

## I. Description

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From royalty to rebels, religious leaders to reporters, influential individuals have shaped culture and commerce throughout history. Today, social media enables virtually anyone to develop and exert influence. Modern influencers include journalists, self-proclaimed experts, creators, even AI-powered virtual characters.

Taking advantage of this trend — or is it just a fad? — marketers and other communication managers are planning influencer campaigns to ideally reach niche segments, cut through the clutter, enhance their brands, and achieve bottom-line goals.

The challenges, however, are substantial. Managers must first distinguish the truly influential — those who shape beliefs and behavior — from the merely popular, especially since such vanity metrics as “followers” and “likes” are easily purchased. Fraud permeates the industry, with agencies and even platforms complicit in the deception.

Managers must also identify individuals who have little online presence but greater influence than social-media creators and celebrities. (Indeed, social-media stars comprise just part of this course.) In addition, campaign success hinges on analyzing data, evaluating communities of interest and networks of influence, complying with both platform and government regulations, and adjusting tactics on the fly.

On the flip side, many individuals aspire to increase their personal influence, whether online or simply at work. This requires expressing their expertise with personality, perspective, and a persuasive amount of emotion.

To help managers and aspiring influencers identify what matters most — and what will waste time and resources — this course emphasizes professional-caliber community research, critical analysis, and creative expression.

## II. Learning Outcomes

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This course is divided into two parts:

1. You will learn how to enhance your personal influence with real-world activities.
2. You will learn how to plan an influencer-based campaign.

By the end of this course, you will acquire expertise and experience in the following:

- Conducting in-depth qualitative and quantitative research to identify and assess true influence (not just popularity), communities of interest (not demographic segments), and networks of influence.
- Planning influencer campaigns that meet organizational goals beyond “engagement,” and analyzing relevant data — not just vanity metrics — to gauge campaign effectiveness.
- Applying frameworks (such as the AIDA customer journey) to determine which influencers to employ at different stages of a campaign.
- Creating plans and content to build personal influence based on expertise, expression, and expansion.
- Defining and debating issues of diversity and inclusion among influencers, in campaigns, and on platforms, including how algorithms and metrics impact inclusion and income distribution.

### III. Notes

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This master-level course requires extensive reading (100+ pages per week), research, analysis, and planning. For each unit of in-class contact time, the university expects 2 hours of out-of-class student work; consequently, prepare to invest 8 hours per week outside of class into course-related work.

In addition to lectures and in-class exercises, this course is web-enhanced, with mandatory discussions and lecture slides posted on Blackboard. Students will also use ChatGPT or other AI apps to complete projects.

USC computing support:

- [USC Computing Center Laptop Loaner Program](#)
- [Zoom information for students](#)
- [Blackboard help for students](#)
- [Software available to USC Campus](#)

### IV. Instructor

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**Freddy Tran Nager** is the Associate Director of the M.S. in Digital Social Media program at Annenberg, where he has taught since 2012. Beyond the classroom, he has worked with creators and influencers for over three decades as a marketer and creative. In 1994, he served as Editor of one of the world's first entertainment websites, *AMP: MCA Records Online*, which involved working with musicians, their managers, record executives, and radio programmers. He subsequently joined ad agency Saatchi & Saatchi as a senior creative for interactive media, winning awards for his work on Toyota digital media. Freddy currently runs the creative-strategy consultancy Atomic Tango LLC, which serves a diverse array of clients, including executives, entrepreneurs, and influencers. A second-generation Trojan, Freddy received his MBA from USC and his undergraduate degree from Harvard. He welcomes connections on LinkedIn at [FreddyNager.com](https://www.linkedin.com/in/freddynager/).

### V. Media

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In addition to the following publications and videos, articles from academic journals and news publications will be assigned and discussed. (See the Lecture Schedule for details.)

#### Books

- **Trish Hall, *Writing To Persuade: How To Bring People Over To Your Side*, 2020 Liveright.** The former editor of the *New York Times* op-ed page provides principles and practices for persuasion.
- **Robert V. Kozinets, et al, *Influencers & Creators: Business, Culture And Practice*, 2023 Sage.** USC Annenberg Prof. Kozinets and colleagues evaluate the influencer marketing industry.
- **David H.P. Shulman, *The Presentation Of Self In Contemporary Social Life*, 2016 Sage** (free online through the USC Library). Prof. Shulman adapts Erving Goffman's 1959 book, *The Presentation Of Self In Everyday Life*, for 21st century media.

#### Long-Form Videos

- ***Fyre: The Greatest Party That Never Happened***, Netflix
- ***Fyre Fraud***, Hulu
- ***The Inventor: Out For Blood In Silicon Valley***, HBO-MAX

#### Sites:

- **Influencer Marketing Hub**, <https://influencermarketinghub.com> — be critical as you read this content.
- **USC Reach**, <https://www.uscreach.com>, the official creator club of USC.

## VI. Assignments

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The following are brief summaries; complete instructions will be posted on Blackboard.

- **Assignment 1: Op-Ed Analysis + Writing (10%):** This assignment draws from Trish Hall's book *Writing To Persuade*, and consists of two parts:
  - **Op-Ed Analysis:** Evaluate a newspaper op-ed piece from the past week.
  - **Personal Op-Ed:** Write an op-ed piece for that publication, using ChatGPT for the first draft.
- **Assignment 2: Personal Influence Plan (20%):** Your plan should involve changing beliefs or behaviors, not becoming popular in social media. Identify a niche and set guidelines for expertise, expression, and expansion. This plan will guide your creative expressions for the rest of the course.
- **Assignment 3: Creative Expression (10%):** Based on your personal influence plan, create at least 3 expressions of your influence niche in the media of your choice (blog, video, podcast, etc.) and post them on the platform(s) of your choice. You will be graded on your production quality, and more importantly, how your expressions apply the teachings in the course.
- **Assignment 4: Personal Influence Report (10%):** On the last day of class, you will submit a critical analysis of your performance. You will not be held responsible for "success" or "shortcomings," but how you evaluate your performance.
- **Assignment 5: Team Campaign Plan (30%):** In a competition between teams, you will plan an influencer campaign on a topic to be announced. Share your PowerPoint on Blackboard, with the best project receiving an "A." This project includes quantitative and qualitative analysis of a community of interest leading to a detailed plan integrating at least 3 influencers.
- **Literature Review (10%):** This entails two requirements on Blackboard.
  - **Assigned Readings:** In 100-300 words, evaluate course readings by responding to discussion questions and classmates' posts.
  - **Weekly News Evaluations:** You must stay atop news related to influencers. Every week, you will share on Blackboard a relevant recent article from the *L.A. Times*, *New York Times*, or *Wall Street Journal*, and express your opinion about it in approximately 100 words. You may be selected to present your evaluation during class.
- **Class Participation (10%):** Attendance is required, but attendance alone won't earn participation points. Whether online, in class, or with your team, you must converse, ask questions, and debate respectfully. Staying silent is unacceptable, especially in the company of guest speakers, since it conveys disengagement. On a related note, unauthorized use of phones and computers in class will result in a loss of 1 participation point per incident. In addition, arriving late or leaving early without instructor permission will also result in a 1 participation point deduction. Preparation is essential: review past lectures, complete assigned readings, research additional materials, and apply theories to personal experiences. Here is how your class participation is evaluated:
  - Is it relevant to the discussion and respectful of others?
  - Does it address ideas offered by the readings, lectures, guests, or classmates?
  - Does it increase everyone's understanding or merely repeat facts?
  - Does it support views with data, third-party theories, and research?
  - Does it test new ideas and challenge assumptions, or just "play it safe"?

The other half of your participation grade will be based on your contributions to your team assignment. At the end of the semester, you will confidentially rate each of your peers on a scale of 1-5 based on the value of their feedback throughout the term. Students will receive an average of their ratings as part of their final grade.

VII. Grading

Breakdown

Assignment	Due Date	% of Grade
Op-Ed Analysis + Writing	9/8	10
Personal Influence Plan	10/6	20
Creative Expression	11/3	10
Personal influence Report	12/7	10
Team Campaign Plan	11/17	30
Literature Review	all semester (13 total)	10
Class Participation	all semester	10
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100%</b>

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

Standards

Grade	Description
<b>A</b>	Excellent: A's and A-minuses must be earned by "going the extra mile" to produce professional-caliber work that could be presented to a client, supervisor, or investor. A-level work features high production quality with no mistakes, draws on in-depth research of authoritative sources, reflects comprehensive understanding of course materials, and demonstrates superlative creativity, critical thinking, and communication skills. Recommendations will be provided on request <b>only</b> to students who earn a solid A in the course.
<b>B</b>	Good: B's are earned for graduate-school caliber work featuring in-depth research of authoritative sources, critical thinking, and solid if not thorough understanding of course materials, with only minor substantive shortcomings. The ideas and production quality need to be stronger to succeed in a professional context.
<b>C</b>	Fair: C's are earned for undergraduate-caliber work, reflecting insufficient critical thinking, only basic understanding, superficial research, and/or flawed production quality. Note that for graduate students, a C- is equal to failing.
<b>D</b>	Marginal: D's are earned for amateurish work featuring insufficient research, many errors, incomplete sections, and/or superficial analysis. The work demonstrates only rudimentary understanding.

<b>F</b>	Failing: F's are earned for work that's incomplete, not researched, carelessly executed, and/or plagiarized. Note that plagiarism may also be subject to disciplinary measures. The work demonstrates little to no understanding. Three or more unexcused absences will also result in an F.
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**Timeframe and Disputes**

Since this is a communication-management course, deadlines are critical. Without an exceptional circumstance and the instructor's permission, late assignments will be penalized one grade level (e.g., A to B) per day of lateness. As in the working world, where lateness can result in lost opportunities or even lawsuits, missing a deadline by even one minute will result in a penalty.

**Assignment Grading Rubric**

Assignments will be graded on the following criteria without a fixed percentage, since unacceptable quality in any one area (writing, research, etc.) can undermine an entire project. Conversely, exceptional quality in one area may contribute to an overall positive evaluation.

- **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, you should not just answer the questions, you should also question the answers, including methods and data. (Academic journal articles are not immune from critical analysis.) Assignments are not just reports: they must describe "why" and "how," not just "what," and will be evaluated on the quality of the reasoning.
- **Creativity:** Your work should feature original ideas, not just "best practices," and should NEVER consist of copied or AI-generated work (see "Academic Integrity" in this syllabus). Creativity is expected for both content ideas and business strategies. You may certainly be "inspired" by others, as long as you properly credit the sources, but most of the thinking and execution should be originally yours, and extra points will be awarded to work that is innovative and imaginative. The goal is to differentiate and distinguish yourself — after all, "outstanding" literally means "to stand out."
- **Production Quality:** Your work should feature professional production values in terms of writing, design, and (as applicable) video and audio content. Treat your work as a submission to a media company, client, supervisor, or investor. Eliminate all errors by proofreading meticulously, using Microsoft editing tools, AI apps, and/or Grammarly.com (strongly recommended). For help with fluency or simply polishing your writing, contact Annenberg's Graduate Writing Coach (<http://cmgtwriting.uscannenberg.org/>). For design tips, read *Presentation Zen* (available via USC library).
- **Research Quantity and Quality:** Support your work with research from multiple authoritative sources, including academic journals, major news publications, and credible experts — no guessing, generalizations, or stereotypes (such as "Gen Z").
  - Start with the USC online library and our librarians, who have prepared Research Guidelines for CMGT (<https://libguides.usc.edu/cmgt>) and DSM (<https://libguides.usc.edu/digitalsocialmedia>), as well as all other departments throughout the university (<https://libguides.usc.edu>).
  - Search Google Scholar (<https://scholar.google.com/>) before searching regular Google.
  - Never cite Wikipedia; rather, refer to the sources listed in the Wikipedia article.
  - Do not trust sources cited by AI tools, such as ChatGPT. Verify before quoting or citing.
  - Avoid company blogs (unless they are companies you are researching) and superficial news sites like the 3F's (*Forbes*, *Fortune*, and *Fast Company* are not authoritative).
  - Go beyond third-party sources and conduct direct research, such as focus groups, surveys, and interviews, particularly of subject-matter experts like professionals and professors.
  - Within the body of papers, include reference notes, either parenthetical, such as (Lee 2017), or in the form of footnotes or endnotes.
  - Bibliography entries must include COMPLETE source information, not just a URL. You may use any format that includes ALL the following: FULL FIRST NAMES AND LAST NAMES of authors (we respect creators in this course, so a first-name initial alone is not enough — a critical flaw

with APA style), article/chapter titles, the name of the publication, dates of publication, original URLs (not USC library), and the dates a particular website was accessed.

## VIII. Policies and Procedures

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- **Attendance:** Participation from each student is critical to the success of this course; therefore, class attendance is mandatory. You must attend all classes, arrive on time, and stay for the entire session. Although no points are awarded for attendance, an unexcused absence will result in the loss of 5 grade points (half a grade); 3 or more unexcused absences will result in an F for the course. In addition, any missed in-class assignments (such as quizzes and presentations) cannot be made up without a valid excuse. If you need to miss a class for a valid reason, such as religious observances or medical procedures, you must attain approval from the instructor in advance (except, of course, in emergencies). Student athletes should provide approved Travel Request Letters. For any excused absences, you will need to obtain lecture notes from classmates and Blackboard.
- **Illness:** If you are feeling ill, particularly with COVID symptoms, stay home to protect the health of your classmates, your instructors, and yourself. If you show up to class with an illness, you will be asked to leave and will be recorded as absent.
- **Electronics:** You must have a computer for accessing course materials from home; **however, phones, tablets, and computers may NOT be used during class meetings without permission of the instructor**, and should be completely hidden away before class begins. Any unauthorized use of electronics will result in the loss of 1 participation point, and you might be asked to leave the session.
- **Artificial Intelligence Apps:** You are expected to use AI tools, such as ChatGPT, in this class; in fact, some assignments might require it. Here are the guidelines, with assignments containing more details:
  - AI is a useful tool for helping start an assignment — even help overcome writer’s block — but the final submission must reflect your ideas and revisions. Treat AI as a personal intern: someone who can help you, but who has shortcomings and may be prone to mistakes.
  - Don’t trust what AI says. Not only is ChatGPT’s database limited to the years 2021 and earlier, it draws its answers from fiction, nonfiction, and misinformation. It might even fabricate sources. Assume the answers it provides are wrong, and doublecheck them. (Consider using Google Bard or Bing AI as supplemental tools.) You will be held responsible for any errors.
  - Provide detailed prompts to get the best results. You might have to try multiple variations.
  - Your work will become part of the AI’s database, so do not include any sensitive information.
  - You must acknowledge using any AI tools, just as you would any other reference, in your assignments. Include a paragraph explaining what you used AI for and how you used it, including the specific prompts.
- **Respect:** 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, so respect the opinions of others; instead of saying that you “disagree” or even “respectfully disagree,” offer a “different perspective.”
- **Appointments:** If you have questions or concerns, whether academic, career, or personal, contact the instructor to arrange a meeting (please see email addresses on the first page of this syllabus). In emergencies, see the support systems below.

### Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

#### Academic Integrity

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university’s mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional,

and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or “recycle” work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), 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 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](#).

### **Annenberg Statement**

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.

## **Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies**

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, 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 course materials. 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. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

### **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](https://osas.usc.edu). You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto: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](mailto: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://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/annenberg-scholarships-and-awards>

The Annenberg Student Success Fund is a donor-funded financial aid account available to USC Annenberg undergraduate and graduate students for non-tuition expenses related to extra- and co-curricular programs and opportunities.

*Annenberg Student Emergency Aid Fund*

<https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/annenberg-scholarships-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.

*USC American Language Institute*

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

English language instruction, assessment, and resources to support the academic and professional success of non-native speakers of English pursuing degrees at USC.

*Annenberg Graduate Writing Support*

[sites.usc.edu/graduate-writing-coach/](http://sites.usc.edu/graduate-writing-coach/)

In addition to being the place to make one-on-one appointments with the writing coach, this website will host resources, videos, and news about upcoming programs.

*Annenberg Digital Lounge*

[annenbergdl.org](http://annenbergdl.org)

Free lessons and certifications on a range of digital media.

## IX. Course Schedule

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This schedule will likely change depending on class progress, world events, and guest speaker availability. For final requirements, please refer to the lecture slides, which will be posted to Blackboard the night before each class. Assigned readings should be completed prior to the NEXT class.

### **Class 1, August 24: Defining "Influence"**

- Course intro
- Influence throughout history
- Popularity ≠ Influence
- Readings (complete before next class unless otherwise indicated):
  - Weekly Article Evaluation
  - *Influencers & Creators*, Chapters 1-4
  - Fine F. Leung, et al, "Does Influencer Marketing Really Pay Off?", *Harvard Business Review*, 24 November 2022, <https://hbr.org/2022/11/does-influencer-marketing-really-pay-off>
  - Tim Ingham, "The Five Most Powerful People in the Music Industry..." *Rolling Stone*, 25 January 2019, <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-features/the-five-most-powerful-people-in-the-music-industry-don't-work-in-the-music-industry-783723/>
  - "Time 100: The Most Influential People Of 2023," *Time*, <https://time.com/collection/100-most-influential-people-2023/>
- Assignment due before next class: Self-Intro + Syllabus Acknowledgment on Blackboard

### **Class 2, August 31: Meet The Press**

- Journalists as influencers
- Writing tips
- Readings:

- Weekly Article Evaluation
- Jenn Harris, "How To Tell The Difference Between A Journalist And A Food Influencer," *Los Angeles Times*, 11 September 2022, <https://www.latimes.com/food/story/2022-09-11/journalist-influencer-difference>
- Assignment due September 8: Op-Ed Analysis + Writing — upload to Blackboard; you will need to read these books to complete the assignment (no online discussion)
  - Trish Hall, *Writing To Persuade*
  - *Copyediting With An Attitude*
  - *The Gobbledygook Manifesto*

### Class 3, September 7: Finding Your Niche

- "Be yourself" and other useless advice about "authenticity" (including performativity, calibrated amateurism, and contrived authenticity)
- Nexus of opportunity + passion + expertise
- Readings:
  - Weekly Article Evaluation
  - *Influencers & Creators*, Chapter 6
  - David H.P. Shulman, *The Presentation Of Self In Contemporary Social Life*, Chapters 1-4
  - Rebecca Jennings, "Everybody Wants To Be A LinkedInfluencer: And The Biggest Power Users Are Turning To Ghostwriters," *Vox*, 26 October 2022, <https://www.vox.com/the-goods/23423182/linkedin-ghostwriting-jobs>
  - Scott Barry Kauffman, "Authenticity Under Fire," *Scientific American*, 14 June 2019, <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/beautiful-minds/authenticity-under-fire/>
  - Brooke Erin Duffy & Ysabel Gerrard, "BeReal And The Doomed Quest For Online Authenticity," *Wired*, 5 August 2022, <https://www.wired.com/story/bereal-doomed-online-authenticity/>

### Class 4, September 14: Expertise

- Why aren't more experts influential?
- Elements of expertise: education, experience, talent, association
- Readings:
  - Weekly Article Evaluation
  - David H.P. Shulman, *The Presentation Of Self In Contemporary Social Life*, Chapters 5-7
  - Robbie Whelan, "The Social-Media Stars Who Move Markets," *Wall Street Journal*, 27 August 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-social-media-stars-who-move-markets-11630056601>
  - Nicole Phelps, "Margaret Zhang Is The New Editor In Chief Of Vogue China," *Vogue*, 24 February 2021, <https://www.vogue.com/article/vogue-china-margaret-zhang-editor-in-chief>
  - Daniel Oberhaus, "Why Some Citizens Reject Science," *Harvard Magazine*, September-October 2021, <https://www.harvardmagazine.com/2021/09/right-now-clash-science-ideology>
- Assignment due October 6: Personal Influence Plan — upload to Blackboard
- Assignment due November 7: Creative Expressions posted on platforms

### Class 5, September 21: Expression

- Selecting your medium
- Platforms as influencers
- Personality + perspective + persuasion = your voice
- Integrating emotions and storytelling
- Readings/Viewings:
  - Weekly Article Evaluation
  - *Influencers & Creators*, Chapter 5
  - Gary Robbins, "Actor Alan Alda And Scripps Research Will Transform Scientists Into Master Storytellers," *Los Angeles Times*, 18 January 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-01-18/actor-alan-alda-and-scripps-research-will-transform-scientists-into-master-storytellers>
  - Derek Muller, "My Life Story," Veritasium/YouTube, 18 June 2018, <https://youtu.be/S1tFT4smd6E>
  - Matthew Inman, "You're Not Going To Believe What I'm About To Tell You," *The Oatmeal*, <https://theoatmeal.com/comics/believe> [TRIGGER WARNING: contains profanity and an upsetting reference to slavery.]

- Daniel Simons & Christopher Chabris, "Why We Get Scammed and What to Do About It," Wall Street Journal, 7 July 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/why-we-get-scammed-and-what-to-do-about-it-442c2b01>
- Steven Pinker, "Why Academics' Writing Stinks." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 26 September 2014, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/why-academics-stink-at-writing/>
- Video: Dr. Robert Cialdini & Steve Martin, "Science Of Persuasion," Influence At Work/YouTube, <https://youtu.be/cFdCzN7RYbw>

### **Class 6, September 28: Expansion**

- Amplification and algorithms
- Readings/Viewings:
  - Weekly Article Evaluation
  - Kevin Kelly, "1,000 True Fans," *The Technium*, <https://kk.org/thetechnium/1000-true-fans/>
  - Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic, "Why Do So Many Incompetent Men Become Leaders?," *Harvard Business Review*, 22 August 2013, <https://hbr.org/2013/08/why-do-so-many-incompetent-men>
  - Maxim Sytch, "How to Figure Out How Much Influence You Have at Work," *Harvard Business Review*, 18 February 2019, <https://hbr.org/2019/02/how-to-figure-out-how-much-influence-you-have-at-work>
  - Video: Jonah Berger, "Contagious: Why Things Catch On," Talks at Google/YouTube, 27 March 2013, <https://youtu.be/FN4eDk1pq6U>
  - *Crafting Contagious Workbook*

### **Class 7, October 5: Issues, Equity + Ethics**

- Legal vs Ethical decisions
- Diversity and inclusion
- Readings/Viewings:
  - Weekly Article Evaluation
  - *Influencers & Creators*, Chapters 6, 8
  - Brooke Erin Duffy & Colten Meisner, "Platform Governance At The Margins: Social Media Creators' Experiences With Algorithmic (In)visibility," *Media Culture & Society*, 23 July 2022, <https://journals-sagepub-com.libproxy1.usc.edu/doi/full/10.1177/01634437221111923>
  - Brooke Erin Duffy, Kate M. Miltner, Amanda Wahlstedt, "Policing 'Fake' Femininity: Authenticity, Accountability, And Influencer Antifandom," *New Media & Society*, 24, no. 7 (July 2022): 1657–76. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448221099234>
  - Li Jin, "The Creator Economy Needs A Middle Class," *Harvard Business Review*, 17 December 2020, <https://hbr.org/2020/12/the-creator-economy-needs-a-middle-class>
  - Sophie Bishop, "Influencer Management Tools: Algorithmic Cultures, Brand Safety, and Bias," *Social Media + Society*, 30 March 2021, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/20563051211003066>
  - Fyre Festival pitch deck + documentaries:
    - *Fyre: The Greatest Party That Never Happened*, Netflix
    - *Fyre Fraud*, Hulu

### **October 12: Fall Recess — No Class**

### **Class 8, October 19: Goals + Nonsense**

- SMART Goals, KPI's, vanity metrics
- The 3B's of Brand, Buzz, Behavior
- Analytics vs Waste
- Readings:
  - Weekly Article Evaluation
  - *Influencers & Creators*, Chapters 9, 11
  - Suzanne Kapner & Sharon Terlep, "Online Influencers Tell You What To Buy, Advertisers Wonder Who's Listening," Wall Street Journal, 20 October 2019, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/online-influencers-tell-you-what-to-buy-advertisers-wonder-whos-listening-11571594003>
  - Association of National Advertisers, "Influencer Marketing Measurement Guidelines," June 2022

- Grant McCracken, "Who Is the Celebrity Endorser? Cultural Foundations of the Endorsement Process," *Journal of Consumer Research*, December 1989
- Jan-Frederik Grave, "What KPIs Are Key? Evaluating Performance Metrics for Social Media Influencers," *Social Media + Society*, July-September 2019
- Assignment due November 17: Team Campaign Plan on Blackboard

### Class 9, October 26: Audience First

- Communities of interest, NOT stereotypes
- Networks of influence
- Readings:
  - Weekly Article Evaluation
  - *Influencers & Creators*, Chapters 3
  - Ogilvy, "The Rebirth Of Social Communities" (PDF on Blackboard)
  - MIT Initiative On The Digital Economy, "It's Still Who You Know That Counts," Medium, 13 July 2023, <https://medium.com/mit-initiative-on-the-digital-economy/its-still-who-you-know-that-counts-eb9810f6075f>
  - Taylor Lorenz, "For Creators, Community Is The New Follower Count," *Washington Post*, 24 July 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/07/24/influencers-chat-apps-community/>
  - Kim Parker, "How Pew Research Center Will Report On Generations Moving Forward," Pew Research Center, 22 May 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/05/22/how-pew-research-center-will-report-on-generations-moving-forward/>

### Class 10, November 2: Influencer Evaluation

- Influencer types and taxonomy
- Readings:
  - Weekly Article Evaluation
  - *Influencers & Creators*, Chapter 10
  - Masuda, et al, "Impacts Of Influencer Attributes On Purchase Intentions In Social Media Influencer Marketing: Mediating Roles Of Characterizations," *Technological Forecasting & Social Change*, January 2022, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S004016252100679X>
  - Amanda Hess, "The Triumph Of The Celebrity Endorsement," *New York Times*, 14 April 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/14/arts/celebrity-endorsements-catherine-zeta-jones.html>
  - Vanessa Grigoriadis, "The Beauty of 78.5 Million Followers: How Social Media Stars Like Addison Rae Gave The Cosmetics Industry A Makeover," *New York Times*, 23 March 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/23/magazine/addison-rae-beauty-industry.html>
  - Video: *The Inventor: Out For Blood In Silicon Valley*, HBO-MAX

### Class 11, November 9: Campaign Planning

- Integrating Influencers into the AIDA Customer Journey
- Readings:
  - Weekly Article Evaluation
  - *Influencers & Creators*, Chapter 11
  - Ana Andjelic, "Three Models Of Social Influence," Medium, 9 December 2019, <https://medium.com/swlh/three-models-of-social-influence-46d486374b8c>
  - Donovan X. Ramsey, "One woman helped move the needle on Black vaccination in South L.A. She's 'Mama Tsega'", *Los Angeles Times*, 10 December 2021, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-12-10/mama-tsega-a-quiet-force-at-l-a-city-hall>
  - Christopher F. Schuetze, "A German State Is Last in Almost Everything, But It's No. 1 in Vaccines," *New York Times*, 12 April 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/12/world/europe/germany-covid-vaccine-strategy.html>
  - Mike Ives, "Celebrities Are Endorsing Covid Vaccines. Does It Help?" *New York Times*, 1 May 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/01/health/vaccinated-celebrities.html>
  - Jan Hoffman, "Clergy Preach Faith in the Covid Vaccine to Doubters," *New York Times*, 14 March 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/14/health/clergy-covid-vaccine.html>

- Maya Lau & Laura J. Nelson, "From Taco Vendors To Flyers: The Epic Outreach To Vaccinate California's Most Vulnerable," *Los Angeles Times*, 22 March 2021, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-03-22/how-covid-vaccines-reaching-high-need-california-areas>
- Assignment due December 7: Personal Influence Report — upload to Blackboard

**Class 12, November 16: Managing Influencers + Agencies**

- Contracts, controversies, and the power of commitment
- Statements of Work + Creative Briefs
- Readings:
  - Weekly Article Evaluation
  - FTC Endorsement Guidelines 2023
  - Agency Onboarding Questions
  - Ryan Kartje, "Caleb Williams Inc: How one family and a PR firm helped a USC QB build an NIL empire," *Los Angeles Times*, 10 July 2022, <https://www.latimes.com/sports/usc/story/2022-07-10/an-inside-look-at-usc-qb-caleb-williams-nil-agreements>
  - Katherine Rosman, "Girl, Wash Your Timeline," *New York Times*, 29 April 2021 <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/29/style/rachel-hollis-tiktok-video.html>
  - Anderson, "Influencer Marketing Contracts: 21 Clauses To Always Include," *Casual Fridays*, 1 February 2018, <https://casualfridays.com/influencer-marketing-contracts-21-clauses-that-should-be-in-every-contract/>

**November 23: Thanksgiving — No Class**

**Class 13, November 30: Future of Influence**

- Digital Human as a Service: Virtual Influencers
- Assignments:
  - Weekly Article Evaluation
  - *Influencers & Creators*, Chapter 13
  - Sites: AWW Tokyo <https://aww.tokyo> + Replika AI <https://replika.ai>
  - Ingrid Lunden, Superplastic, A Creator Of 'Synthetic' Influencers, Raises \$20M Led By Amazon In Deal To Make TV Shows And More," *TechCrunch*, 15 February 2023, <https://techcrunch.com/2023/02/15/superplastic-a-creator-of-synthetic-influencers-raises-20m-led-by-amazon-in-deal-to-make-tv-shows-and-more/>
  - Jessie Yeung & Gawon Bae, "Forever Young, Beautiful And Scandal-Free: The Rise Of South Korea's Virtual Influencers," CNN, 30 July 2022, <https://edition.cnn.com/style/article/south-korea-virtual-influencers-beauty-social-media-intl-hnk-dst/index.html>
  - Kim Eunjin (Anna), et al, "The Next Hype In Social Media Advertising: Examining Virtual Influencers' Brand Endorsement Effectiveness," *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2023, <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1089051>

**Class 14, December 7: Exam Week — Final Personal Influence Reports Due**