

PR 351b: Multichannel Strategy and Content Creation 4 Units

Spring 2024 – Thursdays – 9 a.m.-12:20 p.m.

Section: 21157R

Location: ANN 308

Instructor: Jenn de la Fuente

Office Hours: By appointment only. You may schedule office hours at <https://calendly.com/jrosebud>

Office hours can be conducted via Zoom.

Contact Info: jdelafue@usc.edu, cell (916) 538-2133

(Please do not call or text my cell phone on weekends or late at night.)

Course Description

In this class, we will examine media that is created and published by today's public relations practitioner. New platforms have enabled brands, organizations and individuals to become publishers and directly engage their audiences. This class examines strategies and tactics needed to be an effective publisher including digital content created for social and owned media channels.

This course is designed to teach students about the array of public relations tools available to them, with particular emphasis on writing, digital content creation and production of communications collateral. Students will be exposed to audience research and segmentation, social media and digital communications writing, multi-media content creation, feature writing, newsletter preparation, basic principles of design, writing for the ear, creating and making presentations and brainstorming. Case histories will illuminate the use of these tools and examples of materials will be used extensively throughout the course. This is a lab course; a great deal of hands-on activities such as writing, graphic design, video production and oral presentations will be assigned.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Produce professional-quality social media content, videos, newsletters, and PR controlled content for external and internal audiences.
- Construct basic promotional video production for product demonstrations, crisis response and other PR driven scenarios.
- Develop basic design and layout using design software.
- Produce visual elements such as photos, graphics, infographics, special effects and motion graphics.
- Identify and communicate with an array of audiences.

Course Elements

In-class writing, content creation and video production assignments

1. Take-home writing and content creation assignments
2. Midterm
3. Final project
4. Participation

Description and Assessment of Assignments

In addition to take-home and in-class writing and design assignments, there will be a midterm and a final project. There will also be weekly group presentations as described below.

Case study presentations

Students are encouraged to read the weekly trade publications AdWeek and PRWeek, or spend time observing PR campaigns in whatever field they are interested in. Each student will be required to present an analysis and critique of brand storytelling campaigns either from those publications or based on a current campaign of your choosing. The presentations will be done by two students each week starting on week 3. The presentation should be at least five minutes long and include:

- Summary of the campaign
- Thoughts on the strategy and target audiences
- Campaign messaging/storytelling
- Discussion of all campaign elements including breaking down the production
- Overall critique and suggested changes

Grading

a. Grading Breakdown

Description of assessments and corresponding points and percentage of grade.

Assessment Tool (assignments)	% of Grade
Class Assignments	25%
Midterm	25%
Final Project	40%
Class Participation / In-Class Assignments	10%
TOTAL	100%

b. Course Grading Scale

Letter grades and corresponding point value ranges.

Letter grade and corresponding numerical point range		
95% to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B- (B minus)	67% to 69%: D+ (D plus)
90% to 94%: A- (A minus)	77% to 79%: C+ (C plus)	64% to 66%: D
87% to 89%: B+ (B plus)	74% to 76%: C	60% to 63%: D- (D minus)
84% to 86%: B	70% to 73%: C- (C minus)	0% to 59%: F

c. Grading Standards

Public Relations

“A” projects have writing near professional quality; one or no mistakes; clearly proofread and edited material. All required elements included (catchy headline, solid lead, varied vocabulary; supporting facts/figures; quotes as

required). Excellent organization and flow; original thinking. Showed creativity in packaging/distribution method. High end of scale: publishable today as is.

“B” projects have two to five spelling, grammar or AP Style mistakes. One or more required elements missing or poorly displayed (i.e., boring headline; confusing lead, etc.). Shows potential as a good writer. Adhered to inverted pyramid. High end of scale will have at least one extraordinary element such as astonishing lead or little-known facts or pithy quote. Some creativity shown. Publishable with medium editing.

“C” projects have more than five errors (spelling, grammar, AP style). Poorly edited and/or proofread. May have adhered to inverted pyramid but strayed at beginning or end. Hackneyed elements such as trite headline or uninteresting lead. Little or no facts/figures included. Passive rather than active verbs become the norm. Little or no creativity shown. Publishable with major editing.

“D” projects have more than 10 errors (spelling, grammar). Needs to be completely rewritten. Poorly organized with little or no understanding of journalistic style/standards. Needs to work with writing coach.

“F” projects are not rewritable, late or not turned in. A grade of F also will be assigned for any plagiarized and/or fabricated material that is submitted.

d. Grading Timeline

Assignments will be graded and returned within two weeks from the time they were turned in. All feedback will be written into the rubrics on Blackboard. Allow about two to three weeks for feedback from your final project.

Assignment Submission Policy

All assignments are due on the dates specified. Lacking prior discussion and agreement with the instructor, late assignments will automatically be dropped one grade (for example, from an A to a B). Assignments that are two weeks late will be dropped two grades (for example, from an A to a C). No late assignments will be accepted after two weeks and are an automatic zero.

Assignments must be submitted via email or Blackboard. Your instructor will provide instructions on how to submit your assignments, and each assignment will have a description with detailed instructions on how to do the assignment.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Reading assignments will be posted to Blackboard throughout the semester, along with handouts and other resources.

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.

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](#).

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).

Add/Drop Dates for Session 001

(15 weeks: 1/8/2024 – 4/26/2024; Final Exam Period: 5/1-8/2024)

Link: <https://classes.usc.edu/term-20241/calendar/>

Last day to add: Friday, January 26, 2024

Last day to drop a class without a mark of “W,” except for Monday-only classes, and receive a refund: Friday, January 26, 2024

Last day to change enrollment option to Pass/No Pass or Audit: Friday, January 26, 2024 [All major and minor courses must be taken for a letter grade.]

Last day to add/drop a Monday-only class without a mark of “W” and receive a refund or change to Audit: Tuesday, January 30, 2024

Last day to withdraw without a “W” on transcript or change pass/no pass to letter grade: Friday, February 23, 2024 [Mark of “W” will still appear on student record and STARS report and tuition charges still apply.]

*Please drop any course by the end of week three for session 001 (or the 20 percent mark of the session in which the course is offered) to avoid tuition charges.]

Last day to drop with a mark of “W”: Friday, April 5, 2024

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

A weekly schedule of the topics, readings, and deliverables for the course.

Important note to students: Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change - and probably will change - based on the progress of the class, news events, and/or guest speaker availability.

Week 1 – Jan. 11 – Presentation of Syllabus; Overview of Class Projects

The syllabus will be presented along with the course description and expectations. We will explore what content creation means for today's public relations practitioner, how and when it is used, and what forms we will be addressing in class. There will be an overview of final term projects and a quick writing assignment.

We will talk about the importance of storytelling and telling a good story. What makes a story compelling? Also, what is the importance of being a "conscientious creator" — how do we try to avoid bias, keep other people's perspectives in mind, and avoid cultural pitfalls in our content?

In-class assignment: Write about your favorite food. Why is it your favorite food? Does it have a special meaning, a sentimental story, or a cultural or family significance? This will be a timed assignment, about 10-15 minutes.

Homework assignment: Find a job description for a position or internship you're interested in. Write a cover letter applying to that job opening or internship. How will you introduce yourself with the written word? How will your cover page stand out from the many in my email box? What will get me to read yours? (This will not be given a letter grade; you will get credit for class participation upon turning this assignment in.)

Week 2 – Jan. 18 – What Constitutes "Well Written?"

This class will examine the fundamentals of good writing. Is it an exact science? Do we adhere to the strict "inverted pyramid" format you learned in 209 and 351a? The structure of good storytelling will be examined for long-form content, blog posts, and short social media content. Building on the principles learned in 351A, we will discuss the nuances of feature writing. We'll discuss human-interest articles, editorial and opinion pieces, humor, irony and an array of feature writing techniques.

We'll talk about cover letters and the art of persuasion. Writing a cover letter is a form of persuasion — you're trying to present the best version of yourself and convince someone to hire you for a job. Persuasive, well-written ideas are the essence of multi-media content.

In-class writing assignment: In small groups, critique your classmates' cover letters and offer suggestions.

Homework assignment: Rewrite your cover letter and incorporate the feedback from your classmates and from your instructor.

Week 3 – Jan. 25 – Know Thy Audience / Working with AI

****CASE STUDY PRESENTATIONS BEGIN!****

To be effective writers and content creators, it is important to understand who you are communicating to and their demographic characteristics. Students will learn how to research and segment audiences. We'll explore how GenZ, GenY, GenX differ from Baby Boomers; how age, ethnicity, gender, geography, sexual orientation and culture factor into messaging; and which audiences you will likely encounter in conducting public relations efforts in the field.

Also, we'll talk about the bots. We can't avoid AI but we can think about how to use it to help with idea generation and refining our writing. Make sure you have a ChatGPT account set up before class.

In-class assignment: Working in assigned teams, you will be assigned a prompt and two different audience targets. Using ChatGPT, come up with some campaign ideas and a slogan for your different audiences.

Homework assignment: Write a 400-word persuasive article on a topic of your choice (due in two weeks).

Week 4 – Feb. 1 – Writing content for online and social media/ The Small Stuff on the Web

We will review the differences between writing that is meant to live online vs. traditional writing consumed in the physical world. Emphasis will be on content and overall design, with some very basic review of technical challenges and requirements. TikTok, Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat stories, Instagram and IG Stories, and other social media and online platforms play an important role in communications. We'll examine an array of digital communications to find out what works and what doesn't. We will examine how different organizations – non-profits, consumer brands, advocacy groups – use social media platforms to achieve strategic PR goals. We will explore purpose, audience and voice of social media engagement across different platforms and organization sectors.

We'll also talk about SEO and why you should care about it.

Guest Speaker: Edward de la Fuente, Senior Programmer, FOX Sports

Week 5 – Feb. 8 – Online accessibility

Did you know that a large portion of internet content is inaccessible to people with disabilities? Disabilities aren't limited to things like deafness or blindness – they can be temporary (like a broken hand that renders you unable to use a keyboard, or the classic situation where you're in a room where you can't turn your volume on and you don't have headphones on hand). We'll discuss the importance of making your content web accessible, not only on websites but also on social media. Our guest speaker is an expert on web accessibility and will offer tips and insight on alt text, best practices for videos, and other things you may not have been aware of.

Homework assignment: Write a series of social media posts to promote the persuasive piece you wrote.

Week 6 – Feb. 15 – An Intro to Design and Useful Tools

Design is the art of solving problems visually. We'll talk about what makes good design and what you should consider in creating your designs.

Also, there are various programs out there that help you with design, such as Canva and Adobe Spark. But if you find you're starting to see some of the same graphics over and over again because these programs are in heavy use, you'll have to learn some basics in Photoshop and Illustrator. We'll go over some basics in Illustrator to start to help you step up your design game and make simple graphics.

Week 7 – Feb. 22 – Midterm

Speed is of the essence sometimes in PR. The world we live in requires practitioners to be able to develop content and get it out quickly across many platforms, since conversations, promotions, and crisis occur in real time.

You will be given a prompt and be asked to write pieces of varying lengths based on the prompt.

Week 8 – Feb. 29 – Newsletters and Brochures

Due to digital advances in both production and printing, online newsletters and brochures are thriving. What are they? Why do they work? Who reads them? When don't they work? How are the digital consumption habits changing the style and content of newsletters and brochures? We will review the newsletters you brought to class and discuss them as a group. We will discuss the fundamentals of newsletter design, layout and distribution.

Homework assignment: Write the copy for an edition of an e-newsletter. Topic is your choice.

Week 9 – Mar. 7 – More Design and Useful Tools

More work with Illustrator and a quick intro to Photoshop.

Spring Break – Mar. 14 – NO CLASS!

Week 10 – Mar. 21 – Principles of Layout and Design – InDesign Tutorial

This session was developed to help you communicate with professional designers in the language they understand and to prepare you for working with them. We'll learn the basics of setting up documents, important shortcuts, and creating basic layouts.

Homework assignment: Taking the newsletter content you wrote in class previously, design an e-newsletter with this content. (Due in two weeks)

Week 11– Mar. 28 – Principles of Layout and Design – InDesign Tutorial, Part 2

More work in InDesign, including more advanced techniques, text styles, and setting up advanced layouts.

Week 12 – Apr. 4 – The Art of the Infographic

During this class session, we also will explore visual literacy and we will discuss and understand why it is important to visualize data and how best to apply the various tools used to do it.

In-class assignment: We will design an infographic in small groups.

Homework assignment: Create an infographic on a topic of your choosing.

Week 13 – Apr. 11 – Video Production

For this class session, we will begin our module on Video Production by starting with the storyboard. Most PR videos don't just evolve; they are based on careful planning. We'll also talk about tools you can use to shoot footage more easily from mobile devices and edit footage, plus resources for music and archival footage and graphics.

Week 14 – April 18 – Digital Production

We'll talk about digital considerations and tools you can use to create quick one-page pages, do research on online handles, and how to secure and buy a domain.

Week 15 – April 25 – More Digital Production and Open Lab

We'll talk more about digital production and how to prep files and content for clients. For example, if you wanted to take your final brochure or magazine and get it printed professionally, how would you have to set it up? What formats should your videos be in if you're exporting for social media or if you're exporting for an actual commercial? Also, best practices for both print and digital production.

We'll also work on your final projects, come with any questions you might have!

Final Exam Period – Tuesday, May 7, 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. – Final projects are due.

Present your final projects and celebrate you and your peers' work!

Policies and Procedures

Additional Policies

If you must miss a class, please give ample notice to your instructor via email. You will be responsible for catching up on any missed material and make any arrangements you need to catch up in class.

No late assignments will be accepted unless you have a medical emergency or other excused absence. Documentation for any excused absence must be provided.

Communication

Please make sure to check your USC email regularly. It will be the primary means of communication between you and your instructor. If you have any questions, please feel free to email your instructor or come speak to your instructor before or after class or make an appointment.

Internships

The value of professional internships as part of the overall educational experience of our students has long been recognized by the School of Journalism. Accordingly, while internships are not required for successful completion of this course, any student enrolled in this course that undertakes and completes an approved, non-paid internship during this semester shall earn academic extra credit herein of an amount equal to 1 percent of the total available semester points for this course. To receive instructor approval, a student must request an internship letter from the Annenberg Career Development Office and bring it to the instructor to sign by the end of the third week of classes. The student must submit the signed letter to the media organization, along with the evaluation form provided by the Career Development Office. The form should be filled out by the intern supervisor and returned to the instructor at the end of the semester. No credit will be given if an evaluation form is not turned into the instructor by the last day of class. Note: The internship must be unpaid and can only be applied to one public relations or journalism class.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct

The USC Student Handbook (https://policy.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/USC_StudentCode_August2022.pdf)

Academic Integrity

USC's Unifying Value of integrity is a foundational principle that inspires the community to match its values to its actions. Academic integrity is ultimately the sole guarantor of the legitimacy of one's education, and therefore, is vitally important not just for oneself, but for the entire USC community. The value of all USC degrees is negatively impacted by violations of academic integrity. In the classroom, general principles of academic integrity include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles.

Academic Integrity violations (academic dishonesty) include, but are not limited to:

Plagiarism and Cheating

- The submission of material authored by another person but represented as the student's own work, whether that material is paraphrased or copied in verbatim or near-verbatim form.
- Re-using any portion of one's own work (essay, term paper, project, or other assignment) previously submitted without citation of such and without permission of the instructor(s) involved.
- Improper acknowledgment of sources in essays or papers, including drafts. Also, all students involved in collaborative work (as permitted by the instructor) are expected to proofread the work and are responsible for all particulars of the final draft.
- Acquisition of academic work, such as term papers, solutions, or other assignments, from any source and the subsequent presentation of those materials as the student's own work, or providing academic work, such as term papers, solutions, or assignments that another student submits as their own work.
- Failure to disclose the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools in completing assignments and assessments.

The USC Annenberg Public Relations and Advertising program views generative AI as an addition to USC's digital literacy tools that students are encouraged to experiment with and use inside and outside the classroom. Students may use generative AI tools such as Chat GPT to help complete their class assignments, but must disclose such use in the bibliography section. Students are solely responsible for the accuracy of their documents, regardless of whether they were completed with the aid of generative AI.

USC School of Journalism Policy on Academic Integrity

https://catalogue.usc.edu/preview_entity.php?catoid=16&ent_oid=3459

"Since its founding, the School of Journalism has maintained a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found plagiarizing, fabricating, cheating on examinations, and/or purchasing papers or other assignments faces sanctions ranging from an "F" on the assignment to dismissal from the School of Journalism."

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://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.

About Your Instructor

Jenn de la Fuente is a web developer with a graphic design background. She has run her own business, Rosebud Designs, since 2009 and developed a variety of print and web collateral for a range of clients, from nonprofits to small businesses. Her specialty is creating custom WordPress websites, and she has teamed up with other design firms and design businesses to create solutions for clients such as Invisible People, Rancho La Puerta, Heal the Bay, 826 Los Angeles, and 826 National. Before starting her business, Jenn worked in sports journalism as a reporter, copy editor, page designer, and web producer for a variety of newspapers: the Orange County Register, The News Journal (Wilmington, Delaware), and The Sacramento Bee. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Print Journalism from USC Annenberg, graduating in 2000, and has taught at Annenberg since 2014. She is an avid sports fan, longtime Trojan football season ticket-holder, a huge L.A. Kings fan, as well as an avid scuba diver, a hockey player and curler.