This is a sample syllabus – subject to some change for Fall 2025.



COMM 402 (20617) Public Communication Campaigns (4 units)
Spring 2025, Thursday 2:00 – 4:50pm
Location: ANN L116

Instructor: Dr. Lindsay Young **Campus Office:** ASC 326C

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 3-5pm (Zoom only)

Sign up for Office Hours here: https://calendly.com/ley 584-usc/comm-402-office-hours-spring-2025

Email: lindsay.young@usc.edu

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to understand how public communication campaigns are designed, disseminated, and evaluated. Public campaigns are designed to address topics of interest to the public with the intention of improving the quality of life for individuals, families, and communities. Public campaigns are intended to make the public aware of a problem, to be informed and knowledgeable about the problem, to change attitudes, and to motivate individuals to do something about the problem (i.e., to take action).

Public communication campaigns often center on issues related broadly to themes like health, environment, education, family & community, emergency preparedness, and safety. Increasingly, however, public communication campaigns are taking on critical human rights and justice concerns, for example racial justice, criminal justice reform, LGBTQ+ rights, gender equality, housing equity, and environmental justice, to name a few.

This course is an upper-level seminar. Students are expected to be able to work independently, with all major assignments focused on one particular social issue/public concern of their choice. Each student will have three major assignments (described in more detail below) around that topic, focusing on the following:

- Assignment 1: Write a research paper (i.e., background paper) on the social issue you are tackling
- Assignment 2: Critically review a current or past public communication campaign about your issue
- Assignment 3: Pitch a new campaign for the issue (written proposal and brief oral presentation)

This course will be primarily discussion- and activity-based. We will use brief lectures, assigned readings, and multimedia campaign content as the foci of those discussions and activities. As your instructor, my responsibilities will be to: (1) expose you to research and theory in the social and behavioral sciences that are relevant to public communication campaigns, providing examples along the way; (2) advise and assist students in their paper projects and proposals (described in more detail below); (3) provide feedback on papers and

proposals so that the papers are well written and supported throughout; and, most importantly, (4) nurture an environment where your ideas and experiences are valued.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the semester, students enrolled in this course should be able to:

- 1. Explain the theories of persuasion and behavior change that work within communication campaigns.
- 2. Analyze how a given persuasive scenario targets a specific segment of the population.
- 3. Dissect and critique the techniques that have been applied in previous persuasive campaigns.
- 4. Evaluate the reasons some messages succeed while others fail.
- 5. Conduct research on their social issue of choice.
- 6. Design the elements of a new campaign, applying theoretically informed design and persuasion principles that are aligned with your campaign objectives and audience needs.

My Teaching Philosophy

My teaching is guided by the principle that *education is a partnership*. By this, I mean that you and I are joint participants in the educational process and, therefore, we should consider ourselves collaborators, working together to achieve a common pursuit. When put into practice, this "partnership" perspective should translate into interactions characterized by:

- Intellectual generosity: Intellectual generosity is what happens when I bracket my own ideas to help you develop your own and when you bracket your ideas to help your fellow classmates develop their own. More than just a selfless act and a sign of one's maturity, being intellectually generous can also help you grow in your own thinking.
- Mutual respect: Our diverse backgrounds by race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, class, ideology, and even personality traits are our greatest strengths. I strive to make my classroom a place where those differences can be expressed and valued as the assets that they are. To ensure that everyone feels welcome to express themselves, we <u>must</u> treat one another with mutual respect and proceed with a good faith effort to listen and learn from one another. Healthy partnerships are respectful partnerships.
- Mutual accountability: As partners, we must hold each other accountable for the responsibilities we have for making this a successful experience. As students, you are responsible for attending class, engaging with course content, completing assignments, etc. And, as your teacher, I am responsible for ensuring a productive learning environment, providing timely and constructive feedback, responding to your concerns, etc. If at any point, we find ourselves falling short, it's important that we be receptive to feedback on how we can improve.
- Mutual patience and flexibility: Over the years, I have learned to understand the importance of being
 patient and flexible as one cannot control every aspect of their environment. I am committed to creating
 a learning environment that works for us, but to do that I will need your patience and flexibility as I
 figure out what works and what does not work. And, in return, I will be as patient and flexible as I can
 for you.

Communication with Your Professor

In line with my philosophy that education is a partnership, I want you to feel comfortable asking questions and giving me feedback on the course. You will have several options for seeking and/or providing feedback, including:

- In class: Each class will start with a check-in; good time for logistical questions
- Office hours: Speak with me directly during office hours
- Email: Email me at <u>lindsay.young@usc.edu</u> and I will try to respond within 24 hours
- End-of-term evaluations

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

This course requires use of Brightspace, Microsoft Word, and presentation software (e.g., Power Point, Google Slides, Canva).

USC Technology Support Links

Brightspace Assistance
Software available to USC Campus
Zoom information for students

Required Materials

This course does not have any textbooks that have to be purchased. All assigned readings and lecture slides will be made available on Brightspace under "Content", which is organized by week.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

<u>NOTE</u>: Descriptions of each writing assignment and its grading rubric will be uploaded to Brightspace and discussed in class.

Major Assignments

- 1. The Background Paper is a research paper on the public interest topic or social problem you have selected for the semester. This paper should address: (1) the nature and scope of the problem; (2) key causes and consequences of the problem; (3) populations/communities who are most impacted and why; (4) an overview of what has been done to solve/address the problem; and 5) an assessment of what those efforts have missed or why they have failed to produce appropriate change.
- 2. The Campaign Review Paper is a critical evaluation of a current (ongoing) or past campaign that has addressed your focal issue. This paper should draw on principles of campaign design we cover in class to assess the following: (1) the reason why the campaign was launched; (2) the apparent intended audience; (3) the overall goals of the campaign; (4) the ask being made of the audience; (5) the messaging and dissemination strategies being used (e.g. message appeals, source characteristics, channels of dissemination, etc.); and 6) the overall effectiveness of those strategies.
- 3. The 'Next Big Idea' Project is your opportunity to create a new campaign on your social issue. Your 'Next Big Idea' project will be organized into two parts: a written proposal and a brief oral pitch. The written proposal will provide: 1) a summary of what past campaigns have missed about the problem

and/or have failed to accomplish, 2) an assessment of what you think any new campaign on the issue will have to address and/or overcome to be successful, 3) a description of who the target audience will be for your new campaign, 4) the reveal of your new idea, including a name for the campaign and detailed descriptions of its key elements, and the primary outcome you hope to achieve, and 5) a proposed plan for evaluating its effects. The oral presentation will be structured like a 'pitch' that you would give to your teammates or the client who is funding the campaign. Essentially it will be a distilled version of the proposal in a more visual format. This is also an opportunity for all your classmates to see what you have been working on all semester.

Specs and Deadlines for Major Assignments

Assignment	Specs	Due Date
Background Paper	MS Word, 8-10 double-spaced pages (not including title page or reference page), 12-pt font, 8+ scholarly citations using APA guidelines	Mon, Feb 24
	Note: You may use ChatGPT as one of your 8 sources for this paper. However, you can only use it as a reference once in the paper, and you must still cite 7 additional scholarly pieces of work to meet your citation quota.	
Campaign Review Paper	MS Word, 6-8 double-spaced pages, 12-pt font	Mon, March 24
Next Big Idea Oral Pitch	10-minute oral presentation w/ slides	Presentations scheduled for: Th, April 24 Th, May 1
Next Big Idea Written Proposal	MS Word, 6-8 double-spaced pages, 12-pt font	Monday, May 5

For help with APA-style citation check this out:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html

For help with using APA style to cite ChatGPT: https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt

Grading Breakdown

Grades will be recorded in Brightspace.

Assignment	% of Grade
Assignment #1: Background Paper	30%
Assignment #2: Campaign Review Paper	30%
Assignment #3: Next Big Idea Project (Written Proposal + Oral Pitch)	40%

Assignment	% of Grade
Total	100%

Grading Scale and Standards

Course grades will be determined using the following scale and standards.

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

Letter Grade	Description
Α	Excellent; demonstrates extraordinarily high achievement; comprehensive knowledge and understanding of subject matter; all expectations met and exceeded.
В	Good; moderately broad knowledge and understanding of subject matter; explicitly or implicitly demonstrates good, if not thorough understanding; only minor substantive shortcomings.
С	Satisfactory/Fair; reasonable knowledge and understanding of subject matter; most expectations are met; despite any shortcomings, demonstrates basic level of understanding.
D	Marginal; minimal knowledge and understanding of subject matter; more than one significant shortcoming; deficiencies indicate only the most rudimentary level of understanding.
F	Failing; unacceptably low level of knowledge and understanding of subject matter; deficiencies indicate lack of understanding.

Course-Specific Policies (deadlines, grading timeline, late work, extensions)

Assignment Submission: All assignments should be submitted through Brightspace.

Grading Timeline: I will do my best to return graded work within 10 business days from the date of submission.

Grace Extensions: For the background and campaign review papers, each student can request one no-penalty grace extension equal to a maximum of 48 hours of extra time to turn in that assignment. However, to earn the right to use this extension you must request the extension **BEFORE** the deadline. More specifically, all requests must be made via email by 5pm the day the assignment is due. So, if the assignment is due on Monday at 11:59 pm, then your extension request must be made by 5pm on Monday. If you do not communicate with me in advance about your need for an extension, then your work will be penalized using the structure below.

Penalized Late work: All assignments are due on the designated due date by 11:59 pm Pacific Time. <u>An assignment turned in after the designated due date **AND** for which no extension was granted, will be penalized in the following way:</u>

- Submitted < 24 hours late = 3 percentage pts off
- Submitted 24 48 hours late = 5 percentage pts off
- Submitted > 48 hours late = 10 percentage pts off

Academic Integrity

A grade of zero will be applied to submitted work that does not comply with the USC standards of academic conduct.

Generative AI/ChatGPT Usage

The use of generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT) is permitted for activities such as:

- Finding scholarly papers on your topic
- Drafting an outline to organize your thoughts
- Checking grammar and style.

The use of generative AI tools is not permitted in this course for the following activities:

- Writing a draft of a writing assignment
- Writing entire sentences, paragraphs or papers to complete class assignments

You are responsible for the information you submit based on an AI query (for instance, that it does not violate intellectual property laws, or contain misinformation or unethical content). Your use of AI tools must be properly documented and cited to stay within university policies on academic honesty. Any written assignment that uses information gleaned from ChatGPT must cite its use, both in-text and in the reference list. Please see here for guidelines on how to do that: https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt. When in doubt about permitted usage, please ask for clarification.

Attendance and Participation

Attendance: I expect that students will make every effort to attend class. Missing just one class for a course taught once a week can really set a student back. However, I also recognize that personal circumstances (e.g., personal health; death in the family; religious observances) may preclude class attendance. Please email me to let me know that you are unable to attend class so that I can help you access what you need to stay abreast with course content. However, this class is not a hybrid class, so I will not offer the option of attending class over Zoom in the case that you cannot attend in person. All materials presented in class, including links to campaign material that we discuss, will be made available on Brightspace.

Participation: This course is discussion- and activity-based, which means that participation is necessary for making it a successful experience for everyone. That said, I will not grade your participation. I choose not to grade participation because I want students to speak when they have something to contribute, not because they need to say something to get points. I don't want students worrying about whether their answer is right or their comment is good. Learning to speak up in a group is a skill that you'll need throughout your life. In this course,

you have the opportunity to develop that skill without grade pressure. I hope you'll take advantage of some of these opportunities to join the conversation:

- Synchronous participation: oral participation in class (e.g., asking questions/answering questions, sharing thoughts/opinion), in-class activities (e.g., group activities), office hours or appointments, etc.
- Asynchronous participation: emails to the instructor

Classroom Norms

To promote a healthy, fair, respectful, and productive classroom environment, everyone should use the following guidelines to inform all course related interactions:

- Allow classmates the opportunity to express themselves be intellectually generous!
- Listen actively
- Critique ideas, not people
- Disagree openly, but respectfully
- Either support your assertions with evidence, or speak from personal experience

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

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

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

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

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298 equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

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. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following *protected characteristics*: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual

sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298 usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity |Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710

uscsa.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

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

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

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) 442-120 – 24/7 on call dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

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.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Week	Date	Topics	Readings, Listenings, Viewings (complete before class; except Wk1)	Assignments Due
Week 1 Introductions	Th, 1/16	Course OverviewStudent IntroductionsWhat is a Public Communication Campaign?	Atkin & Rice (2013) - Theory and Principles of Public Communication Campaigns	
Week 2 Theories of Behavior Change: Overview	Th, 1/23	Introduction to Theory - Why theory matters - Intro to the ecological model of behavior change	National Cancer Institute - Theory at a Glance (pp. 1-12) Fishbein & Yzer (2003) — Using Theory to Design Effective Health Behavior Interventions	Due on Mon, 1/27: Your issue of choice; Notify Prof. Young via email
Week 3 Individual- level theories of behavior change	Th, 1/30	Individual Level Theories: Channeling perceptions and personal dispositions Theories: Health Belief Model, Protective Motivation Theory, Stages of Change	National Cancer Institute - Theory at a Glance (pp. 12-19) Seitz et al (2024) – Formative Research to Inform College Health Communication Campaigns About COVID-19 Prevention Behaviors	
Week 4 Interpersonal-level theories of behavior change	Th, 2/6	Interpersonal Level Theories: Channeling social identity, social norms, and social learning Theories: Social Comparison Theory, Norm-based Theories, Social Learning and Role Models	National Cancer Institute - Theory at a Glance (pp. 19-22) Morgenroth (2015) – The motivational theory of the role model Rimal & Real (2003) – Understanding the Influence of Perceived Norms of Behaviors	
Week 5 Community-level theories of behavior change	Th, 2/13	Community Level Theories: A social determinants of health framework Watch in class and discuss: "Unnatural Causes: Place Matters"	National Cancer Institute - Theory at a Glance (pp. 22-33) Niederdeppe et al (2008) – Message Design Strategies to Raise Public Awareness of Social Determinants of Health Thompson et al. (2016) - Strategies to empower communities to reduce health disparities	

Week	Date	Topics	Readings, Listenings, Viewings (complete before class; except Wk1)	Assignments Due
Week 6 Moving Mindsets	Th, 2/20	Communicating about Human Rights	Muller et al (2008) - We can't 'Just do it' alone! An analysis of Nike's(potential) contributions to antiracism in soccer Janezic & Arsenault (2021) – How to Foster Empathy in Anti-discrimination Initiatives: Implication for Social Interventions Flores et al (2021) - Antidiscrimination Interventions, Political Ads on Transgender Rights, and Public Opinion	Due on Mon, 2/24: Background Paper
Week 7 Emotional Appeals	Th, 2/27	Emotions as Pathways of Influence: Fear, Anger, Guilt, and Pride Appeals	Nabi (1999) - A Cognitive-Functional Model for the Effects of Discrete Negative Emotions on Information Processing, Attitude Change, and Recall Yzer et al (2013) - Inducing Fear Turner (2007) - Using emotion in risk communication: The Anger Activism	
			Model Erlandsson et al (2016) - Anticipated Guilt for Not Helping and Anticipated Warm Glow for Helping	
Week 8 Message Framing	Th, 3/6	Defining how you want your audience to understand your issue Framing Theories; Common Types of Frames; Framing Techniques	Kim (2014) – Framing as a Strategic Persuasive Message Tactic De Dominicus et al (2017) – Protecting the Environment for Self-Interested Reasons Wolsko et al (2016) – Red white and blue enough to be green	
Week 9 Narratives	Th, 3/13	Persuasive Effects of Narratives	Murphy et al (2013) – Narrative vs. Nonnarrative Igartua et al (2018) – How the interplay of imagined contact and first-person narratives improves attitudes toward stigmatized immigrants Kim & Lee (2017) – Conditional Effects of Gain-Loss-Framed Narratives among Smokers at Different Stages of Change	
Week 10	Th, 3/20	SPRING BRE	EAK – NO CLASS	Due on Mon, 3/24: Campaign Review Paper

Week	Date	Topics	Readings, Listenings, Viewings	Assignments Due
			(complete before class; except Wk1)	
Week 11	Th, 3/27	Celebrity and Peer Influencers:	Dunn & Nisbet (2020) - If Childish	
Sources		Opportunities and Challenges	Gambino Cares, I Care	
Appeals			Valente & Pumpuang (2007) -	
Аррешіз			Identifying Opinion Leaders to	
			Promote Behavior Change	
			Louik et al (2023) – A peer influencer	
			delivered social media intervention to	
			promote mental health awareness for	
			young Black and Latinx GBM and TW	
Week 12	Th, 4/3	Entertainment Education	Singhal et al (2013) – Rising Tide of	
	, , ,		Entertainment-Education	
Dissemination				
Vehicles			Chaterjee et al (2021) – Challenging	
			the Forcefield: Crafting Entertainment-	
			Education Transmedia Campaigns	
Wook 12	Th, 4/10	Using physical and digital spaces	De Vere Hunt & Linus (2022) - Social	
Week 13	111, 4/10	to disseminate your messages	Media for Public Health: Framework	
Dissemination		to disseminate your messages	for Social Media–Based Public Health	
Vehicles			Campaigns	
			Kwate (2014) – Racism Still Exists: A	
			Public Health Intervention that Uses	
			Counter-marketing	
Week 14	Th, 4/17	Measuring the impact of your	Hornik & Yanovitzky (2003) – Using	
Week 11	111, 1, 2,	campaign	Theory to Design Evaluations of	
Campaign		. 5	Communication Campaigns	
Evaluation				
			Levine et al (2012) – Evaluating	
			MyPlate: Traditional and	
			Nontraditional Metrics for Assessing Health Communication Campaigns	
			Theath Communication Campaigns	
			Niederdeppe (2014) - Measures of	
			Public Communication Campaign	
			Exposure	
Wook 15	Th, 4/24	'Next Big Idea' Oral Presentations		
Week 15	111, 4/24	ivest dig lued. Oldi Pleselitations		
Final				
Presentations				
Week 16	Th, 5/1	'Next Big Idea' Oral Presentations		
Final				
Presentations				
Finals Week				Due on Mon, 5/5:
		NO IN-CLASS EXAM		'Next Big Idea'
				Written Proposal