



COMM 324 (4 units, 20520)
Intercultural Communication
Fall 2025 M/W 2:00-3:20 Room ASC 204

Instructor: Jillian Pierson, Ph.D.
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Feel free to reach out to me by texting or calling my office phone number. Text for short messages only, please. Longer, content-related questions are best sent via email.

Office hours: ASC G21
TBA

I encourage you to connect with me outside of our regularly scheduled class meetings!

Aside from these hours, please email or text whenever you'd like to come by or meet on Zoom. I generally can meet before or after our class in-person. I'm also available via Zoom (or phone) most Fridays. When you email, suggest a couple of times that work for you..

TA graders: TBA

Course Description

This class will introduce you to the field of intercultural communication, which draws from an array of academic disciplines. The overall goal is to prepare you to be the best global citizen you can be. Using readings, lectures, in-class exercises, discussions, film clips and your own assignments, we will enhance our understanding of the myriad of ways that cultures differ; develop a meaningful vocabulary for discussing these differences; learn about processes that affect intercultural interactions; investigate a variety of contexts in which intercultural communication takes place; and take an introductory look at the current strands of research in the field.

Learning Objectives

Specifically, by the end of the course students will be able to:

- Explain and apply terms used in intercultural communication scholarship
- Describe processes and contextual factors that affect intercultural communication
- Interpret real-world interactions through the framework of cultural concepts
- Recognize the different perspectives researchers bring to the study of intercultural communication

Required Course Materials

Samovar, L. A., Porter, R. E., McDaniel, E. R., & Roy, C. S. (2015). *Intercultural communication: A reader* (14th Ed.). Boston, MA: Cengage. [You must use the 14th edition.]

Additional required readings are posted on Brightspace. Please check Brightspace frequently to find links to readings and other information.

Note that even when class lectures and discussions do not cover material from the text, you will be required to read and thoroughly understand the readings for the exams and assignments.

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On the following schedule, chapters with page numbers refer to the textbook anthology. Readings marked “B” will be posted on Brightspace and are generally listed by the authors’ last names.

Tentative Course Schedule (Schedule from Fall 2024 **will be updated for 2025!**)

Week	Date	Topic	Assignment due before class	Readings for after class
1	Aug 26	Course welcome & introduction		McDaniel, Samovar & Porter 5-16
	Aug 28	A model of intercultural comm	Culture description	Saint-Jacques 16-26 Korzenny 42-46
2	Sept 2	Labor Day – no class meeting		
	Sept 4	Approaches to the study of intercultural communication	Student info form	B: Martin & Nakayama chapter
3	Sept 9	Perception		B: tbd
	Sept 11	World view		B: Ishi, Klopff & Cooke; Jain 121-126; Begley 126-132
4	Sept 16	Dimensions of culture		Yum 110-120 Skow & Stephan 288-302 Kim 405-417
	Sept 18	Cultural patterns	Research paradigm	Andersen 229-241 B: Robinson
5	Sept 23	Cultural patterns (cont)		B: Triandis; McSweeney; Hofstede
	Sept 25	Cultural identity		Chen 61-69 Collier 53-60 Yamazaki (2023)
6	Sept 30	Cultural identity		Pratt, Pratt, & Dixon 70-75
	Oct 2	(cont.)	Cultural interview	B: Hecht et al. (2002)
7	Oct 7	Intergroup relations		B: Myers & Twenge (2019)
	Oct 9	(cont.)		B: Morber; Project Implicit; AAA Statement on Race; Crenshaw TED talk
8	Oct 14	Intercultural conflict		Ting-Toomey 355-367
	Oct 16	Midterm (bring laptop)	Exam	
9	Oct 21	Nonverbal communication		Andersen 236-238 McDaniel 242-251
	Oct 23	Cultural identity and language	Topic ideas due	Gay 302-219; Ellis & Maoz 217-223

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Week	Date	Topic	Assignment due before class	Readings for after class
10	Oct 28	Verbal aspects of ic comm		Cargile 251-259 Fong 209-216
	Oct 30	Language and meaning		B: Shariatmadari, 2020
11	Nov 4	Cultural appropriation		B: Bradford; Avins
	Nov 6	Cultural transitions		Kim 385-397
12	Nov 11	and adaptation		Onwumechili et al. 92-104; B: Croucher
	Nov 13	Cultural change and development	Cultural exploration	B: Davis, 2020
13	Nov 18	Culture and the workplace		Nishiyama 266-272
	Nov 20	(cont)		Hinner 273-288
14	Nov 25	Culture and medicine		B: Dembosky, 2015; Rao 329-339 Geist-Martin 320-329
	Nov 27	<i>Enjoy Thanksgiving break!</i>		
15	Dec 2	Cultural dilemmas		TBD; B Runyowa, 2015
	Dec 4	Looking ahead		
	Dec 12	Final exam 2 – 4 pm	Exam	

Please note the date of the final exam is set by USC. The university requires we hold the final during that time period.

Course Policies

Respectful conversation: We may touch on topics that some students feel sensitive about during class. If you find yourself having an emotional response, please reach out to me. Know that I want everyone to feel comfortable engaging in productive, open conversation, including at the times we don't agree with one another. If I get something wrong, I'd like to hear from you in a respectful way; I have an open mind and like most people, I am still learning and evolving.

I also hope you'll be mindful that we all come to the classroom from a variety of backgrounds and life experiences. We can't truly understand another person's perspective, but we can listen with acceptance and empathy.

Attendance and Participation

1. To get the most out of this class, you must show up for our class meetings. While it is normal to miss a few times during the course of a semester, you cannot take this class without attending regularly.

2. Of course you may occasionally have to miss class for illness or other reasons. When you are absent, I do not need to hear an excuse. However if you have to miss several classes, I would appreciate your letting me know what is going on so that I don't worry about you.

If you miss more than six classes, your overall grade for the course will be lowered by a third of a grade (so an A automatically becomes an A-). If you miss more than nine

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classes, your grade will be lowered by a full letter grade (for example, from A- to B-). Similarly, if you are consistently late to class, leave early, or disappear during class for lengthy periods of time, your grade may be lowered.

If a student misses 12 classes or more, they cannot pass the class regardless of the quality of the work submitted. Should you find yourself approaching this absence danger zone, please communicate with me to see if we can prevent this negative outcome.

3. When you miss class, you should ask two other students for their notes from class. After you've reviewed any postings and read students' notes, feel free to come to me with questions.
4. Participation credit will be given on occasion during lectures. If you miss the live session, it will be your responsibility to find the alternative participation opportunity on Brightspace to receive that credit. Your alternative participation assignment must be submitted no later than one week from the date of the missed class, or you will not receive credit for it.
5. If you added the class late, you are still responsible for the material and assignments you missed. Please submit any homework and participation assignments no later than Friday of the fourth week of class.

No laptops or electronics.

When we meet in person, in order to create the best possible learning environment, I ask you to not use your laptops, tablets, or phones. I completely understand the temptation, but I think we all benefit from focusing without technology. Current research shows that taking notes by hand is more effective than typing them. Read the articles posted on Brightspace for a lengthier discussion of this policy. (Sometimes students have documented reasons for using laptops for note-taking; exceptions are made only for students with such documentation.)

Please bring pen and paper to lectures for note-taking and activities. If you are using an iPad or other tablet instead of pen and paper, that is acceptable as long as you keep your device open to the note-taking app only.

The exams will require use of a laptop, so the exam dates will be an exception to the “no laptop” rule.

Please turn off all notifications and sounds on your devices before class begins.

Communication

Please be sure to read your USC emails and Brightspace announcements daily on weekdays.

I reply to my emails within 24 hours (although on the weekends I may take longer). If you don't hear back from me promptly, feel free to send me a follow-up after a day has gone by.

Please put COMM 324 in the subject line of your email!

Timely submission of work: If your assignment is late, it will be marked down by one third of a letter grade for every day it is late. Also, please be aware that if you end up handing a paper in

late, it falls to the bottom of our stack of things to do and will most likely not be returned to you in a very timely manner.

Sometimes a student has a true emergency. Please contact me as soon as possible if something prevents you from submitting your work on time. It is always better to discuss these things ahead of time instead of after the fact.

Accidentally uploading the wrong assignment or a corrupted file or using a format not accepted by Brightspace is not an excuse for a late submission.

Back up your work: Computer failures are sadly not uncommon. Please cover yourself by regularly saving your work to cloud storage and to an external storage device.

Electronic submission of assignments

Please upload your assignments to Brightspace only. If you have trouble with Brightspace, reach out to Brightspace support directly for help—service is available 24/7 at 213-740-5555.

Brightspace submissions that have uploaded successfully automatically generate an email to the student who submitted them. If you don't get the email, you haven't submitted your assignment.

If Brightspace has a problem, you may email your assignment as proof that you completed it by the deadline. However, we can only grade in the Brightspace environment so you will still need to upload there as soon as the system is functioning.

Accommodations for students with registered disabilities

Please upload your letter from OSAS to the “assignment” I've created for it on Brightspace. If there's anything specific you'd like me to know, I would be very happy to talk with you and support you however I can.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Policy

Unless explicitly allowed otherwise in the specific assignment instructions, any uncredited use of Artificial Intelligence tools (such as ChatGPT, Bard, Claude, and many others) is considered plagiarism by the School of Communication and will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Please keep in mind that generative AI can be both a useful tool and a cause for concern. As the technology rapidly evolves, we students of communication need to be thoughtful and ethical consumers of the technology. Please keep in mind some important considerations when using generative AI:

1. You must **give credit** to the specific AI used if you use one in an assignment. Check Brightspace and the specific assignment instructions for information about how to do that appropriately. Failing to cite AI use is an academic integrity violation and will be treated as such, with potentially serious consequences.
2. Generative AI often is incorrect and gives **misinformation** through its “hallucinations.” You cannot rely on AI output; you have to check for correctness.

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3. The **quality of the prompts** shapes the quality of the output of generative AI. As these tools develop, our skills in “conversing” with them will need to change and grow too.
4. AI should never be a substitute for your own **thoughtful, critical contributions** to the subject matter. Expressing oneself through writing is an important part of learning, refining thought, and demonstrating understanding that cannot be ceded to AI tools.
5. If there is any suspicion of inappropriate AI usage in your assignments, I might ask you to **orally defend your work and ideas** in a meeting with me and/or the dean of student affairs.

Do not use Grammarly or other AI-empowered software to enhance, correct, or alter your written work.

These are just a few of many considerations that I wanted to highlight at present. I expect my own knowledge and policies in this arena to evolve, and I welcome your thoughts.

Grading

The grading scale for this class will be that an A is equivalent to 94 or above; A- is 90-93; B+ is 87-89; B is 84-86; B- is 80-83; C+ is 77-79; C is 74-76; C- is 70-73; D+ is 67-69; D is 64-66; D- is 60-63; and F is 59 and below.

Grades will be calculated as follows:

In-class & homework	10%
Research paradigm	10%
Interview paper	20%
Cultural paper	20%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%

I believe an “A” represents excellent, thoughtful, and enthusiastic work. A “B” represents really good work. A “C” merely meets all the requirements of the assignment. If you are disappointed by a grade, we would be happy to discuss our feedback with you and to help you improve for the next assignment.

Grades are earned according to the following standards:

- 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; reasonable knowledge and understanding of subject matter; most expectations are met; despite any shortcomings, demonstrates basic level of understanding.

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- 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.
- P/ NP To earn a passing grade, you must have a C- or higher. You also may not omit any assignments. You cannot earn a “P” without completing the two papers and both exams regardless of your average score in the class.

We will do our best to get you feedback on assignments within two weeks of the due date. If you have questions about a grade on an assignment, you have ten days after the grade was posted to inquire about it via email.

No “Extra Credit”

This class gives you many opportunities to succeed. The ten percent homework/in-class work specifically gives you an opportunity to get full credit without any evaluation. Do homework on time, come to class to get credit for participation activities when we have them (or do the makeup participation assignments if you have to miss), and you’ll have an automatic 100% or “A” in ten percent of the class.

Assignments

Please read all instructions carefully and ask questions if you are unsure about the requirements. I’ve written out this detailed information to help you succeed on the assignments; look for additional information and samples of most of these assignments on Brightspace.

NB: The assignments you undertake should all be about cultures other than your own. You will have many opportunities to share your own cultural background and experiences with us in class discussions. For your assignments, however, I want you to investigate new territory.

In-class & homework (10%)

Culture Homework

Write two or three paragraphs describing your own culture and what it means to you. (This is the one exception to the note above about not writing about your own culture!)

Student Information Form

Please complete just so we can get a little info on you.

Quizzes

I will give you at least one practice quiz to help you prepare for the exams.

Miscellaneous

There will be other brief assignments that come up throughout the semester, either for in-class work or homework. (When I ask for in-class participation assignments, I will work to create a suitable alternative for students who are unable to participate; if you miss class, check Brightspace.)

Research Paradigm Assignment (10%)

1. Find and read a research article in intercultural communication published in the last two years (2022-2024).
2. Turn in the citation for the article along with the article's published abstract.
3. Based on the information presented in class and in the Martin and Nakayama chapter about research paradigms, write a brief paragraph or two explaining which perspective the author(s) took and what about their work made that perspective evident.

Be sure to choose a *research* article in which the authors conducted some kind of study. Do not choose a meta-analysis (a study of other studies), a book review, an essay, or an article that only discusses theory.

We will discuss in class how to look for articles in our USC Library system. Accepted sources include the *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *Human Communication Research*, and *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research* and others which are listed in the assignment on Brightspace.

Cultural Interview Paper (20%)

This assignment combines a cultural interview with knowledge gained from the textbook and your own research. Each of these parts should enhance the other. The interview should give you cultural knowledge that will help you understand the text and the text gives you a theoretical perspective that will increase your understanding of what you see in your interview. You have two options here.

1. Interview someone from another culture who is living in the U.S. What surprises did they encounter when they came here? What differences have they noticed? How have they adjusted? Focus on differences in human interaction and communication. In addition to citing the textbook, cite at least one outside source that gave you additional information about your interviewee's original culture. The additional information should directly support and contribute to the cultural exploration, not provide background or geographical information. Please do not interview a member of your immediate family. It is best to choose someone who arrived here within the last few years.

OR

2. Interview someone from the U.S. who has lived for at least a year in another country, preferably sometime in the last five years. What surprises did they encounter in the new country? What differences did they notice? How did they adjust? Focus on differences in human interaction and communication. In addition to citing the textbook, cite at least one outside source that gave you additional information about the culture your interviewee visited. The additional information should directly support and contribute to the cultural exploration, not provide background or geographical information. Please do not interview a member of your immediate family.

Cultural Exploration Paper (20%)

This assignment combines a cultural exploration with knowledge gained from the class readings and your own research. Each of these parts should enhance the other. The exploration should give you cultural knowledge that will help you understand our texts and our readings give you a theoretical perspective that will increase your understanding of what you see in your exploration.

This is your opportunity to do an independent investigation of a topic within the field of intercultural communication. Use a combination of research articles and reputable journalistic sources to learn about a cultural phenomenon that interests you.

In place of the cultural exploration, you may choose to do a second interview (as described above) as long as the second interview focuses on a completely different culture than the first one.

Exams (40%)

The exams assess if you have learned the material covered in the readings, lectures, and class discussions. They will require you to apply what you have learned and demonstrate your ability to analyze intercultural situations. Prepare for a series of rigorous multiple choice questions on the exams. If you know yourself to be someone who finds these kinds of tests particularly challenging, check my posts on Brightspace and seek help early in the semester.

Please note that you are responsible for both the material presented in the readings and in class. The two do not always overlap.

The final will not be “cumulative” in that you will not have to go back to the earlier readings and study them in depth. However, your knowledge will build, and the questions on the second exam will reflect that knowledge base.

Campus Resources

Please take advantage of some of the resources your tuition supports. Early in the semester, visit The Writing Center for one-on-one assistance or small-group workshops. (Email writing@usc.edu or call 213-740-3691). If you have difficulty with tests, reach out to the Center for Academic Support (call 213-740-0776 or email them at study@usc.edu).

Honoring Native Lands

Our USC campus is located on the traditional land of the Tongva People. It is a complicated reality that we exist in a space which for many years belonged to the Tongva as well as the Chumash, Tataviam, Serrano, Cahuilla, Juaneno, and Luiseno People. I would like to acknowledge the unjust, violent history that unfolded over many years before the establishment of this university, and to show appreciation and humility toward indigenous communities and the sacrifices they were forced to make.

Looking Ahead

Every semester one of the great benefits of teaching this class is that I get to learn from the wealth of experiences and backgrounds students bring to the course. I'll be your guide through

the materials, but you will make many contributions. I look forward to your participation and to learning more together about culture and communication.

Statement on Academic Conduct

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.

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 itself, such as suspension or even expulsion.

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](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation, is prohibited. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been

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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).

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 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.

Student Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress:

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

Support Systems:

[Annenberg Student Success Fund](#)

The Annenberg Student Success Fund is a donor-funded financial aid account available to USC Annenberg undergraduate and graduate students for non-tuition expenses related to extra- and co-curricular programs and opportunities.

[Annenberg Student Emergency Aid Fund](#)

Awards are distributed to students experiencing unforeseen circumstances and emergencies impacting their ability to pay tuition or cover everyday living expenses. These awards are not intended to cover full-tuition expenses, but rather serve as bridge funding to guarantee students' continued enrollment at USC until other resources, such as scholarships or loans, become available. Students are encouraged to provide as much information in their application, as well as contact their academic advisor directly with questions about additional resources available to them.

[Counseling and Mental Health](#) - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline consists of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

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[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 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.