

**Session:** Spring 2025, Mon/Wed 12:00pm–1:50pm

**Section:** 20576R

**Location:** ANN 406

**Instructor:** Michael J. Wissot, MBA, MIM

**Office:** ASC 333

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

**Contact Info:** [mwissot@usc.edu](mailto:mwissot@usc.edu) / 805-490-2460 mobile

## I. Course Description & Notes

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

## II. Student Learning Outcomes

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

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

**Required Preparation:**

N/A

**Recommended Preparation:**

COMM 204 or COMM 322

*Having a foundation in presentational speaking is highly advisable*

## III. Course Attendance

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

#### IV. Description and Assessment of Assignments

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

**V. Grading**

**a. Breakdown of Grade**

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

**b. Grading 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

### c. Grading Standards

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

### d. Grading Timeline

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

### VI. Assignment Rubrics

Assignment rubrics are discussed individually during class.

### VII. Assignment Submission Policy

All assignments are posted on Brightspace with detailed instructions and due dates. Students are expected to complete all assignments on time. Late work, if accepted, may be penalized. Typically, late submissions will result in 10% grade deduction per day late. Lacking prior discussion and agreement with me of any late assignment may result in the student receiving a grade of F for that late assignment. **Assignments must be submitted via e-mail with Word, PPT or PDF attachments** (unless instructed otherwise).

## VIII. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

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

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

## IX. Laptop Policy

**Students may not use laptops, tablets or phones to take notes during class.** You are encouraged to take written notes as you see fit. Students requiring a waiver from this rule must discuss with professor and formally submit a request with supporting documentation to justify an exemption. However, there may be some in-class activities where students will be permitted to conduct research and/or work on shared documents with each other.

## X. Add/Drop Dates

**Spring Semester 2025 (15 weeks: 1/13/25 – 5/2/25)**

- |                             |                                                                     |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Friday, January 31:</b>  | Last day to register and add classes                                |
| <b>Friday, January 31:</b>  | Last day to drop a class without a mark of “W” and receive a refund |
| <b>Friday, February 28:</b> | Last day to drop a course without a mark of “W” on the transcript   |
| <b>Friday, February 28:</b> | Last day to change pass/no pass to letter grade                     |
| <b>Friday, April 11:</b>    | Last day to drop a class                                            |

**XI. Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown**

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

	<b>Daily Topics/Activities Covered in Class</b>	<b>Assigned Readings (Y&amp;T 2<sup>nd</sup> ed)</b>	<b>Assign Dates / Due Dates</b>
<b>Week 1</b> <b>January 13</b>	Overview of Course		
<b>January 15</b>	Professional Comm Boot Camp I <b>Presentation</b> , Presence, Message	Chapters 1 & 9	Assign Goals Essay
<b>Week 2</b> <b>January 22</b>	Professional Comm Boot Camp II Presentation, <b>Presence</b> , Message Working in Teams	Chapter 7	
<b>Week 3</b> <b>January 27</b>	Writing Résumés / Workshop	Chapter 3	Goals Essay DUE
<b>January 29</b>	Résumés (continued)		Share Résumé in class
<b>Week 4</b> <b>February 3</b>	Writing Reports & Presentations Cover Letter Workshop	Chapter 6	Share Cover Letter in class
<b>February 5</b>	Intrapersonal Skills	Chapter 2	Assign Informative Presentation
<b>Week 5</b> <b>February 10</b>	Listening in the Workplace Problematic Personalities at Work	Chapter 5 10 People excerpt	Assign Interview Assessment
<b>February 12</b>	Communication Solutions at Work	Chapters 8 & 10	
<b>Week 6</b> <b>February 19</b>	Midterm Exam	Y&T 1-3 & 5-11, lectures, handouts	
<b>Week 7</b> <b>February 24</b>	Deliver Informative Presentation		Outline DUE
<b>February 26</b>	Deliver Informative Presentation		Outline DUE
<b>Week 8</b> <b>March 3</b>	Interviewing / Workshop	Chapter 4	Prepare for Interview Q&A
<b>March 5</b>	Guest Speaker: Interviewing		

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<b>Week 9</b> <b>March 10</b>	Op-Ed Review / Workshop		Assign Op-Ed Share Samples IN CLASS
<b>March 12</b>	Guest Speaker: Analytics, Data, Intel		Zoom
<b>March 17 / 19</b>	NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK		
<b>Week 10</b> <b>March 24</b>	Networking Persuasive Business Presentations	Chapter 11	Assign Persuasive Business Strategy Presentation
<b>March 26</b>	Guest Speaker: Entertainment		Interview Assessment DUE
<b>Week 11</b> <b>March 31</b>	Guest Speaker: Social Impact in Comm		Assign Jobs Package
<b>April 2</b>	Guest Speaker: Corp Strategy in PR		
<b>Week 12</b> <b>April 7</b>	Marketing Case Study / Workshop		Op-Ed DUE
<b>April 9</b>	Guest Speaker: TBD		
<b>Week 13</b> <b>April 14</b>	Deliver Persuasive Presentation		Outline DUE
<b>April 16</b>	Deliver Persuasive Presentation		Outline DUE
<b>Week 14</b> <b>April 21</b>	Deliver Persuasive Presentation		Outline DUE
<b>April 23</b>	Developing Your Personal Brand		
<b>Week 15</b> <b>April 28</b>	Crisis Communication Activity		Jobs Package DUE
<b>April 30</b>	Conducting a SWOT Analysis		Assign Final Report
<b>Exam Week</b> <b>May 9</b>	Final Report		Final Report DUE 5/9/25 at 4:59PM

## **XII. Additional Class Policies and Procedures**

### **a. Technology**

Using any laptops, tablets, phones or other mobile devices to access the Internet and/or e-mail during class time to partake in non-class-related activity is not permitted. **Any violation of this policy may result in the loss of all participation points for the entire semester, as well as other measures under university policy.** However, there may be some in-class activities where students will be permitted to conduct research and/or work on shared documents with each other.

### **b. Late Submissions**

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

### **c. Student Conduct**

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

### **d. Lecture Slides & Notes**

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

## **XIII. Communication**

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

## **XIV. Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

Since creating, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course, all assignments should be prepared by the student, working individually on individual assignments or working with assigned peers on group assignments. Students may not have another person or entity, including AI-generated tools or platforms (e.g. Chat GPT), complete any substantive portion of any assignment. Developing strong competencies in these areas will prepare you for a competitive workplace as you look to set yourself apart with your own ingenuity and analytical thinking. Therefore, using AI-generated tools or platforms on any graded assignments is prohibited in this course. Any use of AI-generated tools or platforms on any graded assignments will be identified as plagiarism and reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

## **XV. 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).

## **XVI. Academic Conduct and Support Systems**

### **a. Academic Integrity & Conduct**

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

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

### **b. 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](http://osas.usc.edu). You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto:osasfrontdesk@usc.edu).

### **c. 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.

**d. 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.

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[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.

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

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