USC Annenberg

DSM 599 Special Topics: The Future of Advertising: AdTech Innovations & AI Trends
4 units

Fall 2024 – Thursday 6:00-8:50
Section: 21899
Location: ANN 209

Instructor: Rafael Bracero
Office Hours: By Appointment, preferred times are after class and on Friday.
(Please email Professor Bracero to set a time to meet)
Contact Info: rbracero@usc.edu

Course Description:

Class Topics: AdTech, Programmatic Advertising, Media Planning, Media Buying & Platforms, Artificial Intelligence, AI in Media Planning, AI in Ad Creative, Creative Marketing, Campaign Development, Creative Briefs, Audience Targeting

Course Overview:

This graduate-level course explores the intersection of media planning & buying, programmatic advertising, and artificial intelligence (AI) within the context of digital advertising and marketing communications. Through theoretical concepts, hands-on exercises, case studies, and real-world applications, students will develop the knowledge and skills to effectively leverage media buying strategies, programmatic advertising techniques, and AI tools to optimize advertising ad campaign creative and performance across various digital platforms. We also explore emerging trends in advertising across the industry, including advertisers, publishers/media providers, and AdTech / MarTech / Data service providers.

Prerequisites:

Prior coursework in marketing, advertising, or related fields is recommended but is <u>not required</u>. Familiarity with basic digital marketing concepts and social platforms will be beneficial.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students will acquire the knowledge and hands-on experience to:

1. Apply the fundamentals of media buying, programmatic advertising, and AI in digital marketing.
2. Analyze the role of data-driven decision-making in media planning and buying processes.
3. Explore key platforms and tools used in digital media buying and programmatic advertising, such as Google Analytics (GA4), Google Ads, FB Ads, TikTok Ads, The Trade Desk, and Hootsuite.

4. Evaluate the ethical and regulatory considerations and challenges associated with using personally identifying information (PII) and AI in advertising. Explore issues related to ad fraud, brand safety/suitability, and ad site whitelisting & blacklisting.

5. Develop strategic media plans and campaigns integrating programmatic advertising techniques.

6. Leverage AI tools to optimize campaign ad creative design and ad performance.

7. Apply <u>both</u> critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills to address real-world advertising challenges and opportunities.

Course Notes:

This graduate-level course will require extensive hands-on-keys ad & AI platform work, readings, in-depth primary and secondary research, quantitative and qualitative analysis, strategic planning and implementation, and creative development and content creation. Guest speakers may change depending on scheduling.

Prerequisites — recommended but not required: prior exposure to Google Analytics and funnel marketing and audience targeting frameworks.

OPTIONAL: We encourage students to secure their Google Analytics GA4 Certification by the end of the course, which can be obtained at no cost at:

- [Google Analytics Academy](#) (Optional)
- [Google Analytics Certification](#) (Optional)

COURSE MATERIALS & REFERENCES

BOOK(S):
Book: ["Selling the American People: Advertising, Optimization, and the Origins of Adtech" by Lee McGuigan](#) (MIT Press)

Open Access: https://direct.mit.edu/books/oa-monograph/5610/Selling-the-American-PeopleAdvertising

ARTICLES BY TOPIC (REFER TO "WEEK BY WEEK COURSE OUTLINE" FOR ASSIGNED READINGS SCHEDULE):

<u>Overview of AdTech Today</u>
Article: [Regulation of data-driven marketing and management theory: bibliometric analysis, systematic literature review and research agenda](#), International Journal of Law and Management
Article:["Understanding Programmatic Advertising: A Brief Overview"](#), Digital Marketing Institute
Article:["Your Ultimate Guide to Programmatic Advertising Terms](#)", Digital Marketing Institute
Report: ["The State of Digital Advertising"](#) by Drift (A Salesforce Co.)
Article: ["What is Data Driven Marketing"](#), Marketing Evolution
Article/Video: ["The Changing Role of Media Buying"](#), Adweek

<u>AI & Advertising</u>
Article: [Long Road Ahead for Broad Application and Understanding of AI in Marketing, American Marketing Association (AMA)](#)

Report: [The Road to the AI Future, As Told by AI and a Few Humans, Adweek](#)
Article: [The 'Unsexy' Ways Generative AI Is Changing Marketing, Adweek](#)
Article: [The Pros And Pitfalls Of AI (AdExchanger)](#)

Measurement & Incrementality
Report: [The Waste in Advertising: Stats and Solutions of Misattribution](#), Marketing Evolution
Report: [The future of measurement 2024 (WARC)](#)
Report: [Beyond Third-Party Cookies Your Guide to Privacy-Friendly Advertising, Basis Technologies](#)
Article: [Netflix Announces New Ad Measurement Options Ahead Of The Upfronts, AdExchanger](#)
Article: [Google delays third-party cookie demise yet again, Digiday](#)
Article: [The 2023 TV Measurement Shakeout, AdExchanger](#)
Article: [Understanding Incrementality in Marketing, Measured](#)

CTV
Report: [The Fundamentals of Connected TV Advertising (Innovid)](#)
Article: [More Americans Use CTVs Than Watch Linear TV or Use Social Media, MNTN Research](#)
Article: [Get ready for the age of CTV domination: The complete guide to Connected TV, AppsFlyer](#)

Audience Targeting
Article: [Programmatic Advertising 101: Campaign Targeting Tactics, Basis Technologies](#)
Article: [Need to Know: What is advanced audience targeting and why is it important?, Nielsen](#)
Article: [Inside AB InBev's Strategy For Tapping Into First-Party Data (AdExchanger)](#)

Media Planning
Article: [How AI is revolutionizing media planning and buying, Hearts & Science (Agency)](#)
Article: [A Plain English Guide to Real Time Bidding Download Now: Free Media Planning Template, HubSpot](#)
Article: [What are the best sources of data for media planning and optimization?, Linkedin](#)
Article: [Media Planning: A Complete Guide for Marketers, Marketing Revolution](#)

Ethics, Brand Safety, AdTech Fraud, PII, and Clean Rooms
Article: [Ethics In Digital Marketing: What To Know And How To Align, Forbes](#)
Article: [The Importance Of Brand Safety In Digital Advertising—It's Not What You Think, Forbes](#)
Article: [IAB Tech Lab's Shailley Singh Talks About CTV Ad Fraud, Transparency, IAB Tech Lab](#)
Article: [Brands Paid for Ads on Forbes.com. Some Ran on a Copycat Site Instead, WSJ](#)
Article: [PII May No Longer Be The Third Rail Of Ad Tech, AdExchanger](#)
Article: [Personally Identifiable Information (PII)](#)
Article: [WTF is a data clean room?, DigiDay](#)
Article: [AppsFlyer Adds To Its Privacy Cloud With A Clean Room-Inspired Marketplace, AdExchanger](#)

Creative Optimization
Video: [Alex Collmer, of VidMob, on Using AI For Creative Optimization and Audience Insights](#)
Article: [How to Do A/B Testing: 15 Steps for the Perfect Split Test, HubSpot](#)

Article: [Creativity in Advertising: When It Works and When It Doesn't, Harvard Business Review](#)
Video: [The Ever-Changing Role of Creative in Performance Marketing, DTCX - The Community For Growing DTC Ecommerce](#)

Platform Guides: The Trade Desk
- [The Trade Desk - Edge Academy: The Future of the Open Internet](#)
- [The Trade Desk - Edge Academy: Executive Program](#)
- [The Trade Desk - Edge Academy: Trading Essentials](#)

(Optional) Platform Guides: Hootsuite
- [Overview of Hootsuite Ads](#)
- [Hootsuite Social Strategy Guides](#)

Key Ad Industry Websites:
https://www.adexchanger.com/
https://www.emarketer.com/coverage/emarketer/
https://www.beet.tv/
https://www.adweek.com/
https://digiday.com/
https://adage.com/
https://www.mediapost.com/
https://www.iab.com/
https://www.ana.net/resources

USC Library Resources - Advertising & AdTech Related:
- [Digital Social Media: Statistics - Research Guides](#)
- [Advertising - Industry Research](#)
- Statista
    - Report: [Programmatic advertising in the United States 2024, Statista](#)
    - Report: [Programmatic advertising worldwide 2023, Statista](#)
    - Report: [Digital Advertising: market data & analysis 2023, Statista](#)
    - Article: [AI use in programmatic advertising - statistics & facts, Statista](#)

Assignments Overview:

The following are brief assignment summaries; complete instructions will be posted on Brightspace and in the "Week by Week" detail below.

The 2 primary assignments for this course are an individual midterm presentation and a final team project that entails planning a programmatically enhanced ad campaign for an Non-Profit Organization (NPO) client which the teams will find and secure.

Course Assignments & Grading Composition:

Assignments	% of Grade	Due
Weekly Homework Assignments & Class Exercises (2pts/each)	**30%**	**Weekly**
Individual Midterm Presentation	**30%**	**Week 8**
Launch Ad Buys for Final Team Project **Team Final Presentation/Deck (NPO Client)** **Total Final Team Project**	**10%** **+20%** **30%**	**Week 11** **Week 14**
Class Participation	**10%**	**Ongoing**
Total	**100%**	

• Weekly Homework Assignments & Class Exercises (30%): Posts, in-class breakout exercises, quizzes, lit reviews, case studies, and platform hands-on-keys exercises. There are 15 planned homework/exercises for the course, and each carries a value of 2 points which combined will represent 30% of the course grade.

• Individual Midterm Presentation (30%): Select a company and develop a Media Plan (Media Mix & Flighting) & Verbal Presentation (with slide deck) in class. Develop a comprehensive media plan incorporating programmatic advertising techniques and AI tools.

• Team Final Presentation (30%): Develop a Non-Profit Organization's (NPO) campaign (ex., KUSC, USC Sports, or other pre-approved outside nonprofits) which entails the planning of a programmatically enhanced ad campaign and includes designing effective ad creatives for different platforms, leveraging AI for creative optimization, monitoring campaign performance and making adjustments, along with the usual creative brief elements.
  - Student Teams are responsible for securing the specific NPO client as well as getting the client to allocate a test & learn ad budget to the project. The budget can be quite small for purposes of the class. Aim for at least $1000 if possible.
  - Student Teams will meet with the NPO client no later than Week 6 to do an intake session to better understand their client. After this meeting, which student teams will create an NPO Creative Brief by Week 10 which the Professor must approve, and the Client be aligned to.

• Class Participation (10%): Attendance in every class is required since sessions are not recorded, and learning involves discussing and applying concepts, not just consuming lectures and readings. Since discussions are an essential element of this course, attendance alone won't earn participation points. 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. If you remain silent, you may be "cold-called" to respond to a question or issue. To prepare for discussions, review past

lectures, complete assigned readings, research additional materials, and apply theories to personal experiences. Here is how your class participation is evaluated:

o   Is it relevant to the discussion and respectful of others?
o   Does it address ideas offered by the readings, lectures, guests, or classmates?
o   Does it increase everyone's understanding or merely repeat facts?
o   Does it support views with data, third-party theories, and research?
o   Does it test new ideas and challenge assumptions, or just "play it safe"?

On a related note, unauthorized use of phones and computers in class distracts your instructor and other students and it prevents you from fully participating. You are in attendance but not fully present. Consequently, it might result in 1 participation point deduction per incident. Similarly, arriving late or leaving early is disruptive and impedes learning, and might also result in a 1-point deduction.

Half of your participation grade will be based on your contributions to your team assignment. At the end of the project, team members will confidentially rate each other on a scale of 1-5 based on the value of their contribution throughout the term. Students will receive an average of their ratings.

FALL 2024 CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction to Media Buying and Programmatic Advertising	**Thur Aug 29**
Week 2: Digital Advertising Ecosystem; Student Teams Formed	**Thur Sept 5**
Week 3: Data-Driven Decision-Making in Media Buying & Measurement	**Thur Sept 12**
Week 4: Introduction to Programmatic Advertising Platforms & CTV	**Thur Sept 19**
Week 5: Advanced Programmatic Advertising Techniques	**Thur Sept 26**
Week 6: Ethical Issues in Programmatic Advertising; Teams Secure NPO Clients	**Thur Oct 3**
Week 7: Introduction to AI in Advertising	**Thur Oct 10**
Week 8: Media Planning Midterm Individual Project Presentations	**Thur Oct 17**
Week 9: Creative Brief Development	**Thur Oct 24**
Week 10: Media Plan Optimization; Teams Hand in Creative Briefs	**Thur Oct 31**
Week 11: Creative Ad Strategies in Digital; Launch Ad Buys for Final Team Project	**Thur Nov 7**
Week 12: Advanced AI Tools for Media Buying & Measurement	**Thur Nov 14**
Week 13: Team Project Working Sessions (Media Planning & Campaign Development)	**Thur Nov 21**
Week 14: Final Project Presentations	**Thur Nov 28**
Week 15: Course Wrap-Up	**Thur Dec 4**
FINAL TBD	

FALL 2024 CLASS KEY ACTIVITIES & DELIVERABLES SCHEDULE

Key Activities & Deliverables	Week	Date
Student Teams Form	Week 2	Thur Sept 5
Student Teams Secure NPO Clients	Week 6	Thur Oct 3
Midterm Individual Project Presentations	Week 8	Thur Oct 17
Teams Hand in NPO Client Creative Briefs	Week 10	Thur Oct 31
Teams Launch NPO Ad Buys for Final Team Project	Week 11	Thur Nov 7
Final Team Project Presentations & Decks	Week 13	Thur Nov 28

Week-by-Week Course Outline:

All guest speakers are subject to change.

Week 1: Introduction to Media Buying and Programmatic Advertising
- Overview of the media buying process
- Evolution and principles of programmatic advertising
- Role of AI in programmatic advertising
- Readings:
Book: "Selling the American People: Advertising, Optimization, and the Origins of Adtech" by Lee McGuigan
(MIT Press)
Book Excerpts: AdTech & Programmatic: Master online media tech & programmatic media
- Article: "Understanding Programmatic Advertising: A Brief Overview", Digital Marketing Institute
- Article: "Your Ultimate Guide to Programmatic Advertising Terms", Digital Marketing Institute
- Homework:
Explore case studies on successful media buying campaigns and identify key strategies.

Week 2: Digital Advertising Ecosystem
- Student Teams Formed
- Understanding the digital advertising landscape
- Types of digital advertising channels and formats
- Key players in the digital advertising ecosystem
- Readings:
Article: "Understanding Programmatic Advertising: A Brief Overview", Digital Marketing Institute
Article: "Your Ultimate Guide to Programmatic Advertising Terms", Digital Marketing Institute
Report: "The State of Digital Advertising" by Drift (A Salesforce Co.)
Article: "What is Data-Driven Marketing", Marketing Evolution

- Homework:

Research and analyze different digital ad platforms (Google Ads, FB Ads, TikTok Ads, etc.).

Week 3: Data-Driven Decision-Making in Media Buying & Measurement; Creative Brief Primer

Topic 1: Data-Driven Decision-Making in Media Buying & Measurement

    - Importance of data in media planning and buying

    - Data sources and analytics tools for media buying

    - Using data measurement to optimize advertising campaigns

Topic 2: Creative Brief Primer

    - Mini-refresher on the Creative Brief - its role, components, and proper use. We will review examples of good and bad creative briefs. We will have a more in-depth creative brief development session on Week 9 which will focus on the team project creative brief.

    - Class Exercise:

    - During class breakout, each student will individually draft a creative brief for the company they selected for their Individual Midterm Project, using the **Creative Brief Template**.

    - Student Teams brainstorming on the campaign "Big Creative Idea" for final team project

- Readings:

Report: The Waste in Advertising: Stats and Solutions of Misattribution, Marketing Evolution

Article/Video: "The Changing Role of Media Buying", Adweek

Report: The Waste in Advertising: Stats and Solutions of Misattribution, Marketing Evolution

Article/Video: "The Changing Role of Media Buying", Adweek

Report: The future of measurement 2024 (WARC)

Report: Beyond Third-Party Cookies Your Guide to Privacy-Friendly Advertising, Basis Technologies

Article: Netflix Announces New Ad Measurement Options Ahead Of The Upfronts, AdExchanger

- Homework:

Conduct a data analysis exercise using Google Analytics.

Week 4: Introduction to Programmatic Advertising Platforms & CTV

- Overview of programmatic advertising platforms

- Introduction to The Trade Desk

- Setting up and managing programmatic campaigns

- Guest Speaker: Ali Haeri, VP of Marketing, MNTN

- Readings:

Articles: MNTN Research Portal https://research.mountain.com/

Report: The Fundamentals of Connected TV Advertising (Innovid)

Article: More Americans Use CTVs Than Watch Linear TV or Use Social Media, MNTN Research

Article: Get ready for the age of CTV domination: The complete guide to Connected TV, AppsFlyer

 - Platform Guides: The Trade Desk

    ● The Trade Desk - Edge Academy: The Future of the Open Internet

    ● The Trade Desk - Edge Academy: Trading Essentials

- Homework:

Create a basic programmatic ad campaign on The Trade Desk or another programmatic platform with open access (Meta Ads Programmatic DSP, AdCritter, Teikametrics, MediaMath, etc.).

Week 5: Advanced Programmatic Advertising Techniques
- Targeting options in programmatic advertising
- Real-time bidding (RTB) and auction dynamics
- Programmatic direct and private marketplaces
- Guest Speaker: Head of Performance Marketing, Tatari
- Readings:
Article: Programmatic Advertising 101: Campaign Targeting Tactics, Basis Technologies
Article: Need to Know: What is advanced audience targeting and why is it important?, Nielsen
Article: How AI is revolutionizing media planning and buying, Hearts & Science (Agency)
Article: A Plain English Guide to Real Time Bidding, HubSpot
- Homework:
Explore advanced targeting options on a programmatic platform and design a targeted campaign.

Week 6: Ethical Issues in Programmatic Advertising
- <u>Student Teams Secure NPO Clients</u>
- Ethical challenges in data-driven advertising
- Privacy concerns and regulations (e.g., GDPR, CCPA)
- Brand Safety, PII, and Clean Rooms
- Transparency and accountability in programmatic advertising
- Guest Speaker: Eric John, Vice President (Media Center), IAB
- Readings:
Article: Ethics In Digital Marketing: What To Know And How To Align, Forbes
Article: The Importance Of Brand Safety In Digital Advertising—It's Not What You Think, Forbes
Article: IAB Tech Lab's Shailley Singh Talks About CTV Ad Fraud, Transparency, IAB Tech Lab
Article: Brands Paid for Ads on Forbes.com. Some Ran on a Copycat Site Instead, WSJ
Article: PII May No Longer Be The Third Rail Of Ad Tech, AdExchanger
Article: Personally Identifiable Information (PII)
Article: CCPA vs GDPR Compliance Comparison
Article: WTF is a data clean room?, DigiDay
- Homework: Analyze an AdTech scenario and identify any ethical/legal or brand safety dilemmas

Week 7: Introduction to AI in Advertising
- Role of AI in advertising and marketing
- Applications of AI in media buying and campaign optimization
- Hands-on introduction to AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Bard AI)
- Readings:
Article: Long Road Ahead for Broad Application & Understanding of AI in Marketing, AMA
Report: The Road to the AI Future, As Told by AI and a Few Humans, Adweek
Article: The 'Unsexy' Ways Generative AI Is Changing Marketing, Adweek

Article: [The Pros And Pitfalls Of AI (AdExchanger)](#)

- Homework:

Experiment with ChatGPT, Gemini, or Copy.ai to generate ad copy or campaign ideas.

Week 8: Media Planning Midterm Individual Project Presentations

- Individual media planning project: Media Plan (Deck) & Verbal Presentation

- Develop a comprehensive media plan incorporating programmatic advertising techniques and AI tools & presentation summary of the midterm project proposal

- Formation of teams for the final project

Reading:

Article: [Inside AB InBev's Strategy For Tapping Into First-Party Data (AdExchanger)](#)

- Presentations

3 Min/ Student (Order: Alphabetical by Student Last Name)

Homework:

Brainstorm, as a team, a brand campaign subject for the final project and submit to the Instructor for review/approval

Week 9: Creative Brief Development

- In-depth refresher on the creative brief and its role, components, and proper use:

> Overview & Context / Project Objective /Brand Challenge / Opportunity /Strategy
> Brand Positioning
> Project Goals: Driving Awareness / Engagement / Conversion
> Target Audiences
> Key Insights
> Tone & Manner
> Priority of Communications (up to 3) & Mandatories (One)
> Unique Selling Proposition (USP)
> Reasons to Believe (RTB)
> Big Creative Idea: 1-2
> Media Mix & Media Plan (Gantt)
> Campaign Timing & Budget

- Class Exercise:

- Breakout in your student teams and use the **[Creative Brief Template](#)** to develop your team final project briefs

- Student Teams brainstorming on the campaign "Big Creative Idea" for final team project

- Homework:

Complete & submit final team project creative brief

Week 10: Media Plan Optimization; Teams Hand in Creative Briefs

- Strategies for optimizing media plans and advertising campaigns

- A/B testing and multivariate testing

- Using AI for real-time optimization

- Readings:

Article: [How to Do A/B Testing: 15 Steps for the Perfect Split Test, HubSpot](#)

Article: [What are the best sources of data for media planning and optimization?, Linkedin](#)

Article: [Media Planning: A Complete Guide for Marketers, Marketing Revolution](#)

Video: [Alex Collmer, of VidMob, on Using AI For Creative Optimization and Audience Insights](#)

- Checkpoint: Design creative assets for the final project campaign.

- Homework: Launch team's final project ad campaign so it can run for at least 3-4 weeks

Week 11: Creative Strategies in Digital Advertising; Launch Ad Buys for Final Team Project

Importance of creative elements in digital advertising

- Designing effective ad creatives for different platforms

- Leveraging AI for creative optimization

- Guest Speaker: Aston Ford, Manager of Creator Operations, QuickFrame

- Readings:

Article: [Creativity in Advertising: When It Works and When It Doesn't, Harvard Business Review](#)

Video: [The Ever-Changing Role of Creative in Performance Marketing, DTCX](#)

- Homework:

Conduct an A/B creative test on digital advertising campaigns and analyze results.

Week 12: Advanced AI Tools for Media Buying & Measurement

- Exploring advanced AI tools for media planning

- Integrating AI into advertising strategy and decision-making

- Case studies of AI-driven advertising campaigns

- Guest Speaker: Samantha Jacobson, Chief Strategy Officer, The Trade Desk

- Readings:

Report: [The future of measurement 2024 (WARC)](#)

Report: [Beyond Third-Party Cookies Your Guide to Privacy-Friendly Advertising, Basis Technologies](#)

- Homework:

Explore and experiment with AI tools for media planning tasks and optimization.

Week 13: Team Project Working Sessions (Media Planning & Campaign Development)

- Briefing from teams in class on project team brief

- Teams work on executing final campaign project presentations

- Monitor campaign performance and make optimizations if needed

- Checkpoint: Finalize campaign execution/optimization and prepare for presentation.

Week 14: Final Project Presentations

- Teams present their final campaign projects and performance results for their live campaign

- Presentations by Team 1 / Team 2 / Team 3 / Etc.

- Homework:

 Submit final project decks and complete course evaluation.

Week 15: Course Wrap-Up
- Course wrap-up & class reflections on key learnings and future trends advertising
- Discuss ways to make this new course even better for future semesters

FINAL TBD

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
A	Excellent: A's and A-minuses are 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 a comprehensive understanding of course materials, and demonstrates superlative creativity, critical thinking, and communication skills. *Recommendations will be provided on request **only** to students who earn a solid A in the course.*
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 shortcomings. The ideas and quality need to be stronger to succeed in a professional context.
C	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.
D	Marginal: D's are earned for amateurish work featuring insufficient research, many errors, incomplete sections, and/or superficial analysis. The work might demonstrate only rudimentary understanding.

F	Failing: F's are earned for incomplete work, not researched, carelessly executed, and/or plagiarized. Plagiarism may also be subject to disciplinary measures. The work demonstrates little to no understanding. Note that three or more unexcused absences will also result in a failing grade.

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 might 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 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 communication strategies. You may certainly be "inspired" by others, including AI, as long as you properly credit the sources, but most of the thinking and execution should be yours, and higher grades are awarded to work that is innovative and imaginative. The goal is to 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. Treat your work as a submission to a client, supervisor, investor, or award show. 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* (avail via USC library).

·   **Timeliness:** In the professional world, missing a deadline by even one minute can result in lost opportunities or even legal issues. Consequently, without an exceptional circumstance and the instructor's permission, late assignments will be downgraded one level (e.g., A to B) per day of lateness.

·   **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").

   o Start with the USC library and our librarians, who have prepared Research Guidelines for DSM (https://libguides.usc.edu/digitalsocialmedia) and other departments (https://libguides.usc.edu).
   o Search Google Scholar (https://scholar.google.com/) before searching regular Google.
   o Never cite Wikipedia; rather, refer to the sources listed in the Wikipedia article.
   o Do not trust sources cited by AI tools, such as ChatGPT. Verify before quoting or citing.

o Go beyond third-party sources and conduct direct primary research, such as focus groups, surveys, and interviews, particularly of subject-matter experts like professionals and professors.

o Within the body of papers, include reference notes, either parenthetical, such as (Lee 2017), or in the form of footnotes or endnotes.

o 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, name of the publication, dates of publication, original URLs (not USC library), and dates a particular website was accessed.

Timeframe and Disputes

The instructor will make every effort to evaluate your assignments within two weeks of submission. Should you wish to dispute a grade, you must do so within a week of receiving it, and before the end of the semester.

VIII. Policies and Procedures

·   **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 participation 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 Brightspace.

·   **Illness:** If you are feeling ill, particularly with COVID symptoms, stay home to protect the health of your classmates, your instructor, 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 might 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 a few guidelines, with assignments containing more details:

o AI is a useful tool for helping you start an assignment or overcome writer's block, but the final submission must reflect your ideas and revisions. Treat AI as a personal intern: an efficient and capable assistant who can help you, but who has shortcomings and might be prone to errors.

o Don't trust what AI says. Not only is ChatGPT's database limited, it draws its answers from fiction, nonfiction, and misinformation. It might even fabricate sources. Assume the answers it provides are wrong, and doublecheck them. You will be held responsible for any errors.

o Provide detailed prompts to generate the best results. You might have to try multiple variations.

o Your work will become part of the AI's database, so do not include any sensitive information.

o 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 should 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, do not hesitate to contact the instructor to arrange a meeting (rbracero@usc.edu). 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](#). 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 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
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/
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
Free lessons and certifications on a range of digital media.

USC computing support:
- · USC Computing Center Laptop Loaner Program
- · Zoom information for students
- · Brightspace help for students
- · Software available to USC Campus

Course Creator / Instructor: Prof. Rafael Bracero, Adjunct Professor, USC Annenberg:

Rafael Bracero has over 20 years of experience in brand marketing and partnership development at industry-leading firms, including Disney, Procter & Gamble, Activision, Warner Media, and most recently, as Director of Marketing Strategy at MNTN, a leading SaaS AdTech CTV platform for streaming TV advertisers.

Rafael is an Adjunct Professor at USC Annenberg, where he teaches graduate marketing courses, including Integrated Communication Strategies, Global Marketing Communications, and Storytelling & Experiential Communications. He earned his MBA from the USC Marshall School of Business and serves on the Board of

the Marshall Volunteer Leadership Council. Rafael also hosts the marketing podcast ["Working Media with Rafael Bracero"](#), which is available on Spotify and Apple.

Prof. Rafael Bracero is an ICF ACC-credentialed executive coach and founder of RBR Brand Consulting which provides executive coaching, career advisory, and brand consulting services. Prof. Bracero was born and raised in Puerto Rico, and his hobbies include sailing, food & travel, photography, tennis, golf, and volunteering.