USC Iovine and Young Academy
Arts, Technology and the Business of Innovation

IDSN 560 Narrative and Storytelling
Units: 4.0
Spring 2025—Tuesdays—5:00 pm-7:50 pm PT

Location: https://brightspace.usc.edu

Instructor: Jay Clewis
Office: Virtual
Office Hours: By Appointment
Contact: jclewis@usc.edu

IT Help: https://uscedu.sharepoint.com/sites/IYAStudent/SitePages/IT-Resources.aspx
IT Email Support: iyahelp@usc.edu

Course Description
We all have stories to tell, and there have never been more ways to share your story. Narratives and Interactive Storytelling invites you to explore and master the art and science of creating compelling narratives across diverse media. This course offers a dynamic blend of communication theory, storytelling techniques, and practical applications that span historical classics to the latest advancements in interactive and digital media.

In this course, students will learn how to craft resonant stories that captivate and engage audiences, whether for personal expression, professional projects, or innovative creative endeavors. By examining various formats—written, spoken, visual, and digital—students will discover how to tailor their narratives to different technologies, platforms, and purposes, ensuring their stories leave a lasting impact. By integrating multimedia tools and methods, students will gain the skills to effectively develop, communicate, and distribute their stories across the evolving landscape of modern storytelling.

Learning Objectives
Upon completing this course, students will be able to:
- Identify and analyze various narrative structures and techniques from historical and contemporary perspectives, understanding their applications across different media.
- Create and refine engaging narratives tailored to specific audiences and platforms, utilizing written, spoken, visual, and interactive storytelling methods.
- Utilize emerging technologies and tools to enhance storytelling and expand narrative possibilities.
- Integrate communication theory with practical storytelling techniques to craft narratives that evoke meaningful and impactful audience responses.
- Collaborate with peers from diverse fields to explore innovative storytelling approaches and leverage interdisciplinary insights for creative projects.
- Adapt storytelling strategies to the changing media and technology landscape for delivery in any context.

Prerequisites
There are no prerequisites or co-requisites for this course.

Course Notes

This course is for a letter grade and will be conducted online via Zoom. All assignments and lecture notes will be posted in Brightspace. All assignments will be submitted to Brightspace.

Additionally, critique is crucial to developing your craft as a storyteller, yet it is one of the more challenging components of the education experience. This course will include a lot of constructive feedback from your instructor and peers in the class. Learning how to give and accept feedback is essential for growth and creating a safe learning space. Your instructor will discuss this in more depth in class, but to get started, please read the following website:

- Goldstein, Mitch. *The Purpose of Critique.* https://howtocrit.com. Accessed 27 Aug. 2024.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Students must provide their own laptops. Laptop specifications consider that students will create, stream, and download audio and video, communicate using video conferencing applications, and create and store large multimedia files. The university realizes that attending classes online and completing coursework remotely requires access to technology that not all students possess. You may be eligible for the USC Computer Center Laptop Loaner Program.

How To Purchase Software at The Academy Discounted Rate

Selected software licenses are available for purchase online through the USC Iovine and Young software catalog at the Academy discounted rate. To purchase software:

- Visit: https://commerce.cashnet.com/IOVINE
- Select the software license(s) you want to purchase by clicking "View Details."
- You will receive an order confirmation receipt at the email address you provided.
- You will be notified by email when the software license has been activated.

Technical Support Information

Use the following contact information for help accessing or using Brightspace, Zoom, or other USC online tools and resources, including email:

- Brightspace Help: https://www.brightspacehelp.usc.edu
- Brightspace Email Support: usc@d2l.com
- Zoom Support: Zoom information for students
- IT Help: https://uscedu.sharepoint.com/sites/IYAStudent/SitePages/IT-Resources.aspx
- IT Email Support: iyahelp@usc.edu

Required Readings and Supplemental Material

Weekly required readings are included in the course schedule below and are available online for free by a third-party website. Please contact your instructor to provide replacement material if any required reading becomes unavailable. Additionally, the website, The Purpose of Critique, is required reading.

- Goldstein, Mitch. *The Purpose of Critique.* https://howtocrit.com. Accessed 27 Aug. 2024.

Optional Reading and Supplemental Material

The following text is recommended, but not required, to provide additional context and supplemental material in this course:

- **Recommended:** Storr, Will. *The Science of Storytelling: Why Stories Make Us Human and How to Tell Them Better.* Harper Collins, 2019.

Important University Dates for the Spring 2025 Semester

Please refer to the university registration calendar for important dates relating to the start of classes, university holidays, add/drop deadlines, recess dates, study days, final exams, and Commencement week.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Week	Topics	Reading and Assignments
1	**Introduction to Narratives and Interactive Storytelling** ● Course Overview, Introductions, Expectations ● Definitions and Theories of Narrative and Storytelling ● Historical and Cultural Perspectives on Storytelling ● Trends in Narrative Design	**Read:** [The Science of Storytelling by Will Storr Review – The Lure of Novel Ideas](#) (The Guardian) **Due:** None
2	**Narrative Archetypes and Structures** ● Kurt Vonnegut's 8 Shapes of Stories ● Plot Structure and Narrative Arcs ● Three-Act Structure, Non-Linear Narratives ● The News Story	**Read:** [Kurt Vonnegut on the 8 Shapes of Stories](#) (BigThink) [The Traditional Story Structure Gets Deconstructed](#) (NeimanLab) **Due:** Assignment 1
3	**Storytelling Techniques and Frameworks** ● Setting, Plot, Character, Theme, Perspective, Style ● Conflict and Resolution ● Story Scaffolding ● The StoryBrand Framework and the BrandScript	**Read:** [15 Storytelling Techniques and How to Use Them](#) (Maven) **Due:** Assignment 2
4	**AI, Ethics, and Accountability in Storytelling** ● The Power of Persuasion and Influence ● Ethical Considerations with Data and Generative AI ● Recognizing and Avoiding Biases and Manipulation ● Storytelling in Diverse and Inclusive Contexts	**Read:** [5 Principles of Data Ethics for Businesses](#) (HBS) [Inclusive Language: How to Use and Promote It at Your Organization](#) (Hubspot) **Due:** Assignment 3
5	**Crafting Narratives for Presenting and Pitching** ● Public Speaking, Best Practices, Common Mistakes ● Components of a Great Presentation ● Pitching a New Business Venture ● Introduction to the PechaKucha	**Read:** [Storyboarding a PechaKucha](#) (Tweak Your Slides) [Transformer Apartment](#) (PechaKucha.com) **Due:** Assignment 4
6	**Designing Interactive Experiences** ● Storytelling in User Experience (UX) Design ● Storytelling in User Interface (UI) Design ● Extended Reality (XR) Technologies ● Visual and Data-Driven Storytelling Techniques	**Read:** [Beyond the Headset: Immersion and Togetherness](#) (Fizel, J. on Medium) [Carne y Arena: An Immersive VR Experience](#) (PHI Studio) **Due:** Assignment 5
7	**Designing Interactive Experiences (continued)** ● Design Fiction ● Audio Essays ● Generative AI and Prompt Engineering	**Read:** [Designing Materials for Better Storytelling with Gen AI](#) (Laroche, J. & Fizel, J. on Medium)
8	**Brand Storytelling and Product Narratives** ● Brand Identity and Loyalty Through Narratives ● Designing Products with Engaging Narratives ● Balancing Evidence with Empathy	**Read:** [How to Write a Product Narrative](#) (Nandini Jammi) **Due:** Assignment 6

9	**Brand Storytelling and Product Narratives (continued)** ● User Stories: Articulating the Emotional Arc of Users ● Storytelling with Product Videos ● Live Product Demos	**Read:** User Stories with Examples and a Template (Atlassian) 20 Compelling Examples of Video Storytelling (YumYum Videos)
10	**The Power of Micro-Narratives** ● Flash Fiction: Impactful Stories in Short Format ● Inspire, Engage, and Influence with Social Media ● Short-Form Video for Mobile Devices ● Process-as-Plot	**Read:** How to Write Flash Fiction Stories (Writers.com) Micro Storytelling (Baugh, N.) **Due:** Assignment 7
11	**Transmedia Storytelling and Messaging** ● Omnichannel Campaign Strategy and Development ● Goal Setting, Target Audience Definition ● Channels and Tactics	**Read:** What is Omnichannel Marketing? Definition, Tips, and Examples (Marketing Evolution) **Due:** Assignment 8
12	**Transmedia Storytelling and Messaging (continued)** ● Campaign Messaging Maxtrix ● Campaign Creative ● Campaign Measurement and Testing	**Read:** How to Identify Your Core Marketing Message (HubSpot)
13	**The Future of Storytelling** ● Designing the Future ● Overview of Strategic Foresight ● Foresight Methodologies ● Signals, Emerging Issues, and Trends	**Read:** Designing the Future (Cramer, T. ResearchGate.net) **Due:** Assignment 9
14	**The Future of Storytelling (continued)** ● Design Fiction ● Diegetic Objects and Prototypes ● Writing Future Scenarios Workshop	**Read:** IDEO's Secret to Designing the Future (IDEO) A Deep Dive Into Diegesis (Videomaker)
15	**Personal and Professional Development** ● Developing Personal Narratives ● Storytelling for Leadership	**Read:** Storytelling That Moves People (Harvard Business Review) **Due:** Assignment 10
Final	**No Class** (attendance not required)	**Due:** Assignment 11

Description of Assignments

Below are brief overviews of each assignment. Your instructor will provide additional instructions for each in class. All assignments will be submitted to the Brightspace Learning Management System (LMS).

Assignment 1: Personal Narrative

In 500-1000 words, write a personal narrative introducing yourself and highlighting the role of storytelling in your personal and professional journey. Include your strengths and where you would like to improve in this class. The deliverable should be a PDF of a Google/Word document.

Assignment 2: Storytelling Archetypes

Find a TV commercial or video advertisement online that resonates with you and, in 250-500 words, analyze the storytelling archetypes and structures used in its messaging. Why does it resonate with you? Can you identify the shape of the story being told? Who is this story intended for and what is their call to action? The deliverable should be a PDF of a Google/Word document.

Assignment 3: The Brandscript
Select a product or service of your choosing and develop a BrandScript for that product or service using the StoryBrand Framework discussed in class. Focus on clarity of the messaging. Visuals are not required for this assignment. Be prepared to share your BrandScript in class.

Assignment 4: Ethical Considerations in Interactive Storytelling
Research and draft a short narrative, in 250-500 words, on a new trend or technology in narrative design you are interested in and discuss its implications and potential impact on society (e.g., AI-powered storytelling, XR, etc.). Then, develop a code of ethics for responsible storytelling with this trend or technology. You may consider your chosen field or industry as a context for developing your code of ethics. You will share and discuss your code with the class.

Assignment 5 Part 1: PechaKucha Talk Storyboards
The PechaKucha talk must utilize 20 slides that auto-advance every 20 seconds. To start, create a set of storyboards as an initial draft of your talk. The talk can be about any topic of genuine interest to you. You will leverage some of the techniques discussed in class and apply them as you see fit to make your talk engaging. Using feedback on your storyboards, finalize your PechaKucha talk and slide deck. Practice your talk and be prepared to deliver the talk in class.

Assignment 6: Design Fiction Prototypes
Create a narrative around a product or concept and record a short audio pitch (1-2 minutes). Include a short explanation of your inspiration and design choices. Then, create a visualization of this concept using one of the Gen AI tools covered in class. Draft three prompts to generate the image results. Select the best outcome and include citations for the prompts and tools used. Each element should stand on its own and not rely on each other to convey the intended meaning.

Assignment 7: Product Narrative
In 250-500 words, choose an existing product that stands out in its category (e.g., a specific car model, smart device, gaming console, etc.) and describe how its form factor communicates its uniqueness. Discuss how it fosters empathy and understanding between its users and the technology. How does it connect to our senses and memory? Include a photo of the product.

Assignment 8: Process-as-Plot Micro-Narrative
Conceptualize a process or routine that involves technology and create a story to show how it works (storyboards are the first step and should be included in your deliverable). Next, shoot a video and make a rough cut. Consider audio elements and options, including a narrative track and background music or sound. Lastly, create the final edit of the process-as-plot video to play and discuss in class. The final video should be no more than two minutes in length.

Assignment 9: Omnichannel Campaign Strategy
In small teams, select one of the product narratives from Assignment 7 to build a multi-channel campaign to promote the product or service. The strategy component should include the campaign goals, the target audience, the channels and tactics to reach and engage the audience, and the metrics to measure the campaign. The campaign must incorporate at least three channels and tactics to engage the intended audience with the campaign messaging (story). Teams will present the campaign in class and should include mockups of the campaign creative.

Assignment 10: Future Scenario & Diegetic Objects
Choose one context from the Alternative Futures Framework and write a scenario about the future of storytelling ten years from today. Be vivid in your descriptions of this future time and place. Your words should inspire our imaginations. Then, create at least one diegetic object representing something tangible from your future scenario. Be prepared to present both to the class for contemplation and discussion. The deliverable should be a short presentation deck.

Assignment 11: Professional Video Narrative
Create a video narrative or resume that showcases your professional experience, skills, and unique abilities as a pitch to an organization for which you would like to join. Utilize any combination of the storytelling techniques learned in class or beyond. The video should be 90 seconds or less and easily shareable via social media, a personal website, or any other digital channel.

Assignment Rubrics
The instructor will provide evaluation and grading criteria for assignments throughout the course.

Assignment Submission Policy
As noted in the course schedule, all assignments must be delivered by the start of class unless otherwise noted by your instructor. Late assignments will be accepted with the following grade penalties:
- Submission in the 24 hours after the deadline   10% deduction
- Submission between 24 hours and three days after the deadline   50% deduction
- Submission after three days after the deadline   100% deduction

Grading Breakdown

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Weekly Course Participation	150	15%
Personal Narrative	50	5%
Narrative Archetypes	50	5%
The Brandscript	50	5%
Code of Ethics for Interactive Storytelling	50	5%
PechaKucha Talk	100	10%
Design Fiction Prototypes	100	10%
Product Narrative	50	5%
Process-as-Plot Micro-Narrative	50	5%
Omnichannel Campaign	150	15%
Future Scenario & Diegetic Objects	50	5%
Professional Video Narrative	150	15%
Total	1000	100%

Grading Scale

Final course grades will be determined using the following scale:

Letter Grade	Numerical Score
A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
F	69 and below

Course Attendance Policy

The Academy maintains rigorous academic standards for its students. Attending all class meetings on time is expected. Each student will be allowed two absences over the semester for which no explanation is required. Students are admonished not to waste excused absences on non-critical issues and to use them carefully for illness or other issues that may arise unexpectedly. No additional absences will be excused except for prolonged illness or other serious issues (see below). Each unexcused absence will lower the final grade by ⅓ of a grade (e.g., an A will be lowered to an A-minus, and an A-minus will be lowered to a B+). Being tardy to class will count as one-third of an absence. Three tardies will equal a full absence.

Students remain responsible for any missed work from excused or unexcused absences. Immediately following an absence, students should contact the instructor to obtain missed assignments or lecture notes and to confirm new deadlines or due dates. Extensions or other accommodations are at the discretion of the instructor.

Automatically excused absences may not be used for quizzes, exams, or presentation days. Using an excused absence for a quiz, exam, or presentation, such as in the case of sudden illness or other emergency, is at the instructor's discretion.

For prolonged illness, family emergencies, or other unforeseen serious issues, the student should contact the instructor to arrange accommodation. Accommodations may also be made for essential professional or career-related events or opportunities. Additionally, students who need accommodations for religious observations should provide advanced notice to instructors, and student-athletes should provide Travel Request Letters. All accommodations remain at the instructor's discretion, and appropriate documentation may be required.

Unless students provide an accommodation letter from USC's Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) or a letter from IYA Student Services detailing visa or travel restrictions, attendance and active participation is expected in the classroom. Any student with such accommodations should submit their accommodation document to the instructor as soon as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations.

Students who are experiencing illness should not attend class in person. Please inform the instructor in advance of any class sessions that you can't attend for medical reasons, and accommodations will be arranged to view recorded lectures and submit alternatives to any missed class participation. Students will not be penalized for not attending class in person under these circumstances.

Classroom Norms and Zoom Etiquette
We will meet each week at a set time, and you are expected to begin each session engaged and ready to participate. The expectations outlined below are paramount to your success:
- **Be on time:** Set an alarm if needed, and plan to arrive a few minutes early.
- **Limit distractions:** Find a quiet place and check your surroundings.
- **Be prepared:** Turn on your camera and use headphones.
- **Presentation:** Dress appropriately (for a business setting); sit up straight.
- **Mute yourself** when you are not speaking.
- **Participate:** Be present and contribute ideas; avoid multitasking.
- **Chat responsibly:** Use chat to ask questions and offer feedback; avoid gossip.
- **Show respect:** Practice good netiquette. Listen, be respectful, be considerate.

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 and 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 academic misconduct violations include but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

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

For more information about academic integrity,, see the [student handbook,]() the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct]().

Please ask your instructor if you need clarification on what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment or what information requires citation or attribution.

Course Policy for the Use of Generative AI
Generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) platforms have become invaluable tools for content creators, designers, developers, and beyond. Hence, students are encouraged to leverage these resources to learn how to integrate them into academic research and study while upholding the highest standards of ethics and academic integrity. Read the following guiding principles for acceptable use in this course.

- **Acceptable Uses:** Students are permitted and encouraged to use Gen AI platforms to assist in the research of topics and ideas for information discovery and summarization. Students may use Gen AI to create outlines for written work as a starting point. Students may use Gen AI tools to edit

their original work. Students may use Gen AI to help visualize their original ideas and work with the creation of images and videos.
- **Transparency:** Anytime a Gen AI platform is used to create or assist in creating material or content used in submitted deliverables, students must cite each use.
- **Prohibited Uses:** Students are not permitted to use Gen AI to create complete drafts of written content for submission. Submitting content solely generated by AI and/or submitted without citation may be considered plagiarism.
- **Enforcement and Consequences:** Offenses will be reported as academic integrity offenses and may result in failing the assignment, failing the class, suspension, or expulsion.

Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies
USC has policies that prohibit the recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class without the instructor's express permission 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 and 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 instructor's express permission 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 that 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).

USC Learning Experience Evaluations
Course evaluations occur at the end of the semester and are an essential review of students' experiences.

Statement on University Academic and Support Systems

Students and Disability Accommodations
USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for determining 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.

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

Support Systems
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, seven days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline consists of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on-call
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX) - (213) 740-5086
Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-2500
Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) - (213) 740-0776
OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 740-0411
Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion - (213) 740-2101
Information on events, programs, and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various student resources.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on-call
Emergency assistance and avenues to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including how 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 ombudsman who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concerns.

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.