**PUBLIC RELATIONS 490 DIRECTED RESEARCH GUIDELINES**

The purpose of PR 490 Directed Research is to offer students an opportunity to delve into a new area of study, to pursue a subject area in more depth or to enhance her/his professional portfolio. The directed research project should include the academic rigor worthy of the credits assigned. *Only juniors and seniors or graduate students in good academic standing may register for Directed Research.*

Only a full-time public relations faculty member may be an adviser for a PR 490 project. Following are the guidelines for crafting a Directed Research project.

**One unit**

Further examine a topic that the student covered in a previous class. Examples could be in-depth review of a case study, broader examination of an ethical issue or expansion of a Strategic Planning Model exercise. **Requires initial meeting with instructor plus a final project.**

**Two units**

Select a topic that is pertinent to the student’s desired field of study and prepare a case study or specific content. Should include detailed content analysis and specific conclusions related to the issue or campaign. Examples could include a product launch, crisis preparedness plan, an electronic publication such as an e-bulletin. **Requires initial meeting with the instructor, midterm exercise plus a final project.**

**Three units**

In-depth study of an issue, company or industry of special interest to the student. The specific outcome of the 3-unit Directed Research should be to prepare a final report or content about the selected topic. Examples of acceptable areas of study/final output could be a 30-second video about a specific issue or product; a white paper about a current issue or specific industry; detailed audience analysis such as “how Millennials view politics;” or any other content that enhances the student’s electronic portfolio. **Requires regular meetings with the instructor, a midterm exercise or paper plus presentation of the final project.**

**Four units**

In depth study of an issue, company or industry of special interest. This may include working with an instructor on specific elements of her/his research initiatives such as political polling, brand awareness or audience analysis. Examples might include an e-bulletin or video, content analysis utilizing Radian 6 or a detailed overview of purchasing or fan or voter or donor habits. **Requires weekly meetings with the instructor, a mid-semester check and a specific deliverable to be determined by the instructor. Said deliverable should enhance the student’s electronic portfolio.**

**Only a full-time public relations faculty member may be an adviser for a PR 590 project.**

Please meet with the faculty member you would like to work with to discuss your Directed Research proposal and to create a syllabus for your course using the template below. *No Directed Research proposal will be reviewed without a syllabus.*

A PR 490 Directed Research proposal will also not be approved if it substantially duplicates an existing course. **This is especially true in the areas of sports and entertainment.**

**All PR 490 Directed Research proposals are due by the third Wednesday of the fall and spring semesters.**

Once your syllabus has been reviewed and approved by your proposed instructor, please email the individuals below and ***CC: your academic adviser***. It is recommended that your syllabus be submitted early to avoid delays in course registration and additional charges.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1. Department Contact** | **2. Faculty Contact** |
| **Annie Mateen** Academic Program Manager USC School of Journalism  [mateen@usc.edu](mailto:mateen@usc.edu) | **Melanie Cherry**  Lecturer  Program Lead, PR Studies Program  [cherrym@usc.edu](mailto:cherrym@usc.edu)  **Burghardt Tenderich**  Professor of Professional Practice/Associate Program Lead, PR Studies Program  [tenderic@usc.edu](mailto:tenderic@usc.edu) |
|  |  |

Once your syllabus has been approved, you will be notified and given departmental clearance by an adviser in the School of Journalism so that you may officially register for this course.

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**PR 490: Directed Research**

**Insert Topic**

**Number of Units: Insert Units**

Directed Research projects are typically 1-4 units.

**Fall 2025 – Day – Time**

**Section:** Five-digit section number from the [Schedule of Classes](https://classes.usc.edu/)

**Location:** Classroom and/or course-related URLs, etc. [See [Schedule of Classes](https://classes.usc.edu/) for assigned classroom.]

**Instructor: Name**

**Office:** Room or meeting area

**Office Hours:** General guideline: 1 weekly office hour for each 4-unit class taught.

**Contact Info:** Email, phone number (office, cell), Skype, etc.

**Student: Name**

**Student ID:** Ten-digit USC ID number

**Major:** Program of study

**Contact Info:** Email and phone number

**Course Description**

***Student/Instructor:*** Describe the focus of the research that will be conducted throughout the semester. This should include details about the mechanics of the course such as “the student will learn advanced video production techniques” or “the student will craft an entire e-bulletin to add to her/his portfolio” or “the student will investigate issues plaguing college sports.”

**Student Learning Outcomes**

***Student/Instructor:*** List the specific learning objectives/outcomes to be achieved by this research project and the methods and tools that will be used to achieve them. If a video or e-publication is the intended result, the instructor MUST include parameters such as length, sound requirements, graphic/video quality, etc.

**Description of Assignments**

***Instructor*:** Briefly describe the major assignments that will contribute to the student’s overall grade. Provide a grading breakdown to the student in the next section.

**Grading**

**a. Grading Breakdown**

Description of assessments and corresponding points and percentage of grade.

***Instructor:*** You do not need to use this table below, but please indicate how the student will be graded overall, including the assignments you listed above. Must total 100%.

| Assignment | Points | % of Grade |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| **TOTAL** |  | **100%** |

**b. Course Grading Scale**

Letter grades and corresponding point value ranges.

***Instructor*:** The grade scale below was approved by the Faculty Council.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Letter grade and corresponding numerical point range** | | |
| 95% to 100%: A | 80% to 83%: B- (B minus) | 67% to 69%: D+ (D plus) |
| 90% to 94%: A- (A minus) | 77% to 79%: C+ (C plus) | 64% to 66%: D |
| 87% to 89%: B+ (B plus) | 74% to 76%: C | 60% to 63%: D- (D minus) |
| 84% to 86%: B | 70% to 73%: C- (C minus) | 0% to 59%: F |

Students must earn a grade of C- or better in PR 490 in order to receive major credit.

### **c. Grading Standards**

***Instructor****:* In addition to the grading breakdown / grading scale above, please describe the type and quality of work that is needed from the student in order to earn each letter grade.

**Sample grading standards for public relations content-related syllabi are provided below. Not all standards may apply to your course, but similar explanations of grading standards should be provided.**

***Public Relations*“A” projects** have writing near professional quality; one or no mistakes; clearly proofread and edited material. All required elements included (catchy headline, solid lead, varied vocabulary; supporting facts/figures; quotes as required). Excellent organization and flow; original thinking. Showed creativity in packaging/distribution method. High end of scale: publishable today as is.

**“B” projects** have two to five spelling, grammar or AP Style mistakes. One or more required elements missing or poorly displayed (i.e., boring headline; confusing lead, etc.). Shows potential as a good writer. Adhered to inverted pyramid. High end of scale will have at least one extraordinary element such as astonishing lead or little-known facts or pithy quote. Some creativity shown. Publishable with medium editing.   
  
**“C” projects** have more than five errors (spelling, grammar, AP style). Poorly edited and/or proofread. May have adhered to inverted pyramid but strayed at beginning or end. Hackneyed elements such as trite headline or uninteresting lead. Little or no facts/figures included. Passive rather than active verbs become the norm. Little or no creativity shown. Publishable with major editing.  
  
“**D” projects** have more than 10 errors (spelling, grammar). Needs to be completely rewritten. Poorly organized with little or no understanding of journalistic style/standards. Needs to work with writing coach.  
  
**“F” projects** are not rewritable, late or not turned in. A grade of F also will be assigned for any submitted work that is found to be plagiarized, fabricated and/or uses AI tools in unauthorized ways.

### **d. Grading Timeline**

***Instructor****:* *Announce a standard timeline for grading and feedback.*

**Assignment Rubrics**

***Instructor:*** Include assignment rubrics to be used. Sample rubrics may be obtained from your program directors.

**Assignment Submission Policy**

***Instructor:*** Describe how, and when, assignments are to be submitted. Examples:

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

B. Assignments must be submitted via [Brightspace, Multimedia Asset Management (MAM) system, email, etc.]

**Required Readings and Supplementary Materials**

***Instructor:*** Include required readings, websites, journals, and supplementary materials, along with information on where to access/purchase materials.

**Laptop Policy**

All undergraduate and graduate Annenberg majors and minors are required to have a PC or Apple laptop that can be used in Annenberg classes. Please refer to the [**Annenberg Digital Lounge**](http://www.annenbergdl.org/) for more information. To connect to USC’s Secure Wireless network, please visit USC’s [**Information Technology Services**](http://itservices.usc.edu/wireless/support/) website.

**Add/Drop Dates for Session 001**

**(15 weeks: 8/25/2025 – 12/5/2025; Final Exam Period: 12/10-17/2025)**

**First day of classes:** Monday, August 25, 2025

**Last day to add:** Friday, September 12, 2025

**Last day to change to Pass/No Pass:** Friday, September 12, 2025

**Last day to drop without a mark of "W" and receive a refund:** Friday, September 12, 2025

**Last day to withdraw without a “W” on transcript or change pass/no pass to letter grade:** Friday, October 10, 2025

**Last day to drop with a mark of "W":** Friday, November 14, 2025

**Last day of classes:** Friday, December 5, 2025

**Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown**

A weekly schedule of the topics, readings, and deliverables for the course.

***Instructor:*** Provide a calendar with assignments/deliverables/due dates. Be sure to consult the [Academic Calendar](https://academics.usc.edu/calendar/academic-calendar-2019-2020/) to reflect applicable holidays/breaks.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Topics/Daily Activities** | **Readings and Homework** | **Deliverable/Due Dates** |
| **Week 1**  **Dates: 8/25-8/29** |  |  |  |
| **Week 2**  **Dates: 9/1-9/5** |  |  | [**Labor Day:** Monday, September 1] |
| **Week 3**  **Dates: 9/8-9/12** |  |  |  |
| **Week 4**  **Dates: 9/15-9/19** |  |  |  |
| **Week 5**  **Dates: 9/22-9/26** |  |  |  |
| **Week 6**  **Dates: 9/29-10/3** |  |  |  |
| **Week 7**  **Dates: 10/6-10/10** |  |  | [**Fall Recess:** October 9-10] |
| **Week 8**  **Dates: 10/13-10/17** |  |  |  |
| **Week 9**  **Dates: 10/20-10/24** |  |  |  |
| **Week 10**  **Dates: 10/27-10/31** |  |  |  |
| **Week 11**  **Dates: 11/3-11/7** |  |  |  |
| **Week 12**  **Dates: 11/10-11/14** |  |  | [**Veterans Day**: Tuesday, November 11] |
| **Week 13**  **Dates: 11/17-11/21** |  |  |  |
| **Week 14**  **Dates: 11/24-11/28** |  |  | [**Thanksgiving Break**: November 26-28] |
| **Week 15**  **Dates: 12/1-12/5** |  |  |  |

# **Policies and Procedures**

## **Additional Policies**

***Instructor:*** Add any additional policies specific to your class that students should be aware of: missed classes, attendance expectations, checking USC email, use of technology in the classroom, dress code, etc.

## **Communication**

***Instructor:*** Include a line that encourages students to contact the instructor outside of class and if they cannot come to office hours to arrange a meeting time by whichever method you prefer (email, text, etc.). In addition, include a timeline for replying to emails or calls (e.g., within 48 hours).

## **Classroom Policies**

***Instructor:*** Classroom policies set the tone for how a course operates. An anti-racist curriculum takes into consideration how racism tends to be part of the structures and mechanism of course content, grading, teacher feedback, and what is valued. Professors can make a difference by creating a culture of respect and addressing microaggressions, which research shows can affect students’ ability to learn. Please add language about expectations for discussions in classrooms, and mediating disputes and review these policies with students. Refer to the CET resource, [a menu of discussion norms](https://cet.usc.edu/teaching-resources/reaching-all-students/). Also, view the sample syllabus language on the ASCJ Excellence in Teaching on the Brightspace organization and Faculty Resources websites.

## **Classroom Norms**

Classroom norms, also referred to as discussion norms or community agreements, describe the behaviors that are encouraged and discouraged during class. They can be a powerful tool for establishing a supportive learning environment. Refer to the CET resources on [creating community agreements](https://cet.usc.edu/teaching-resources/).

## **Course Evaluations**

Course evaluation occurs at the end of the semester university-wide. It is an important review of students’ experience in the class. The process and intent of the end-of-semester evaluation should be provided. In addition, a mid-semester evaluation is recommended practice for early course correction. [Contact CET](https://cet.usc.edu/contact-us/) for support in creating a mid-semester evaluation.

## **Internships**

The value of professional internships as part of the overall educational experience of our students has long been recognized by the School of Journalism. Accordingly, while internships are not required for successful completion of this course, any student enrolled in this course that undertakes and completes an approved, non‐paid internship during this semester shall earn academic extra credit herein of an amount equal to 1 percent of the total available semester points for this course. To receive instructor approval, a student must request an internship letter from the Annenberg Career Development Office and bring it to the instructor to sign by the end of the third week of classes. The student must submit the signed letter to the media organization, along with the evaluation form provided by the Career Development Office. The form should be filled out by the intern supervisor and returned to the instructor at the end of the semester. No credit will be given if an evaluation form is not turned into the instructor by the last day of class. Note: The internship must by unpaid and can only be applied to one journalism or public relations class.

## **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](https://policy.usc.edu/studenthandbook/), 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](https://policy.usc.edu/studenthandbook/), page 13).

## **Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems**

## **Academic Conduct**

The USC Student Handbook (https://policy.usc.edu/studenthandbook/)

## **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](https://policy.usc.edu/studenthandbook/). 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](https://policy.usc.edu/studenthandbook/) or the [Office of Academic Integrity’s website](https://academicintegrity.usc.edu/), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](https://policy.usc.edu/research-and-scholarship-misconduct/).

**USC School of Journalism Policy on Academic Integrity** https://catalogue.usc.edu/preview\_entity.php?catoid=20&ent\_oid=4369

“Since its founding, the School of Journalism has maintained a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found plagiarizing, fabricating, cheating on examinations, and/or purchasing papers or other assignments faces sanctions ranging from an “F” on the assignment to dismissal from the School of Journalism.”

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.

Academic Integrity violations (academic dishonesty) include, but are not limited to: Plagiarism and Cheating

* The submission of material authored by another person or entity (such as an AI tool – see below) but represented as the student’s own work, whether that material is paraphrased or copied in verbatim or near‐verbatim form.
* Re‐using any portion of one’s own work (essay, term paper, project, or other assignment) previously submitted without citation of such and without permission of the instructor(s) involved.
* Improper acknowledgment of sources in essays or papers, including drafts. Also, all students involved in collaborative work (as permitted by the instructor) are expected to proofread the work and are responsible for all particulars of the final draft.
* Acquisition of academic work, such as term papers, articles solutions, or other assignments, from any source and the subsequent presentation of those materials as the student’s own work, or providing academic work, such as term papers, solutions, articles or assignments that another student submits as their own work.

**Generative AI Policy**

The USC Annenberg Public Relations and Advertising program views generative AI as an addition to USC’s digital literacy tools that students are encouraged to experiment with and use inside and outside the classroom. Students may use generative AI tools such as Chat GPT to help complete their class assignments but must disclose such use in the bibliography or notes section. Students are solely responsible for the quality and the accuracy of their submissions, regardless of whether they were completed with the aid of generative AI.

## **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.](mailto: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:**

USC Annenberg has an embedded student health counselor, Dr. Kelly Greco. Dr. Greco helps students prioritize their mental health and emotional well-being. In this video, she shares a few tips for how to "Fight On" every day. Students may schedule sessions with her through MySHR or by calling (213) 740-9355 (WELL). USC Student Health services are also available to support student's mental health journey by visiting: <https://sites.usc.edu/counselingandmentalhealth/>

[Counseling and Mental Health](https://sites.usc.edu/counselingandmentalhealth/) - (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](http://988lifeline.org/) - 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)](https://sites.usc.edu/clientservices/) - (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)](http://eeotix.usc.edu/) - (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](https://report.usc.edu/) - (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)](http://osas.usc.edu/) - (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](http://campussupport.usc.edu/) - (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](http://diversity.usc.edu/) - (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](https://emergency.usc.edu/) - 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](https://dps.usc.edu/) - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](http://ombuds.usc.edu/) - (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](http://chan.usc.edu/patient-care/faculty-practice) - (323) 442-2850 or [otfp@med.usc.edu](mailto: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 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.

**About Your Instructor**

Please insert your bio here - 150 words or less.