

Session: Spring 2024, Mon/Wed 12:00pm–1:50pm

Section: 20576R

Location: ANN 406

Instructor: Michael J. Wissot, MBA, MIM

Office: ASC 333

Office Hours: appointment only (virtual / in-person)

Contact Info: mwissot@usc.edu / 805-490-2460 mobile

I. Course Description & Notes

This class will require an intensive examination and application of effective communication in the workforce. Students will be exposed to a wide range of professional communication strategies and tactics, and they will be expected to apply these approaches to their preferred industries. The class will cover a variety of contemporary business topics, allowing students to discover unique opportunities affecting organizations/industries of interest and to learn how to harness such knowledge. *All students will be evaluated using a Letter Grade scale. Lectures vary between PPT slides and discussions of reading material. Students must take notes (handwritten or typed). Audio/video recordings of lectures are not permitted. For any class dates that cannot be offered in person, due to university policy and/or professor's unexpected absence, professor will strive to supplement with virtual learning.*

II. Student Learning Outcomes

This course will aim to achieve the following goals: **1)** To achieve excellence in constructing and delivering business presentations; **2)** To acquire skills in managing the pace, content and outcome of professional interviews; **3)** To strengthen skills in developing concise and substantive résumés and cover letters; **4)** To refine your own personal brand and sell your value proposition to an organization; **5)** To understand the strategic challenges facing an organization or industry of interest.

We will demonstrate the highest attainable work ethic and discover within us that which is superior to circumstance. We will persevere this semester toward the most rewarding pursuit in higher education – the stimulation of thought, emotion, and soul. It is my duty to prepare you, as future leaders of the Free World, to integrate your communication skills into all fields of endeavor. As individuals and as a collective unit, we will dare to be great.

Required Preparation:

N/A

Recommended Preparation:

COMM 204 or COMM 322

Having a foundation in presentational speaking is highly advisable

III. Course Attendance

Class will meet each Monday and Wednesday throughout the semester. You must complete ALL course requirements in order to earn a grade in this course. You are responsible for giving presentations on the dates when you are scheduled. Since your participation in this course – both as a speaker and listener – is vital, any absences from class will affect your final grade. You are, therefore, required to notify me BEFORE missing class and provide corresponding documentation AFTERWARD. In the event that both of these criteria are satisfied, you will receive “make up” assignments/projects to suffice for time missed from class. Please note that I will record an unexcused absence if you miss any considerable portion of the class period (arriving late, leaving early) without my prior authorization.

IV. Description and Assessment of Assignments

Goals Essay	You will draft an essay that addresses your career ambitions, as well as your plans and ideas for realizing them. You will focus on the professional aspects where you anticipate being most satisfied. It's an opportunity to identify preferred industries and employers, as well as which opportunities you may pursue in order to progress toward your goals. You will identify the unique skill sets and experiences that will best prepare you, any unique challenges/expectations you expect to face along the way and any people you may want to engage for mentorship/guidance.
Informative / Discovery Presentation	You will deliver a 6-8 minute presentation on your research of a business-oriented current event, trend or topic of potential relevance to a targeted organization. You will identify how that trend is affecting the organization. The goal here is for you to inform the desired internal audience of a relatively new topic or to expand their knowledge on a topic already known.
Persuasive / Strategy Presentation	You will deliver a 7-10 minute presentation to advocate for the launch of a new Corporate Social Responsibility initiative, a new Diversity Equity & Inclusion initiative or a new Artificial Intelligence integration on behalf of a for-profit or nonprofit entity. You will cultivate your entrepreneurial instincts by creating an initiative or revenue-generating property that advances the targeted company's value proposition to its targeted stakeholders. You will position yourself as an expert in this new area of business development, and to assertively promote your understanding and ability to add value within this domain.
Interview Assessment	You will interview a business professional (with five years of experience or less) or formally interview for a job/internship. You will then answer a series of post-interview questions that cover a wide range of factors to assess, based on your overall performance.
Op-Ed Article	You will write and edit an editorial article (500+ words) that identifies a unique threat or opportunity facing an industry or organization, and then advocate or oppose a specific course of action in response to that opportunity or threat. It should be something that directly impacts any relevant stakeholders. You will also seek mentorship/feedback from at least one faculty member or professional mentor on ways to improve your article.
Job Package	You will submit a Job Package to bolster your candidacy for a position that you are creating as a result of your final presentation and report. The position should correlate to the new CSR initiative or product/service launch that you are advocating. You will ask key decision-makers to consider you for a specific position to oversee this launch. The submission will include a cover letter, résumé, reference list and job description.

V. Grading

a. Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Participation / Attendance	50	10.00%
Goals Essay	25	5.00%
Informative/Discovery Presentation	50	10.00%
Persuasive/Strategy Presentation	100	20.00%
Interview Assessment	25	5.00%
Op-Ed Article	50	10.00%
Job Package (CV, CL, JD)	50	10.00%
Midterm Exam	50	10.00%
Final Report (Exam)	100	20.00%
TOTAL	500	100%

b. Grading Scale

95% to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B-	67% to 69%: D+
90% to 94%: 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

c. Grading Standards

A Level Grades	Demonstrates superior work performance and organizational skills, as well as mastery of subject matter and/or project requirements, including, but not limited to exceeding expectations in written/verbal communication, research methodologies, knowledge of material and practical application.
B Level Grades	Demonstrates commendable work performance and organizational skills, as well as a clear understanding of subject matter and/or project requirements, including, but not limited to reasonably meeting expectations in written/verbal communication, research methodologies, knowledge of material and practical application.
C Level Grades	Demonstrates basic level of work performance and organizational skills, as well as a basic understanding of subject matter and/or project requirements, including, but not limited to marginally meeting expectations in written/verbal communication, research methodologies, knowledge of material and practical application.
D Level Grades or Below	Demonstrates insufficient work performance and organizational skills, as well as an insufficient understanding of subject matter and/or project requirements; including a deficiency in fulfilling expectations in written/verbal communication, research methodologies, knowledge of material and practical application.

d. Grading Timeline

I make myself available to review any work, except exams and term papers, if student sends me a complete rough draft at least one week prior to the due date (or delivery date). Most projects are graded within one to two weeks of the assignment being completed by all students (note: presentations are not always delivered on the same date). I offer extensive feedback on my evaluation forms for presentations.

VI. Assignment Rubrics

Assignment rubrics are discussed individually during class.

VII. Assignment Submission Policy

All assignments are posted on Blackboard with detailed instructions and due dates. Students are expected to complete all assignments on time. Late work, if accepted, may be penalized. Typically, late submissions will result in 10% grade deduction per day late. Lacking prior discussion and agreement with me of any late assignment may result in the student receiving a grade of F for that late assignment. **Assignments must be submitted via e-mail with Word, PPT or PDF attachments** (not Google Drive, not Blackboard, not MAM).

VIII. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Young, K.S. & Travis, H.P. *Business and Professional Communication: A Practical Guide to Workplace Effectiveness. Second edition.* Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2020.
ISBN-13: 9781478639770

Additional materials are available via e-mail and/or the university's Blackboard course site

IX. Laptop Policy

All undergraduate and graduate Annenberg majors and minors are required to have a PC or Apple laptop that can be used in Annenberg classes. Please refer to the [Annenberg Digital Lounge](#) for more information. To connect to USC's Secure Wireless network, please visit USC's [Information Technology Services](#) website.

X. Add/Drop Dates

Spring Semester 2024 (15 weeks: 1/8/23 – 4/26/23)

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Friday, January 26: | Last day to register and add classes |
| Tuesday, January 30: | Last day to drop a class without a mark of “W” and receive a refund |
| Friday, February 23: | Last day to drop a course without a mark of “W” on the transcript |
| Friday, February 23: | Last day to change pass/no pass to letter grade |
| Friday, April 5: | Last day to drop a class |

XI. Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Subject to change, based on progress of the class, news events, activities, guest speaker availability, etc.

	Daily Topics/Activities Covered in Class	Assigned Readings (Y&T 2nd ed)	Assign Dates / Due Dates
Week 1 January 8	Overview of Course		
January 10	Professional Comm Boot Camp I Presentation , Presence, Message	Chapters 1 & 9	Assign Goals Essay
Week 2 January 17	Professional Comm Boot Camp II Presentation, Presence , Message Working in Teams	Chapter 7	
Week 3 January 22	Writing Résumés / Workshop	Chapter 3	Share Résumé in class
January 24	Résumés (continued)		Goals Essay DUE Share Cover Letter in class
Week 4 January 29	Writing Reports & Presentations Cover Letter Workshop	Chapter 6	Assign Informative Presentation
January 31	Intrapersonal Skills	Chapter 2	
Week 5 February 5	Listening in the Workplace Problematic Personalities at Work	Chapter 5 10 People excerpt	Assign Job Package
February 7	Communication Solutions at Work	Chapters 8 & 10	
Week 6 February 12	Deliver Informative Presentation		Outline DUE
February 14	Deliver Informative Presentation		Outline DUE
Week 7 February 21	Midterm Exam	Y&T 1-3 & 5-11, lectures, handouts	

COMM 375 – Wissot
Syllabus (cont.)

Week 8 February 26	Interviewing / Workshop	Chapter 4	Assign Interview Assessment Prepare for Interview Q&A
February 28	Guest Speaker: Interviewing		
Week 9 March 4	Op-Ed Review / Workshop		Assign Op-Ed Share Samples IN CLASS Zoom
March 6	Guest Speaker: Analytics, Data, Intel		
March 11 / 13	NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK		
Week 10 March 18	Networking Persuasive Business Presentations	Chapter 11	Assign Persuasive Business Strategy Presentation Interview Assessment DUE
March 20	Guest Speaker: Entertainment		
Week 11 March 25	Guest Speaker: Social Impact in Comm		Assign Jobs Package
March 27	Guest Speaker: Corp Strategy in PR		
Week 12 April 1	Marketing Case Study / Workshop		
April 3	Developing Your Personal Brand		
Week 13 April 8	Deliver Persuasive Presentation		Outline DUE Outline DUE
April 10	Deliver Persuasive Presentation		
Week 14 April 15	Deliver Persuasive Presentation		Op-Ed DUE Assign Final Report
April 17	Conducting a SWOT Analysis		
Week 15 April 22	Crisis Communication Activity		Jobs Package DUE
April 24	Review		

Exam Week May 3	Final Report		Final Report DUE 5/3/23 at 4:59PM
----------------------------------	--------------	--	--------------------------------------

XII. Additional Class Policies and Procedures

a. Technology

Using laptops and/or mobile device to access the Internet and/or e-mail during class time to partake in non-class-related activity is not permitted. **Any violation of this policy may result in the loss of all participation points for the entire semester, as well as other measures under university policy.**

b. Late Submissions

Late submissions on assignments will result in a 10% grade deduction for every day late.

c. Student Conduct

Class behavior will be predicated on an environment of mutual respect. Any level of disruptive or threatening student behavior is unacceptable. We are here to learn from each other in a non-threatening environment. You are encouraged to formulate and share opinions with due discretion, as well as be comfortable in practicing communication techniques and debating ideas in a safe environment. However, any behavior that is deemed disrespectful by the instructor will affect your participation points.

d. Lecture Slides & Notes

Lecture slides are not posted, so students are encouraged to attend all classes and take thorough notes. Students may request a review of prior material, which often occurs periodically throughout the semester.

XIII. Communication

Please e-mail, text or call me with any questions or concerns about anything related to the class and/or career planning, especially if you are unable to meet during my office hours. I typically respond fastest via e-mail (within 24-48 hours), and I'm interested in helping you with anything on your mind.

XIV. Academic Conduct and Support Systems

a. Academic Integrity & Conduct

The Annenberg School for Communication is committed to upholding the University's academic integrity code as detailed in the SCampus guide. It is the policy of the School of Communication to report all violations of the code. Any serious violation or pattern of violations of the academic integrity code will result in the student's expulsion from the Communication major or minor. If you have any doubts about what is and is not an academic integrity violation, please check with me immediately. The University presumes that you are familiar with its standards and policies; should you be found to have committed a violation, ignorance of these standards and policies will not be accepted as an excuse.

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

b. Support Systems

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. Please know that I care deeply about your mental health, and I want to make sure that you are receiving the full support of the university. Please let me know if you are struggling with any mental health issues. We all need support.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

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

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 / Title IX – (213) 821-8298
equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following *protected characteristics*: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

COMM 375 – Wissot
Syllabus (cont.)

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

usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

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

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

osas.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710

ucsa.usc.edu

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

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Annenberg Student Success Fund

annenbergsuccessfund.usc.edu/current-students/resources/additional-funding-resources

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.

Breaking Bread Program

undergrad.usc.edu/faculty/bread/

Please note that I am always open to meeting separately with my students through USC's Breaking Bread Program, which is designed to provide individual undergraduate students with an opportunity to meet and have scholarly discussions with faculty members outside of the normal academic setting. Through this program, students and faculty enjoy good company and great conversation by literally "breaking bread" over a meal together and USC will pick up the tab! The meal can take place outside of the normal academic setting. The venue can be a restaurant or eatery, on or off-campus.

XV. About Your Professor: [Michael Wissot](#)

Michael Wissot has transformed political and corporate communication platforms in every major sector, serving as the choice expert for many Fortune 500 executives and top elected officials seeking strategic counsel. His expertise includes message development, crisis communication, market research, labor disputes, press conferences, political debates, speechwriting, branding and advertising. He has provided counsel for Coca-Cola, Kroger, Safeway, Pfizer, Miller Brewing, FOX Sports, Comcast, Thomson Reuters, News Corporation, Ameriquest Mortgage, Paramount Pictures, Universal, 20th Century FOX, MPAA, Wynn Las Vegas, MGM Mirage, Starwood Hotels, University of Phoenix, Los Angeles Dodgers, Milwaukee Brewers, San Francisco Giants, Baltimore Orioles, Arizona Diamondbacks, and National Football League. He has managed communication initiatives for Senator John McCain, President George W. Bush, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor Luis Fortuño, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and other world leaders. He has served as a political analyst on national television and radio. He co-authored a popular business book, "The 10 People Who Suck: A Positive Prescription for Improving Communication in the Workplace." He has taught at the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism since 2010 after serving seven years as an adjunct professor at Pepperdine University.