

SPRING 2025

OFFICIAL SYLLABUS - COURSE SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

DSM 599 Special Topics Course:

The Future of Advertising: Adtech Innovations & AI Trends

Section: 21786

Semester: Spring 2025 – Wed, Jan 15 - Wed, April 30

Time: 6:00 PM - 8:50 PM

Location: ANN 209

Instructor: Rafael Bracero

Office Hours: Wed after class & Fri (mornings) by appointment

Email: 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 not required. 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 critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills to address real-world advertising challenges and opportunities.

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 coach and founder of RBR Brand Consulting, which provides executive coaching, team 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.

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 — Highly recommend prior exposure to brand and performance marketing, marketing funnels, and creative briefs. CMGT541 Integrated Communication Strategies can be a helpful class before DSM599 The Future of Advertising: Adtech Innovations & AI Trends.

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

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

Assignments Overview:

The following are brief assignment summaries; complete instructions will be posted on Brightspace and in the 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 NPO client which Prof. Bracero will arrange/match or the teams.

Course Assignments & Grading Composition:

Assignment	% of Grade	Due
Weekly Homework Assignments & In Class Exercises	30%	Weekly
Individual Midterm Presentation	30%	Week 8
Launch Ad Buys for Final Team Project	10%	Week 11
Team Final Presentation/Deck (NPO Client)	+20%	Week 13
Total Final Team Project	30%	
Class Participation	10%	Ongoing

- **Weekly Homework Assignments & In-Class Exercises (30%):** Posts, Quizzes, Lit Reviews, Case Studies, Platform hands-on-keys exercises
- **Individual Midterm Presentation (30%):** Select a company - Individual media planning project including a Media Plan (Deck) & Verbal Presentation. Develop a comprehensive media plan incorporating programmatic advertising techniques and AI tools & presentation summary of midterm project proposal
- **Team Final Presentation (30%):** Develop a Non-Profit Organization's (NPO) campaign (ex., KUSC, USC Sports, other pre-approved outside nonprofits) which entails the planning of a programmatically enhanced ad campaign for an NPO client 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. The NPO clients will be arranged/matched by Prof. Bracero. Clients will brief students & allocate working media test & learn ad budget to the project.

- 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.

SPRING 2025 CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction to Media Buying and Programmatic Advertising	Wed Jan 15
Week 2: Marketing Frameworks & the Creative Brief ; Digital Advertising Ecosystem	Wed Jan 22
Week 3: Data-Driven Decisioning in Media Buying; Client+Team Matches	Wed Jan 29
Week 4: Introduction to Programmatic Advertising Platforms & CTV	Wed Feb 5
Week 5: Advanced Programmatic Advertising Techniques	Wed Feb 12
Week 6: Ethical Considerations in Programmatic Advertising	Wed Feb 19
Week 7: Intro to AI in Advertising; Midterm Individual Project Presentations	Wed Feb 26
Week 8: Media Planning	Wed Mar 5
Week 9: Media Plan Optimization ; Teams Hand in Creative Briefs	Wed Mar 12
Week 10: Media Plan KPIs	Wed Mar 19
Week 11: Creative Ad Strategies in Digital; Launch Ad Buys for Final Team Project	Wed Mar 26
Week 12: Advanced AI Tools for Media Buying & Measurement	Wed Apr 2
Week 13: Team Project Working Sessions (Media Planning & Campaign Dev / Creative)	Wed Apr 9
Week 14: Team Project Working Sessions (Optimization, KPIs, Dashboarding)	Wed Apr 16
Week 15: Final Project Presentations	Wed Apr 23
Week 16: Course Wrap-Up	Wed Apr 30

SPRING 2025 CLASS KEY DELIVERABLES SCHEDULE

Key Deliverables	Week	Date
Teams Form & Assign NPO Clients	Week 2	Wed Jan 22
Midterm Individual Project Presentations	Week 8	Wed Feb 26
Teams Hand in Creative Briefs	Week 10	Wed Mar 12
Teams Launch Ad Buys for Final Team Project	Week 11	Wed Mar 26
Final Team Project Presentations & Decks	Week 14	Wed Apr 23

COURSE MATERIALS

BOOKS:

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):

Overview of Adtech Today

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

Book (Optional): [“Ad Tech & Programmatic: Master the online media tech and programmatic media explained”](#) by Julian Delphiki

AI & Advertising

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

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](#)

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://variety.com/v/digital/>

<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/c/business/>

<https://www.mediapost.com/>

<https://research.mountain.com/>

<https://mountain.com/webinars/>

<https://www.tvscientific.com/resources/ebooks>

<https://www.ama.org/marketing-news-home/>

<https://www.iab.com/>

<https://www.ana.net/resources>

<https://www.gartner.com/reviews/market/ad-tech-platforms>

<https://www.gartner.com/en/documents/4315899?ref=null>

[Gartner AdTech Magic Quadrant](#)

<https://searchengineland.com/>

<https://newsletter.smartbrief.com/getLast.action?mode=last&b=MarketingInnovation>

https://newsletter.smartbrief.com/getLast.action?mode=last&b=ANAdv_BizMktg

<https://site.adform.com/resources/resources/>

<https://martech.org/>

<https://www.rockerbox.com/resources#all-resources>

[Marketing Brew](#)

<https://metadata.io/resources/>

<https://www.appsflyer.com/glossary/>

<https://www.appsflyer.com/blog/>

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

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)

- Article: ["Understanding Programmatic Advertising: A Brief Overview"](#), Digital Marketing Institute
- Article: [“Your Ultimate Guide to Programmatic Advertising Terms”](#), Digital Marketing Institute

- Homework:

Book chapter class presentations by **“flash” team presenters**: “Selling the American People: Advertising, Optimization, and the Origins of Adtech” by Lee McGuigan (MIT Press) Chapter 1 - 8

Chapter 1 - 2	Team 1
Chapter 3 - 4	Team 2
Chapter 5 - 6	Team 3
Chapter 7 - 8	Team 4

Week 2: Marketing Frameworks & the Creative Brief; Digital Advertising Ecosystem

Marketing Frameworks & the Creative Brief

- 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 (Only one please)
 - Unique Selling Proposition (USP)
 - Reasons to Believe (RTB)
 - Big Creative Idea: 1-2
 - Media Mix & Media Plan (Gantt)
 - Campaign Timing & Budget:
- In breakout groups, use [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 creative brief

Digital Advertising Ecosystem

- 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 Decisioning in Media Buying; **Client+Team Matches**

- Importance of data in media planning and buying
- Data sources and analytics tools for media buying
- Using data measurement to optimize advertising campaigns

- 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:

Report: [The Fundamentals of Connected TV Advertising \(Innovid\)](#)

- 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 advertising campaign on The Trade Desk or another programmatic platform with open access (Meta Ads Programmatic DSP, AdCritic, 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 Considerations in Programmatic Advertising

- 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; Midterm Individual Project Presentations

- 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 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 \(AdExchanger\)](#)

- Midterm Individual Presentations

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

- Homework:

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

Week 8: Media Planning

- Individual media planning project: Media Plan (Deck) & Verbal Presentation
- Develop a comprehensive media plan incorporating programmatic advertising techniques and AI tools & a 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 \(AdExchanger\)](#)

Homework:

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

Week 9: 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 10: Media Plan KPIs

- Understand the importance of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in assessing media plan effectiveness.
- Explore types of KPIs used across media channels (reach, frequency, CTR, conversion, etc.)
- Learn to analyze media performance data to optimize campaign strategies and budget allocation.

- Readings:

- [IAB: Business Outcomes Are Now the Top Buyer KPI, According to Part Two of the IAB Digital Video Ad Spend and Strategy Report](#)

- [Dashthis: Digital Marketing KPIs and Metrics: The Ultimate Guide](#)

- Homework:

- Select a media campaign of your choice and outline a set of KPIs that could effectively measure its success. Provide a brief explanation of why each KPI is relevant.
- Analyze an example media performance report and suggest three optimizations based on the data provided.

Week 11: Creative Ad 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 - The Community For Growing DTC Ecommerce](#)

- 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 Dev / Creative) -

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: Team Project Working Sessions (Optimization, KPIs, Dashboarding)

- 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 15: Final Project Presentations

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

- Presentations

Team 1 / Team 2 / Team 3 / Team 4

- Homework:

Submit final project decks and complete course evaluation.

FINAL: Course Wrap-Up

- Peer feedback and evaluation
- Course wrap-up & class reflections on key learnings and future trends in advertising
- Discuss ways to make this new course even better for future semesters

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. <i>Recommendations will be provided on request only to students who earn a solid A in the course.</i>
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").
 - 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>).
 - Search Google Scholar (<https://scholar.google.com/>) before searching regular Google.
 - Never cite Wikipedia; rather, refer to the sources listed in the Wikipedia article.
 - Do not trust sources cited by AI tools, such as ChatGPT. Verify before quoting or citing.
 - 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.
 - Within the body of papers, include reference notes, either parenthetical, such as (Lee 2017), or in the form of footnotes or endnotes.

- 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:
 - 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.
 - 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 double-check them. You will be held responsible for any errors.

- Provide detailed prompts to generate the best results. You might have to try multiple variations.
- Your work will become part of the AI's database, so do not include any sensitive information.
- 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 (Prof. Bracero's email is 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](#)