



**COMM 396: Fashion, Media, & Culture**  
**Fall 2024 T/TH 11-12:20pm**  
**20601, 4 units**  
**Location: ANN L105**

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Office hours: by appointment in person or Zoom

*Teaching Assistants:*  
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**Course Description:**

This course will examine fashion as a form of communication and culture. Using a diverse range of readings drawn from cultural studies, we will examine what fashion means and how it has been valued throughout history, popular culture and media institutions, while also exploring some of the economic and social issues that revolve around fashion's industrial production. The course will therefore situate fashion both in terms of its production and consumption, addressing its role in relation to identity and body politics (gender, race, sexuality, class), art and status, nationhood and the global economy, celebrity and Hollywood culture, youth cultures and subversive practices.

The course is divided into five key areas. The first section, "Why Fashion Matters" explores the line between fashion and dress, and historically frames both as key facets in the historical construction of identity. The second section of the class considers the role image production and media play in communicating fashion's meanings and significance. In the third section of the class, "Fashioning Bodies," we will see the way fashion plays a role in how we understand gendered, raced, sexualized bodies, among other facets of identity and politics. "Economies of Fashion" explores various facets and changes in fashion production that impact design and creativity, labor, the environment, as well as consumption. Finally, the last section of the class looks at the changing landscapes of fashion, asking us to consider the future of fashion moving into the mid-21<sup>st</sup> century.

***As of Fall 2018, COMM 396 fulfills USC's GE-A requirement.***

**Course Objectives:**

**Student Learning Outcomes**

Every student comes into our class with different abilities, passions, priorities, lived experiences, and ways of learning. I invite you to begin where you are—to listen and learn from course content and discussions, to critically contemplate, question, and critique. To that end, the learning outcomes below are fluid, and work in collaboration and dialogue with my teaching (as well as that of your Teaching Assistants), course content, and class discussions. What students take away will depend on where they start, how they engage, and how they tap into their capacities to learn and grow. It is my hope that this course provides an opportunity for you to:

- **Identify** fashion’s formal attributes and creative inspirations (drawing from fine art, politics, popular culture, etc.)
- **Develop** critical thinking and analytic skills to understand fashion’s social and cultural meanings in a variety of contexts and bodies (from everyday streetwear to magazines to runway shows to shop windows to museum exhibits to blogging and social media)
- **Interpret** the relationship between fashion and identity (gender, race, ethnicity, LGBTQ), considering rules and conventions of dress, alongside controversies.
- **Contextualize and assess** fashion’s role as a global industry and economy that has implications on labor and the environment.
- **Engage** fashion’s role in Los Angeles by exploring local sites and hearing from invited guests.

**Land Acknowledgment**

The University of Southern California’s (USC) University Park campus is located on the traditional land of the Tongva People. You can visit <https://mila.ss.ucla.edu/> to learn about the history of Indigenous peoples in Los Angeles and read stories shared by the Tongva community. To learn about the Indigenous land on which your learning location resides, you can visit <https://native-land.ca>.

**Course Readings:**

All course readings will be available on Brightspace.

**Course Requirements and Attendance**

Students are required to do all the readings, attend all classes, complete all assignments, and participate fully in this course. There are multiple ways to participate and be part of our class community, including speaking in class, emails to your professor and/or TA, sharing media or other examples relevant to class with your professor and/or TA and on our class [Padlet](#), office hours, attentive listening during class. If you’re uncomfortable participating in a group, please feel free to make an appointment for office hours with me or your TA. If circumstances prevent you from attending class, please inform me by email ASAP. Simply showing up to class does not guarantee a perfect attendance/participation score. Other factors, including promptness and level of attention during class lecture and guest speaker visits, will impact your grade. Participation grades will start at 85—the threshold—and then move up or down based on the factors above. You are responsible for accessing and staying abreast of course content, and for communicating with your professors/TAs in a timely manner if you have any obstacles impacting your work and successful completion of the course. Note: based on guest availability, some classes may be held on Zoom (TBD).

**Technology Guidelines**

It is **highly** recommended that notetaking be done by hand to maintain attention and engagement during the course. During class, it’s imperative that you **avoid** multitasking on mobile phones or web surfing. [To understand the reasons for this guidance, you may want to read “[Why you should take notes by hand – not on a laptop](#)” and “[The Myth of Multitasking](#).”]

Please remember that USC policy **prohibits sharing** of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment. See below in Statement on Academic Conduct.

### **Classroom Conduct and Respect**

All students are encouraged to use the classroom as a safe (and brave) space in which to speak and voice their opinions. We all come to the classroom with different backgrounds and experiences—defined by race, ethnicity, gender, disability, religion, class, ideology, even personality. This diversity can be our greatest strength and an asset as we learn together. My expectation is that you respect not me, the TAs, and our guests, but also your classmates/peers when they participate in discussion. We may not truly understand another person’s perspective, but we can/should listen with acceptance and empathy. Every student should feel comfortable participating and being part of a productive, engaging dialogue. Given that the study of fashion is intimately tied to identity, we may touch on topics that make you feel some discomfort. You also may not always agree with me or your peers. This is normal, and part of the learning. If you ever feel that we (your professor/TAs) have misspoken or misrepresented something or you have an emotional response to the material or to something someone in class has said, please reach out to discuss. Above all, please be flexible (and forgiving) with us, your peers and yourself as we navigate these issues together.

### **Communication**

You may reach me and your TAs by email, and we will respond typically within 24-48 hours. If we don’t respond, feel free to nudge us. We all receive many emails and sometimes things do fall through the cracks. It’s nothing personal. **For questions, concerns, or constructive criticism of class at any time during the semester, you may use this anonymous [google form](#). We also will do course evaluations at the end of the term.**

You will receive details about each assignment separately. **All assignments should be completed and handed in on time to avoid a grade reduction. If you are unable to turn in an assignment due to illness or a personal emergency or other COVID-related issue, please email me or your assigned TA to discuss your situation in a timely manner. We are willing to offer extensions on due dates, but you need to be proactive with your requests. Do not wait until the end of the semester to sort things out. Remember: this is YOUR responsibility.**

### **Assignments and Grading:**

You are responsible for the material covered in class and in the reading. You will be evaluated on the following:

- 1) the level of your engagement with the class materials (as demonstrated in your written work and class participation)
- 2) your capacity to explain your ideas and analysis in articulate and well-written forms
- 3) your ability to creatively explore the theories and methodologies of the class

**All of your work will be graded on two primary evaluative scales:**

- 1) how well it demonstrates an understanding of the theories and methodologies of the class
- 2) how well it articulates and structures its argument

**The final course grade will be based on the following distribution:**

Class participation (at least 3 <a href="#">Padlet</a> posts/responses required)	10%
Paper 1: You Are What You Wear (1200-1500 words)	15%
Paper 2: Fashion On Display (1500-1800 words)	20%
Paper 3: Fashion & the Body Politic (1500-1800 words)	20%

Video Essay: Fashion Forensics (3-5 mins)	20%
Final Paper: Remaking Fashion (1200-1500 words)	15%

You must complete ALL of these assignments in order to pass the class. **Failure to complete one of them will result not only in an F for that assignment but may put your course grade in jeopardy.**

**Course Grading Policy:**

Grades will be assigned as follows:

- A                    outstanding, thoughtful and insightful work and analysis, showing an ability to think beyond the basic course material; a grade of A+ (97-100) *may* be given to *individual* assignments in *rare* instances where expectations are exceeded
- A-/B+            above average work, demonstrating effort and keen understanding of conceptual ideas
- B/B-              average work, needs improvement on ideas and argument
- C+/C             shows little effort, lacks clarity and/or argument
- C- and below    fulfilling the bare minimum and showing little understanding of the material

Each assignment will be worth 100 points and will be converted to a percentage score depending upon the weight assigned to each. Your percentage scores on the assignments will be totaled and translated to a letter grade as per the scale shown below:

A+	=	97-100 (only possible on individual assignments)	C	=	76-74
A	=	96-94	C-	=	73-70
A-	=	93-90	D+	=	69-67
B+	=	89-87	D	=	66-64
B	=	86-84	D-	=	63-60
B-	=	83-80	F	=	59-00
C+	=	79-77			

**Grievance Procedure**

Occasionally, students are dissatisfied with evaluation of their work or some other dimension of a course. For concerns with specific grades, students should first provide a written argument in support of their position to the appropriate TA. All grade appeals on specific assignments must be made within one week of the return of the assignment. The laboratory instructor will then review that petition and evaluate its merits. I will consider grade appeals only after this process has been completed.



## FASHION AND IMAGE PRODUCTION

### Week 4

#### **Au Courant: From Fashion Mags to Instagram & Tik Tok**

September 17:

Richard Martin, "Style from Paris, Reality from America: Fashion in Life Magazine, 1947–1963," pp. 51-55  
Pamela Church Gibson, "The Changing Face(s) of the Fashion Magazine and the New Media Landscape" pp. 125-138

September 19:

Marco Pedroni, "Two Decades of Fashion Blogging and Influencing: A Critical Overview"

#### **Supplemental**

- Minh-Ha Pham, "People Knocking Each Other Off LOL: Diet Prada's Politics of Refusal"

**Paper 1: You Are What You Wear Due by or before 9/22 11:59pm**

### Week 5

#### **Fashion on Display**

September 24:

Valerie Steele, "Museum Quality: The Rise of the Fashion Exhibition" pp. 8-29  
Natalie Kahn, "Catwalk Politics" pp. 114-127  
Caroline Evans, "Fashion at the Edge" pp. 111-117  
Louise Crewe, "Flagship Stores: Scaling Fashion's Luxury Spaces"

September 26:

Brent Luvaas, "On the Street: A Conceptual History of Street Style Photography" (focus on last 13 pages)  
Brent Luvaas, "Post No Bill: The Transience of New York City Street Style"

#### **Supplemental**

- Bobby Hundreds, "[It's Not Just About Clothes: Bobby Hundreds Explains Why Streetwear is a Culture, Not Just a Product](#)" (Complex)
- Daniel-Yaw Miller, "Is Streetwear Still Cool?" (Business of Fashion 10/4/22)

### Week 6

#### **Crossing Over: Icons, Celebrity, & Branding**

October 1:

Valerie Steele, "Chanel in Context" pp. 118-126  
Rachel Moseley, "Trousers and Tiaras: Audrey Hepburn, a Woman's Star"  
Kathleen Craughwell-Varda, "Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis" pp. 287-29

October 3:

Watch: *Valentino: The Last Emperor*  
Rosie Findlay, "'Trust Us, We're You': Aspirational Realness in the Digital Communication of Contemporary Fashion and Beauty Brands"

## FASHIONING BODIES

### Week 7                    Men's Fashion: The Dandy, the "Metrosexual" and the Non-Fashion Guy

- October 8:                    Richard Thompson Ford, "The Great Masculine Renunciation"  
Ben Barry, "[What Happens When Men Don't Conform to Masculine Norms at Work?](#)" (HBR, 8/31/17)  
Luke Leitsch, "[Eclectic, individual: The vibe shift shaping menswear of the 2020s](#)"  
**Supplemental:**
- Daniel-Yaw Miller, "Why the Menswear Market is On Fire" (Business of Fashion, 9/8/22)
  - Daniel-Yaw Miller, "Menswear's New Groove: Casual Suiting Meets Gorpcore?" (Business of Fashion, 6/17/23)

October 10:                    **FALL BREAK**

### Week 8                    Fashion's Race Relations

- October 15:                    Janice Cheddie, "The Politics of the First: The Emergence of the Black Model in the Civil Rights Era" pp. 61-77.  
Minh-Ha Pham, "Racial Plagiarism in Fashion"  
**Supplemental:**
- Robin M. Chandler and Nuri Chandler-Smith, "Flava in Ya Gear: Transgressive Politics and the Influence of Hip-Hop on Contemporary Fashion"

- October 17:                    Elizabeth Wissinger, "Black, Black, Black—How Race Is Read"  
CFDA "[State of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Fashion](#)" (February 2021) and "[The State of DEI in Fashion Today](#)" (March 2022)  
**Supplemental**
- Sheena Butler Young, "Can the 15% Pledge Get Past the Number?" (Business of Fashion, 8/8/23)

**Paper 2: Fashion on Display DUE by or before 10/20 11:59pm**

### Week 9                    Fashion at the Edge: Pushing Boundaries

- October 22:                    Tansy E. Hoskins, "Resisting Fashion"  
Maya Singer, "Can Fashion Be Political?" (Vogue, 2020)
- October 24:                    Richard Thompson Ford, "Recoding Gender"  
Fred Davis, "Ambivalences of Gender: Boys Will Be Boys, Girls Will Be Boys," pp. 31-54

## ECONOMIES OF FASHION

### Week 10                      Distilling the Fashion Industry & Its Labor Practices

October 29:                      Joanne Entwistle, "The Fashion Industry" pp. 208-236  
Adam Briggs, "Capitalism's Favorite Child: The Production of Fashion" pp. 186-195

October 31:                      Minh-Ha T. Pham, "[A World Without Sweatshops: Abolition Not Reform](#)"  
Teresa Iglesias, Ellen Haverhals & Tatiana De Wée, "[The fashion industry needs to break with its gender and women's rights problems](#)" (Fashion Revolution)

#### **Supplemental**

- Minh-Ha T. Pham, "[Stories the Fashion Media Won't Tell](#)" (*The Nation*, 1/18/19)
- John Andrews, "Business Sense: It Takes a Lot More than Individual Flair to Stay at the Top" pp. 357-360

### Week 11                      Eco Fashion, Ethical Fashion, & Sustainability

November 5:                      Screening: *The True Cost*  
Kenneth Pucker, "[The Myth of Sustainable Fashion](#)" (HBC)  
Amanda Mull, "[Seriously, What Are You Supposed To Do With Old Clothes?](#)" (The Atlantic, 8/3/22)  
LISTEN: "[Your Clothes Are Making You Sick](#)" (36 mins)

November 7:                      Kaivonen, Mesiranta, Narvanen, "I Do What I Want to Drive Change': The Social-Symbolic Work of Sustainable Fashion Influencers"  
Elizabeth Paton, "[The New Laws Trying to Take the Anxiety Out of Shopping](#)" (NYT, 9/30/22)

### **Paper 3: Fashion & the Body Politic Due by or before 11/10 11:59pm**

### Week 12                      Traveling Fashion: Global & Local Markets, Fast & Slow

November 12:                      Peter Jackson, "Local Consumption Cultures in a Globalizing World" pp. 212-215  
Louise Crewe, "Tailoring and Tweed: Mapping the Spaces of Slow Fashion" pp. 200-212

November 14:                      David Gilbert, "A New World Order? Fashion and Its Capitals in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" pp. 11-28

#### **Supplemental**

- Norma M. Rantisi, N.M. "The Designer in the City and The City in the Designer," pp. 91-109.



## CHANGING FASHION: TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION & TRENDS

### Week 13

#### Tech Trends: Fashioning via Technologies

November 19:

Natalia Särmäkari & Annamari Vänskä, 'Just hit a button!' Fashion 4.0  
Designers as Cyborgs, Experimenting and Designing with Generative Algorithms"

Terry Nguyen, "[What's the Point of Digital Clothes?](#)" (Vox, 1/21/22)

November 21:

Myles Ethan Lascity "Anti-Fashion Branding: Framing Technology in Uniqlo and Allbirds"

#### ***Supplemental***

- Dana Thomas, "Rage Against the Machine"
- Elizabeth Wissinger, "Blood, Sweat, and Tears: Navigating Creepy versus Cool in Wearable Biotech"

### Week 14

#### Upcycling, DIY and Changing Hierarchies

November 26:

Jennifer Le Zotte, "Connoisseurs of Trash in a World Full of It"  
Liroy Choufan & Nir Tila-Cohen, "From Secondhand to Invisible Hand: Methods of Manipulating Object Biographies on The Realreal Online Marketplace"

November 28:

**Thanksgiving**

### Week 15

#### Rethinking Fashion

December 2:

Tansy E. Hoskins, "Revolutionizing Fashion"

**Video Essay: Fashion Forensics Due by or before 12/1 11:59pm**

December 4:

Abby Lillethun and Linda Welters, "Forecasting Fashion's Future"

**December 17**

**Final Paper: Remaking Fashion due on 12/17 by or before 2 pm**

## 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.

Academic dishonesty has a far-reaching impact and is considered a serious offense against the university. Violations will result in a grade penalty, such as a failing grade on the assignment or in the course, and disciplinary action from the university itself, such as suspension or even expulsion.

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](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

### AI Generators Policy

Generative AI (such as ChatGPT, Bard, Claude and many others) is a tool which offers opportunities and raises concerns. As the technology rapidly evolves and as students of communication, we need to be thoughtful and ethical consumers/users of the technology. For our class, there may be times when it is appropriate to use AI, such as for brainstorming topic ideas. But please keep in mind some important notes when using generative AI:

1. You must **give credit** to the specific AI used in your assignment. Check Brightspac and the specific assignment instructions for information about how to do that appropriately. Failing to cite AI use is an academic integrity violation and will be treated as such, with potentially serious consequences.
2. Generative AI often is incorrect and gives **misinformation**. You cannot rely on AI output; you must check for accuracy.
3. The **quality and nature of the prompts** shapes the quality of the output of generative AI. As these tools develop, our skills in "conversing" with them will need to change and grow too.
4. AI should never be a substitute for your own **thoughtful, critical contributions** to the subject matter. ***Expressing oneself through writing is an important part of learning, refining thought, and demonstrating understanding that cannot be ceded to AI tools.***

These are just a few of many considerations that are important for us to collectively ponder and consider. If you have questions or thoughts on any of these policies, please share them. Please see [USC's Using Generative AI in Research](#) for information on citations, limitations and warnings and ethical considerations.

### **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, is prohibited. 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 relation to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. Distributing course material without the instructor's permission will be presumed to be an intentional act to facilitate or enable academic dishonesty and is strictly prohibited. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

### **Statement on University Academic and Support Systems**

#### **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).

#### **Student Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress:**

To be eligible for certain kinds of financial aid, students are required to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) toward their degree objectives. Visit the [Financial Aid Office webpage](#) for [undergraduate-](#) and [graduate-level](#) SAP eligibility requirements and the appeals process.

#### **Support Systems:**

##### [Annenberg Student Success Fund](#)

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](#)

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.

[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 consists 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) 740-2500

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.