



CMGT 554: Copywriting and Creativity
4 Units

Spring 2025 -Monday – 6:30pm
Location: ANN 409abc

Instructor: Eric Markgraf
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Course Description

The world is full of dreams and ideas, but far too often they die on a piece of paper, or scribbled on a napkin between sips of morning coffee or locked deep in one’s mind waiting to be realized. In short, unless you can take those ideas and simply communicate them to the masses or your target, no one will actually care or have time to listen.

The art of creativity not only lies in the idea itself, but most importantly how that idea becomes a movement. This class will try and prepare you for the blunt real world of marketing and advertising. A world where unless you have a simple end game and truly understand the goal of your client, company or product, there can never be a beginning. Good ideas will be wasted because the lost art of proper creative briefs, and understanding strategy, and goals and ROI, has fallen away to “quick and burn” idea generation factories where buckshot is continually blasted to see what might or might not stick, leaving brands soulless and never standing for anything. I’ve had the fortunate opportunity to help build brands like NIKE, FOX Sports, Land Rover, and Sky Television over many years, and no marketing idea executed for those brands was ever done without a clear understanding of the end game and how it would help the company in the long run.

You will learn how to bring your ideas to life and shape them into world class ads by learning to write concise convincing copy, that not only sells the product, but creates an emotional connection to the brand. The better you understand the how and why, the better you will be at adding value to your future career in advertising and marketing.

Student Learning Outcomes

- Demonstrated leadership and teamwork in small groups
- Execute creative briefs
- Construct advertising concepts and ideas that break through the noise
- Develop advertising copy that cuts to the point and simplifies an overall idea
- Demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the importance of diversity of thought and backgrounds in the creative process
- Translate strategy into creative messages that convince, advocate, and sell
- Evaluate creative and assess what is good and what does not work
- Demonstrate effective presentation skills that convey creative ideas

Policies and Procedures

a. Additional Policies

While it is expected that students will make every effort to attend every classes, it is recognized that personal circumstances will arise which preclude class attendance. In such circumstances, the student is responsible for obtaining the materials presented in missed classes and for making up coursework.

I would like to create a learning environment for my students that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives and experiences, and honors your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.) To help accomplish this, if you have a name and/or set of pronouns that differ from those that appear in your official

records, please let me know. If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to come and talk with me. If anything is said in class to make you feel uncomfortable, please reach out to me, even anonymously.

b. Communication

Please contact the instructor outside of class and if you cannot come to office hours to arrange a meeting time by email. You can send a second email if I have not replied within 24 hours. Please allow more time on weekends.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

How To Write An Inspired Creative Brief by Howard Ibach

How To Write Better Copy by Steve Harrison

The Advertising Concept Book by Pete Barry

Breakthrough The Noise by Tim Staples

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Final Project Campaign: 50% of grade

Your final project will be you and your teammate's creation of an advertising campaign for a specific product or service. What ever product or service you choose will then be used as part of a cause marketing campaign. You will choose a product or service that can easily be used in a campaign that creates awareness for a certain cause and at the same time creates a positive halo for your product or service. You can choose any causes or NGO, i.e Vaccine Awareness, Sex Trafficking, Malaria Prevention, LBGTQ, Climate Change, AIDS Awareness, Energy Efficiency, Water Conservation, Ocean Conservation. You will be required to create a marketing strategy document, a creative brief, 3 print ads, two television commercials, two radio commercials, 1 out of home, and your choice of a internet form of communication/or event marketing idea.

Oral presentation of final project: 10% of grade

The oral presentation will need to reflect the creative theories you have studied in class, the great creative thinkers you have read and the discussions we have had. Your oral presentation will pitch the idea of your cause marketing campaign to the "CEO" of your product or service. You need to explain why the partnership works and why this cause marketing campaign and partnership is better than just a straight product campaign. You should show examples of the work in porter to sell the idea. How you set up your final oral presentation itself with a concept and an innovative, creative approach that will frame the delivery of your advertising campaign will determine this portion of your grade.

Active Participation in Class: 10% of grade

Assignment 1: Individual Written Paper: 5% of grade

You will be asked to pick a print ad and then write the creative brief you think was used to create the ad.

Assignment 2: Individual Oral Presentation: 5% of grade

You will be asked to pick your favorite television commercial and present it to the class and tell us why it is your favorite, what the message is, and why it emotional connected with you.

Assignment 3: Individual Written Paper: 10% of grade

You will be asked to write a creative brief based on today's market conditions and create a print ad based on that brief for ONE of these companies or products: Wonder Bread, Uber Eats, Carnival Cruises, Kraft Mac and Cheese or WeWork.

Assignment 4: A :30 recorded radio spot created with your class partner: 10% of grade

You will be asked to write and record a teaser spot to announce your products affiliation with chosen cause

Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	% of Grade
Final Project	50
Final Presentation	10
Participation	10
Individual Assignments	30
TOTAL	100%

Grading Scale

95% to 100% A	80% to 83%: B-	67% to 69%: D+
90% to 94% A-	77% to 79%: C+	64% to 66%: D
87% to 89%: B+	74% to 76%: C	60% to 63%: D-
84% to 86%: B	70% to 73%: C-	0% to 59%: F

Grading Standards

Letter Grade	Description
A	Excellent; demonstrates extraordinarily high achievement; comprehensive knowledge and understanding of subject matter; all expectations met and exceeded.
B	Good; moderately broad knowledge and understanding of subject matter; explicitly or implicitly demonstrates good, if not thorough understanding; only minor substantive shortcomings.
C	Satisfactory/Fair; reasonable knowledge and understanding of subject matter; most expectations are met; despite any shortcomings, demonstrates basic level of understanding.

D	Marginal; minimal knowledge and understanding of subject matter; more than one significant shortcoming; deficiencies indicate only the most rudimentary level of understanding.
F	Failing; unacceptably low level of knowledge and understanding of subject matter; deficiencies indicate lack of understanding.

Grading Timeline

For effective learning, students should receive timely feedback on assignments and exams. Therefore, every attempt will be made to grade assignments/exams and post grades within two weeks. You are responsible for notifying the Instructor within one (1) week of a score posting if you think a score is missing or inaccurate. Moreover, you only have this period of time to contest a score on an assignment/exam. If you fail to inquire/notify us of any discrepancy, missing score, or contest a score within one week of the date the score is posted, no further changes will be made.

Assignment Submission Policy

A. All assignments are due on the dates specified. Lacking prior discussion and agreement with the instructor, late assignments will automatically be given a grade of F.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

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

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings/Homework	Homework Due at Class
Week 1 Date: 1/13	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introductions 2. Explanation of the class 3. Review of curriculum 4. Review of current award winning ads and the meaning behind them 5. Lecture on the writing of a creative brief 		
Week 3 Date: 1/27	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discussion of Homework 2. Introduce your creative partner 3. Discussion of the modern day advertising agency and how the creative process works 	<p>Read How to Write An Inspired Creative Brief by Howard Ibach</p> <p>Read chapters 1, 2, and 6 in The Advertising Concept Book</p>	<p>Pick a print ad and write the creative brief you think the ad came from</p> <p>Pick a creative partner for the semester's project</p>
Week 4 Date: 2/3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review of what you learned the week before 2. Discuss brand building 3. Oral presentations of favorite commercial 4. Introductions of your product/service. Discuss details of Final Project Requirements 		<p>Pick a favorite television commercial and be prepared to show it in class and discuss</p> <p>Work with your creative partner and pick your product/service</p>
Week 5 Date: 2/10	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss copy writing and the art of grabbing attention 2. Put all homework ads on the wall and have a discussion about them and shared learnings 	<p>Read How to Write Better Copy by Steve Harrison</p> <p>Read chapters 3 and 11 about "Print" and "Copy" in The Advertising Concept Book</p>	<p>Write a creative brief and produce a print ad based on current market conditions for ONE of these products or companies: Wonder Bread, Uber Eats, Carnival Cruises, WeWork. Make enough copies for everyone in class and for the wall.</p>

Week 7 Date: 2/24	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review of out of home pictures homework 2. Lecture on writing strategy brief 3. In class assignment 		Take a picture of an outdoor board, or bus shelter ad, or wall ad, or any out of home ad that you feel did not work in the medium it was set in and be prepared to discuss why
Week 8 Date: 3/3			
Week 9 Date: 3/10	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss Readings 2. Play and discuss radio spot homework 3. Final project check-ins 	<p>Read the chapter on Radio in The Advertising Concept Book</p> <p>Read Breakthrough The Noise by Tim Staples</p>	<p>Write and record a :30 teaser radio spot to announce your brand</p> <p>Draft of strategy and creative brief due</p>
Spring Break Date: 3/17-3/21			
Week 10 Date: 3/24	Design, and type and style		
Week 11 Date: 3/31	Event Marketing and On-line		
Week 12 Date: 4/7	Preparing final project and presentations with partner in class		
Week 13 Date: 4/14	Preparing final project and presentations with partner in class		
Week 14 Date: 4/21			Final Presentations
Week 15 Date: 4/28			Final Presentations
STUDY DAYS Dates: 5/3-5/6			
FINAL EXAM PERIOD Dates: 5/7-5/14	Final Project Due		Date: For the date and time of the final for this class please consult spring schedule

Policies and Procedures

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](#)

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 is prohibited 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 is also prohibited. 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).

AI USE:

AI tools can be used in the final project to help design print ads and commercial story boards to look nice.

AI tools CAN NOT USED TO DEVELOP CONCEPTS OR IDEAS!

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

[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 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.

[TrojansAlert](#)

TrojansAlert is an alert system that allows university officials to contact you during an emergency. It is your connection to real-time updates, instructions on where to go, what to do, or what not to do, who to contact and other important information. Visit the website to sign up.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies. See the university's site on [Campus Safety and Emergency Preparedness](#).

[ITS Customer Support Center \(CSC\)](#): (213) 740-5555

The ITS Customer Support Center (CSC) provides support to the USC community for connecting to the USC Network and using supported applications. For help with network connectivity and software, contact CSC. Walk-in support is available in Leavey Library's Information Commons.

[Violence-Free Campus](#)

Visit the website to read more about prohibited behaviors, reporting responsibilities and where to report.

Student-Athlete Travel Excuse Letters

Prior to a university-sponsored away competition, Student-Athletes are responsible for providing their Instructor with a Competition Excuse Letter (provided by their academic counselor) for the classes missed while on the road (i.e., excused absence). It is the responsibility of the Student-Athlete to provide the letter prior to leaving on their trip and to make arrangements for a make-up of any missed assignments or exams. Please refer to the [SAAS site](#) where they detail travel and travel excuse letters