

## IML 420: New Media For Social Change



### Instructors

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### Overview

*IML 420: New Media for Social Change* explores the nature of civic engagement in the 21st century and gives students the opportunity to strengthen their new media skills in the pursuit of real world change. The course offers students an interdisciplinary experience that combines media studies, media arts and practice, popular culture, storytelling, world building and civic action. The course will deepen students' ability to reflect deeply and act thoughtfully in the age of digital civics. Students will explore the creative needs and opportunities of social action through the harnessing of the civic imagination and civic media. They will also apply participatory research approaches to surface, analyze and critique real world organizations and projects that harness media in new and compelling ways to foster sustainable civic engagement and social change.

Practically, the class is divided into three modules that each invite the students to explore a broad spectrum of approaches to new media for social change. The **first module** focuses on the ways in which our ability to imagine and communicate aspirational futures can be used to build community and mobilize towards action. The **second module** pivots towards real world issues and asks the students to investigate and research specific communities and issues with the objective of proposing thoughtful, research-based participatory approaches to social change. In the **third, and final module**, the students will develop a media for social change campaign proposal. The final deliverables of this campaign proposal will include an outline of the campaign, several media examples, background research on the selected field/topic, an elaboration of participatory elements as they connect to an articulated theory of change, and explanation of how success will be measured.

## **Background**

The course builds on the research and outreach efforts of the Civic Paths Group as it integrates peer-based learning, popular culture, and media production. Civic Paths explores continuities between online participatory culture and civic engagement through outreach, creative work, research, and academic inquiry. With low entry barriers, participatory culture-based communities often encourage online participation and expression even as they promote expression, awareness, mentorship, and skill training. Premised on a dynamic understanding of citizenship, we analyze how participatory culture interactions encourage young people to create, discuss and organize to engage with specific civic issues and events. The goal of this course is to give students the tools to leverage the insights of Civic Paths into new forms of spreadable learning.

Originating in the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, the Civic Paths has been joined by the School of Cinematic Arts Division of Media Arts + Practice. Likewise, this section of IML 420 will be co-taught by representatives of the respective schools and members of the Civic Paths team, Gabriel Peters-Lazaro and Sangita Shresthova.

## **Required Readings**

All readings will be provided electronically by instructors.

## **Grading Breakdown and Assignments**

### **Participation - 20%**

A key aspect of the course is its participatory nature. Students are expected to arrive ready to discuss readings and assignments, to engage in in class exercises and workshops and to provide constructive feedback to their colleagues.

### **Reflections and Reading Responses - 20%**

Students will regularly reflect on readings and other class experiences using various media. All reflections will be posted to the class wiki and will be shared with other students and instructors. Students will also be expected to regularly respond to each others' reflections. Instructors will provide prompts. The reflections should be a space to demonstrate and chart personal development and understanding.

### **Civic Imagination Remixed Story Writeup 15%**

### **Civic Media Case Study 20%**

Initial Writeup  
Research Plan  
Research Deliverables (choice of 2)  
Research Report

**Media Campaign for Social Change 25%**

Proposal

Work in progress presentation

Final Deliverable

Final Presentation

## Weekly Schedule

### MODULE 1: Civic Imagination

#### Week 1 - 1/11 Introduction

In-class media-making exercise

Overview of syllabus - plan for class

Introduction to key themes: civic media and civic imagination, by any media necessary

**Assignment:** Reading 1 - Chapter 1 of *By Any Media Necessary: The New Activism of Youth*  
(due 1/18)

**Assignment:** Reading 1 Reflection

#### Week 2 - 1/18 By Any Media

Discussion of assigned reading

In-class Think Critically, Act Creatively Workshop

**Due:** Reading 1 Reflection

**Assignment:** Reading 2 - Introduction to *Dream: Re-Imagining Progressive Politics in the Age of Fantasy* (reflection due 1/25)

**Assignment:** Reading 2 Reflection

#### Week 3 - 1/25 Civic Imagination

Discussion of assigned reading

In class Civic Imagination Workshop (Part 1)

**Due:** Reading 2 Reflection

**Assignment:** Reading 3 “Superpowers to the People” article

#### Week 4 - 2/1 Remix

Discussion of assigned reading

In class Civic Imagination Workshop (Part 2)

**Due:** Reading 3 Reflection on Superheroes

**Assignment:** Write up of Remixed Civic Imagination Stories

**Week 5 - 2/8 Harnessing the Civic Imagination**

Peer review of remixed stories

Connection to Civic Imagination Atlas and Salzburg Academy/MOVE

**Due:** Write up of Remixed Stories

**Assignment:** Civic Media Reader (excerpt)

**MODULE 2: Civic Media and Participatory Research**

**Week 6 - 2/15 Introduction to Civic Media**

Overview of Civic Media, Case Studies

Why participation matters

**Due:** Reading 4 reflection

**Assignment:** brief civic media case study (200-500 words)

**Week 7 - 2/22 Participatory Research**

Approaches to civic media research - methods, options, situating the researcher

**Due:** brief case study summary

**Assignment:** develop research plan for case study

**Week 8 - 3/1 Research Plan**

Share research plan, discuss execution strategies

**Due:** research plan

**Assignment:** Carry out at least 2 research plan elements

**Week 9 - 3/8 Application of Research Findings**

Discuss research findings, challenges faced, unexpected developments

Fill in summary template, come up with recommendations/action steps based on findings

**Due:** Draft research summary

**Assignment:** Finalize research summary homework

**Week 10 - 3/15 SPRING BREAK**

**MODULE 3 - "By Any Media" Campaign**

**Week 11 - 3/22 Youth Radio Campaign Brainstorm (Case Study)**

Brainstorm/ Rapid Prototyping workshop session

Case study: Youth Radio

**Due:** Finalized Research Summary

**Assignment:** Reflection on workshop sessions, recommendations to Youth Radio

**Week 12 - 3/29 'By Any Media' Campaign Proposal Introduction**

Introduce "By Any Media" Campaign plans

Define working groups, select theme/topic, possible community/organization/network, initial narrative ideas, media options.

All groups share their tentative plans at the end of class

**Due:** Youth Radio Reflection

**Assignment:** meet with group and write a proposal

**Week 13 - 4/5 Project Work**

Project Work

Due: Campaign Proposal Draft 1

**Week 14 - 4/12**

Work in progress presentations

**Week 15 - 4/19**

Project Work

**Week 16 - 4/26**

Final Presentations

**Week 17 - 5/3**

**NO MEETING**

Final Synthesis/Campaign Proposals due by the end of final exam period

## **Evaluation**

In general, you will be graded using these criteria:

### **Conceptual Core**

The project's controlling idea should be apparent.

The project should be productively aligned with one or more multimedia genres.

The project should effectively engage with the primary issue/s of the subject area into which it is intervening.

### **Research Component**

The project should display evidence of thoughtful engagement with its subject matter.

If the project includes sources, they should be cited appropriately.

### **Form and Content**

The project's structural or formal elements should serve the conceptual core.

The project's design decisions should be deliberate, controlled and defensible.

The project's efficacy should be unencumbered by technical problems.

### **Creative Realization**

The project should approach the subject in a creative or innovative manner.

The project should use media and design principles effectively.

The project should achieve significant goals that could not be realized on paper.

## **Policies**

### **Fair Use and Citation Guidelines**

We assert that all of our course work is covered under the Doctrine of Fair Use. In order to make this claim, however, all projects will need to include academically appropriate citations in the form of a Works Cited section, which covers all sources, in order to receive a passing grade. The Works Cited is either included in the project or as a separate document, as appropriate to your project. The style we use is MLA and you may refer to these guidelines: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/05/>

### **Statement on Academic Integrity**

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect

one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. Scampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>.

### **Statement for Students with Disabilities**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

### **Emergency Plan**

In the event that classes cannot convene at the university, all MA+P courses will continue via distance education.