by Ellen Lupton and Leslie Xia</a></p> <p><b>Design Response</b> Create a presentation (saved as a PDF) featuring a family heirloom or an object of design with sentimental value to you. <i>Photos &amp; descriptions should be included.</i></p> <p><b>DUE Friday, January 13th</b></p>
<p><b>WEEK 2      History &amp; Evolution of Design</b></p>		
<p>M 1.16</p> <p>W 1.18</p>	<p><b>MARTIN LUTHER KING HOLIDAY OBSERVED</b></p> <p><b>The Industrial Revolution &amp; Mass Production</b> What makes design so linked to industry and material culture?</p>	<p><b>Required Reading:</b> "Design Against Consumerism" in <i>A Companion to Contemporary Design Since 1945</i>, Paul Michelthwaite, Chapter 21</p> <p><b>Written Response</b> <i>"Design Against Consumerism"</i></p> <p><b>DUE Friday, January 20th</b></p>

**WEEK 3 – 20<sup>th</sup> Century Design & The Modernity Debate**

<p>M 1.23</p> <p>W 1.25</p>	<p><b>Culture in the 19th Century</b> Cottage Industry/ Victorian Design Arts &amp; Crafts Proto-industrial manufacturing John Ruskin</p> <p><b>Formation of Mass Culture</b> Marxism / Substructure and Superstructure</p> <p>Scramble for Africa</p>	<p><b>Recommended:</b> Karl Marx &amp; Friedrich Engels (1977) "Historical Materialism (Excerpted)," <i>in Art in Theory 1815 – 1900: An Anthology of Changing Ideas</i>. Ed. Charles Harrison et. al. Cambridge: Blackwell Press. p. 173 -177(pdf)</p> <p>Megg's History of Graphic Design, <i>The Art &amp; Crafts Movement, Chapter 10</i> (Available online at <a href="#">USC Libraries</a>)</p> <p><b>Required</b> <i>The Socialist Ideal: Art by William Morris</i> <b>Written Response DUE Friday January 27th</b></p>
<p><b>WEEK 4</b></p>		
<p>M 1.30</p> <p>W 2.1</p>	<p><b>Beyond the Bauhaus</b> <b>Guest Speaker Kalenna Sales, Associate Professor of Graphic Design, TSU</b></p> <p><b>W.E.B. Du Bois</b> <b>Social design &amp; Data Visualization</b> (America)</p> <p>De Stijl Russian Constructivism Suprematism Futurism</p>	<p><b>Required</b> <a href="https://educators.aiga.org/category/articles/beyond-the-bauhaus/">https://educators.aiga.org/category/articles/beyond-the-bauhaus/</a></p> <p><b>Recommended:</b> <i>Graphic Design Theory, Readings from the Field</i> Edited by Helen Armstrong – Manifesto of Futurism by FT Marinetti – Manifesto of Constructivism by Rodchenko – <i>Bauhaus Manifesto</i> by Walter Gropius</p> <p><i>Ornament &amp; Crime</i> by Walter Loos</p> <p><b>Design Response</b> Investigate a contemporary design or designer that uses modernist strategies. Provide visual examples and description: bullet points are sufficient. (Save presentation as a PDF) 1-3 pages. <b>DUE Friday February 3rd</b></p>
<p><b>WEEK 5</b></p>		
<p>2.6</p>	<p><b>The Bauhaus</b></p> <p>Women of the Bauhaus László Moholy-Nagy Jan Tschichold</p>	<p><b>Required Reading</b> <i>The Theory &amp; Organization of the Bauhaus</i> by Walter Gropius (pdf)</p> <p><i>Megg's History of Graphic Design</i>, Chapter 16, <i>The Bauhaus and the New Typography</i>  (Book available online at <a href="#">USC Libraries</a>)</p>



W 2.8	Beatrice Warde The Message of Good Design Through Typography	<b>Written Response</b> <a href="#">Graphic Design's Factory Settings</a> <b>DUE Friday February 10th</b>
		<b>Recommended Reading</b> <i>Graphic Design Theory, Readings from the Field</i> Edited by Helen Armstrong – <i>Our Book</i> El Lissitzky – <i>Typophoto</i> by Lászlo Moholy-Nagy – <i>The New Typography</i> by Jan Tschichold – <i>The Crystal Goblet</i> by Beatrice Warde  <a href="http://thinkingwithtype.com/">http://thinkingwithtype.com/</a>
<b>WEEK 6 – Modernism Makes it to America</b>		
M 2.13	<b>Titans of Modern Design</b> Charles and Ray Eames in Santa Monica, California  Modular Design The Case Study Houses  <b>The Creation of Multimedia</b> Glimpses of the USA during The Cold War	<b>Required:</b> “Enclosed by Images: The Eames’ Multimedia Architecture,” Beatriz Colomina, <i>Grey Room</i> , No. 2, 2001. p 5 - 26. (pdf)  <b>Written Response Option #1</b> “Enclosed by Images: The Eames’ Multimedia Architecture” by Beatriz Colomina or Option #2 Below...
W 2.15	<b>Modernist Architecture in the US</b>	<b>Recommended Field Trip</b> MAK Schindler House, Neutra House or Hollyhock House (Los Angeles)  <b>Written Response Option #2</b> Write a description or review of your experience after touring one of LA’s modernist homes. Include images
<b>Week 7 – Semiotics/Signs, Symbols and Language in Media</b>		

M 2.20	<p><b>PRESIDENTS DAY OBSERVED</b></p> <p>How We Consume Media Social &amp; Entertainment</p> <p>Semiotics and structuralism. Sign / signifier / signified</p>	<p><b>Required Reading &amp; Written Response</b> Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding" (pdf) <b>DUE Friday February 24</b></p> <p><b>Required Reading:</b> "A Course in General Linguistics," Ferdinand de Saussure, 1916, <i>Deconstruction in Context</i>. Excerpts p 148 – 152, 159 – 168. (pdf)</p>
W 9.28	<p>Myth as a second-order or meta-level sign. The impact of semiotics. <b>Encoding/Decoding</b></p>	<p><b>Recommended:</b> "Myth Today," Roland Barthes, <i>Mythologies</i>, 1972, excerpt p 109 -117</p>
<p><b>WEEK 8 – PRESENTATIONS DUE. Submit PDF files to Blackboard</b></p>		
M 2/27	<p><b>Midterm presentations</b> Students present 3-page slide deck introducing their research interest and proposal for paper (<i>Images, text &amp; references</i>)</p>	<p>Each student will do a 5-10 minute presentation with <b>5-10 slides on their midterm paper. Slides (decks) should introduce the subject and your thesis, should include selected images/visuals that represent the research, and include analysis or theory as to why it's important.</b></p>
W 3/1	<p><b>Midterm presentations</b> Students present 3-page slide deck introducing their research interest and proposal for paper. (<i>Images, text &amp; references</i>)</p>	
<p><b>WEEK 9 – PRESENTATIONS IN CLASS March 6th and 8th</b></p>		
<p><b>WEEK 10 SPRING BREAK</b> March 13<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup></p>		

<b>WEEK 11</b> <b>Design Research Papers Due Monday, March 20<sup>th</sup></b>		
M 3.20	Postmodernism, late capitalism, culture, consumerism  Super Graphics & The Break with Classicism and Revolt Against Modernism Denise Scott Brown & Robert Venturi  <b>New Wave Design</b> Memphis Breaking with Modernist Idealism	<b>Recommended Reading:</b> <i>Megg's History of Graphic Design</i> , Phillip B. Meggs & Alston Purvis, section on "Postmodernism," p 491 - 511 <b>OR</b>  Frederic Jameson, " <i>Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism</i> " (PDF)  <i>Learning from Las Vegas</i> , Graphic Design Theory  <b>Required Watching:</b> <a href="#">Simulation &amp; Simulacra</a> "The Precession of the Simulacra" in <i>Society of the Spectacle</i> , Jean Baudrillard Understanding the Simulacra and Hyperreal
W 3.9	<b>The Continuum of Post Modernism and Pluralism in Design</b>	<b>Recommended Reading:</b> <i>Extra Bold, A Feminist, Inclusive, Anti-racist, Nonbinary Field Guide for Graphic Designers</i> by Ellen Lupton
<b>Week 12 – Power Structures &amp; Resistance</b>		
M 3.27	Power Structures <b>"The Subject"</b>  <b>Visual Revolution</b> 60s Psychedelia Emory Douglas and the Black Panther Party Sister Corita Kent	<b>Required Reading &amp; Written Response</b> Michel Foucault (1982) "The Subject and Power," <i>Critical Inquiry</i> , Vol. 8, No. 4, pgs. 777 – 795 (pdf) <b>Written response Due Friday March 31st</b>  <b>Recommended Reading:</b> Robert E. Weems, Jr. " <i>The Revolution will be Marketed: American Corporations and Black Consumers in the 1960s</i> ," <i>Radical History</i> (PDF)  <a href="#">Black Experience in Graphic Design</a> 1968-2020

		<a href="#">Kwame Brathwaite; Black Is Beautiful</a>
W 3.29	Feminism, Gender, Performativity, Patriarchy  Queer Design Activism & Visibility in the LGBTQIA Community	<b>Recommended Reading:</b> <i>Queer X Design</i> 50 Years of Signs, Symbols, Banners, Logos, and Graphic Art by Andy Campbell
<b>WEEK 13 – De-Centering Euro-Centric Design History: Transnational Design &amp; Asian Diaspora</b>		
M 4.3	Transnationalism & Decolonizing Design	<b>Required Reading &amp; Written Response</b> <i>Transnationalism for Design History: Knowledge Production and Decolonization Through East Asian Design History</i> by Yuko Kikuchi, Companion to Contemporary Design pg. 75 <b>DUE Friday March 7th</b>
W 4.5	Huang Hua Cheng, Led Taiwan into the First Design Revolution	<b>Recommended Reading</b> <a href="#">Huang Hua Cheng</a>
<b>WEEK 14 – Fashion &amp; Identity</b>		
M 4.10	<b>The Fashionable Object African Fashion Design</b>	<b>Required Reading:</b> “The Fashionable Object” by Christopher Breward, A Companion to Contemporary Design since 1945, Chapter 14 (PDF)  <b>DESIGN RESPONSE: create a deck that reviews an item of fashion. Site it’s cultural significance and history. DUE Wednesday April 12<sup>th</sup> for in-class discussion</b>

W 4.12	<b>Review of the Fashionable Object slide decks</b>	<b>Recommended Reading:</b> Decolonizing Design (Eye On Design) <a href="https://eyeondesign.aiga.org/what-does-it-mean-to-decolonize-design/">https://eyeondesign.aiga.org/what-does-it-mean-to-decolonize-design/</a>
<b>Week 15 –Technology &amp; The Virtual</b>		
M 4.17	<b>The Future of Design From the past</b>	<b>Required Reading:</b> “Virtual” <i>A Companion to Contemporary Design since 1945</i> , Rina Arya pg. 139
W 4.19	<b>The Design of Future Forecasting</b> Media, Technology, Sustainability <b>DIY Design</b>	Recommended: Victor Papanek <a href="#"><i>Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change</i></a>
<b>Week 16 – Critical Design &amp; Design Fiction</b>		
M 4.24	The Design of Everyday Objects by Guy Norman The Bible of UX Design  Indigenous Design Technology, Craftivism	<b>Recommended Reading:</b> <a href="https://www.fastcompany.com/90338379/i-wrote-the-book-on-user-friendly-design-what-i-see-today-horrifies-me">https://www.fastcompany.com/90338379/i-wrote-the-book-on-user-friendly-design-what-i-see-today-horrifies-me</a>
W 4.26	Speculative Design Projects & Design Fiction	<b>Required Reading</b> “Speculative Everything” Design, Fiction & Social Dreaming, Chapter 1, Anthony Dunne & Fiona Raby 2013 Chapters 1 & 2 (PDF)
<b>FINAL Speculative Design Deck (slide show pdf) Submitted by May 3rd</b>		

## **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](http://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, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

### **SUPPORT SYSTEMS:**

Student Counseling Services (SCS) – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call  
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. <https://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling/>

#### **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1 (800) 273-8255**

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.  
[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

**Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call** Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

#### **Sexual Assault Resource Center**

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: [sarc.usc.edu](http://sarc.usc.edu)

#### **Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086**

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. <https://eeotix.usc.edu/>

#### **Bias Assessment Response and Support**

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. [studentaffairs.usc.edu/](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/)

#### **The Office of Disability Services and Programs**

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. [dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu)

**Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710**

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

[studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa)

**USC Emergency Information**

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

[emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

**USC Department of Public Safety** – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000. 24-hour emergency or to report a crime. Provides overall safety to USC community. [dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)

**Diversity at USC**

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. [diversity.usc.edu](http://diversity.usc.edu)