



# Thematic Option



# **Thematic Option Student Handbook 2010-2011**

This handbook is designed to help you during your freshman year in the Thematic Option Program. The CORE curriculum will challenge the motivated student and provide a foundation for intellectual growth.

Keep this handbook. It contains information you will need throughout your Thematic Option enrollment and will prove useful during your entire tenure at the University.

It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with this information. We will assume you have done so.

Remember that this handbook is merely a guide. Your Thematic Option advisors are here to help you and answer any questions you may have and are eager to do so. If you need clarification on any policies or other forms of information listed here, please speak with an advisor.

We wish you success in your college career and encourage you to come to us at any time for help or information.

Best,

the Thematic Option staff



# Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Administration and Office Information .....   | 5  |
| Thematic Option Requirements .....            | 6  |
| AP exams, IB exams, and Transfer Credit ..... | 8  |
| Viterbi School of Engineering Students .....  | 10 |
| Advisement .....                              | 11 |
| Thematic Option Announcements .....           | 13 |
| Thematic Option Events .....                  | 14 |
| Classroom Etiquette .....                     | 15 |
| Faculty Office Hours .....                    | 16 |
| Letters of Recommendation .....               | 16 |
| Academic Dishonesty .....                     | 18 |
| Academic Probation .....                      | 19 |
| University Grading Policy .....               | 20 |
| Pass/No Pass .....                            | 23 |
| Auditing Courses .....                        | 23 |
| Registering for 20 units or more .....        | 24 |
| Withdrawing from a class .....                | 25 |
| Incompletes .....                             | 27 |
| Leave of Absence .....                        | 28 |
| Freshman Forgiveness.....                     | 29 |
| Grade Disputes .....                          | 30 |
| Scholarships .....                            | 31 |



# Administration and Office Information

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## Office Information

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(213) 740-2961  
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Office Hours:  
Monday - Friday  
8:30 am - 5:00 pm

**Please note:** Staff work Monday-Friday. If you send an email or leave a voice message in the evening or over the weekend, please do not expect a reply until regular office hours resume.

## Thematic Option Requirements

### CORE courses

**CORE 102 Culture and Values** focuses on personal identity through close textual analysis of great literary and philosophical works from the Biblical and classical traditions of Western culture to the present.

**CORE 104 Change and the Future** examines industrialization, social relations, and ideology in the modern age from the perspectives of those who have challenged and those who have defended the dominant order.

**CORE 101 Symbols and Conceptual Systems** examines our fascination with human beings as meaning-seekers and symbol-makers and introduces students to contemporary thought and philosophies of interpretation.

**CORE 103 The Process of Change in Science** deals with the nature of scientific change and paradigm shifts by examining the sometimes unquestioned role of science as the dominant mode of knowledge production in the modern world.

### Writing Seminars

**CORE 111** helps to improve your ability to write grammatically, clearly and logically; instructs you in the mechanics of writing academic and analytic papers; encourages close, accurate and thorough reading of texts; and illuminates the relationship between thinking and writing. Each CORE 111 writing seminar enrolls fourteen students and is attached to a section of CORE 102 Culture and Values. By using the same texts in the writing seminar and CORE 102, your understanding of the material deepens while developing your writing skills.

**CORE 112** aims to develop your ability to identify and address specific audiences effectively and to convey complex ideas critically and persuasively. The spring semester writing seminar remains rigorous with the addition of an independent reading list that examines the nature of modernity and postmodernity. Students build upon the analytic writing skills developed in the first semester as well as learn how to present their ideas publicly.

### Writing Tutorials

Both CORE 111 and CORE 112 writing seminars include biweekly, one-on-one tutorials with your writing instructor. This private tutorial allows for individual instruction and helps develop your ability to express ideas in written form and find a personal voice. Writing instructors will arrange a tutorial schedule with students at the start of the semester. Tutorials will be held in the writing instructor offices in CAS 200.

## Theme Courses

The CORE curriculum is supplemented with two theme courses: the Humanities and Social Science theme and the Natural Science theme. These courses are chosen from departments across the University. The Humanities and Social Science theme examines non-western civilizations historically, politically, socially, culturally, psychologically, or any combination thereof. The Natural Science theme is a lab-based natural science course that articulates scientific principles, observed phenomena that inform them, their technological applications, and their consequences. Following USC's general education policy, all Theme Courses must come from departments in USC College. Students receive a new Theme Course List each semester from which they may make their selections.

When choosing theme courses, remember that the purpose of general education in a liberal arts curriculum is to provide breadth. For example, in selecting theme courses, students with programs of study in the social sciences should emphasize the humanities and social scientific approaches unrelated to their discipline; students with programs of study in the humanities should emphasize theme courses in the social sciences and in areas of humanities not addressed by their discipline.

Students who have special interests or circumstances may count a course not appearing on the Theme Course List with prior approval from Associate Director Richard Edinger. Please acquire a syllabus for the proposed course before asking for such an evaluation.

**Please note:** Humanities and Social Science theme courses often do not automatically appear on STARS reports as satisfying the requirement. Please contact an advisor if your STARS report needs to be updated to reflect a theme course you have taken.

## Thematic Option Lab Times

CORE 102, CORE 104, CORE 101, and CORE 103 all have attached lab sections. These three-hour blocks are reserved in a student's schedule to allow your professor or Thematic Option to program events. If your professor lists an event during the lab time on the syllabus, it is understood that the event is a part of the course and attendance is expected. Program-wide events scheduled during the lab times are opportunities made available to students and are not mandatory, but may require signing up.

## Diversity Requirement

All USC students are required to take one diversity course, designated by an "m" following the course number.

## **AP exams, IB exams, and Transfer Credit**

All undergraduate students entering USC may receive a combined maximum of 32 elective units for college courses and/or examinations (i.e. Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) taken before graduation from high school. A maximum of 16 of these 32 units will be allowed for college courses taken before high school graduation. These courses must appear on the college transcripts as part of the regular college curriculum and are expected to be taught on the college campus by college faculty. Students may not receive credit for both an AP (or IB) exam and a college course covering the same subject matter. Units will first be awarded for the AP/IB/other tests, and then for college coursework, for up to 32 units. College courses taken after high school graduation are exempt from the 32 unit rule. See your advisor if you have further questions beyond what is covered here.

### Theme Courses

Following the general education model, students are allowed to apply credits earned through Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exams toward satisfying their theme course requirements. Scores of 4 or 5 on AP Art History or European History or 5 or higher on IB History route 2: 20th century world history HL Options “Europe and the Middle East,” “Africa,” or “Asia and Oceania” will satisfy the Humanities and Social Science Theme. Scores of 4 or 5 on AP Biology, Chemistry, or Physics or 5 or higher on IB HL Biology, Chemistry, or Physics will satisfy the Natural Science Theme.

### Other AP and IB exams

USC grants four units for other AP tests with scores of 4 or 5. USC grants either 20 units of credit to students who earn the International Baccalaureate Diploma with a score of 30 or higher, or six units for each score of 5, 6, or 7 on the IB Higher Level exams, up to a maximum of four exams, whichever is higher. These other exams will not count as USC courses. Rather, certain exams may allow a student to enroll in more advanced courses.

### Transfer Credit

Note: Please refer to the USC Catalogue or the website [www.usc.edu/transfercredit](http://www.usc.edu/transfercredit) for complete information regarding all transfer credit issues.

The University of Southern California generally accepts coursework from institutions (both two-year and four-year) that are accredited by the six American regional accreditation agencies. Articulation agreements with California Community Colleges are issued by the Articulation Office and

indicate courses available for transfer to USC. There are no official articulation agreements with four-year institutions or out-of-state community colleges. Although often transferable, all coursework from such schools is reviewed on a case-by-case basis. To ensure complete evaluation of transfer courses, it is the student's responsibility to submit official transcripts from the institution(s) in question. The transfer credit report sent to the student acknowledges all acceptable work and indicates course equivalencies.

### Transfer Credit Limitations

USC's transfer policies have been established to enable students to achieve an undergraduate degree that reflects traditional academic study. Because of this, the following types of non-traditional coursework do not transfer to USC: life experience, portfolio work, televised courses, work experience, or continuing education courses (even if evaluated by the American Council of Education). Independent study, directed study, internships, travel courses, and correspondence/web/email courses taken at two-year or four-year institutions will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Neither subject nor unit credit will be granted for transfer courses graded with less than a "C-" (1.7). A student may apply a maximum of 64 semester units of credit from other institutions toward a Bachelor's degree at USC.

### College Coursework Taken During High School

College courses completed on a part-time basis prior to high school graduation may be submitted for unit credit in the same manner as other college courses. Only courses appearing on an official college transcript that were taught on a college campus by a college faculty member are acceptable for transfer.

### Residency Requirement

A minimum of 64 units toward the Bachelor's degree must be earned in residence at USC. After the completion of 64 college-level units applicable to the undergraduate degree, no more than eight additional units may be allowed for transfer credit. Once students matriculate at USC, all courses taken for subject or unit credit in the fall and spring semesters must be taken in residence. Because of this restriction, matriculated USC students may only receive credit for transfer work taken during a summer term. **All general education requirements (meaning Thematic Option requirements) and upper-division units required for the major and minor must be earned in residence at USC.**

## Viterbi School of Engineering Students

Students with a declared engineering major who scored a 4 or 5 on AP US History may use this exam to satisfy an additional general education requirement. Engineering students in Thematic Option who wish to take advantage of this option should discuss it with an advisor as soon as possible.

**Please note:** Viterbi students using this option **cannot** take a Humanities & Social Sciences Theme Course, so please disregard that list. Instead, you must take a Category II class through the regular General Education curriculum. If you satisfied the Humanities & Social Sciences Theme with an AP or IB, it is still possible to use the AP US History score as a substitute. In all cases, please consult an advisor.

## **Advisement**

### Scheduled Appointments For Freshmen

All freshmen in Thematic Option are required to meet with an advisor for a half-hour one-on-one appointment in both the fall and spring semesters. During this session, students will plan their schedule for the upcoming semester, receive D-clearances for their Thematic Option classes, and discuss future plans including majors and minors, overseas studies, internships, and various academic opportunities at USC.

Students can sign up for appointments using their myUSC account. Under the “Advisement” tab, there is an option to schedule an appointment.

The exact dates of the advisement appointments fluctuate from year to year, so expect an email detailing the specific days. There will also be an email letting the students know what day and time the appointment scheduling feature will be activated, ensuring that all students get a fair chance to secure an early appointment.

Students may meet with any of the four T.O. advisors and are encouraged to sign up for the earliest available appointment time that fits into their schedule (i.e. NOT during a class).

Students with a declared major are also required to meet with a major advisor. We recommend doing so before meeting with Thematic Option, if possible. Undeclared/undecided students need only meet with Thematic Option, though meeting with an advisor for a possible major may be beneficial in planning a schedule.

Prior to the start of these appointments, the staff will email course descriptions for all upcoming Thematic Option classes and a list of Theme Courses. Students should read these descriptions thoroughly and bring a copy with them to their appointment. In addition, students should review the course catalogue and try to determine major and minor requirements. Please come to an advisement appointment prepared.

Unlike the summer orientations, students will not be registering for classes with an advisor. Students are assigned a specific time that they can begin registering, based on the number of completed units they have on file at USC. This time can be checked on OASIS under the “Permit to Register.”

### Walk-in Advisement for Sophomores

Sophomores will be eligible to attend walk-in advisement appointments.

Advisors will be available during designated time periods to meet with students on a first come, first served basis. The exact dates and times will be sent via email, but they will always occur prior to the freshmen advising appointments.

Students with a declared major are not required to meet with Thematic Option after freshman year but are still encouraged to do so. However, any student wishing to take a Thematic Option class will need to attend a walk-in appointment in order to obtain D-clearance.

### Advisement for Juniors and Seniors

Upperclassmen will be able to request D-clearance for Thematic Option classes via email after being prompted to do so. They may also attend the walk-in advisement times if they wish.

### Unscheduled Advisement Appointments

At all other times of the year (when advisement is not taking place for the following semester), it is not necessary to schedule an appointment in order to meet with an advisor. The advisors are here to help you and answer any questions you might have. Students are welcome to walk in and ask to see an advisor. Please check in at the reception desk to meet with an advisor. Advisors are available from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm, though often most will be unavailable between 12:00 pm and 1:00 pm. You may also email an advisor if you would like to schedule an appointment.

### Class Waitlists

Remember that Thematic Option uses the D-clearance system. Even if there appear to be seats on web registration, a Thematic Option class is considered closed once all the clearances have been issued. If a class is closed, you may request a spot on the waiting list.

Advisors are constantly monitoring enrollment and will contact you via email if a spot becomes available. It is not necessary for you to contact a TO advisor inquiring about your place on the waitlist. Most spaces open up several weeks after all students have registered for courses. Except in rare circumstances, most classes do have spaces become available if you are patient.

## Thematic Option Announcements

Throughout the semester, students will receive numerous emails from the Thematic Option office. These will come in two forms.

1. Emails announcing opportunities for students (club meetings, guest speakers, film screenings, scholarships, fellowships, interesting opportunities, etc.) will come from the ThematicOption@college.usc.edu email address. These are completely optional, and students may ask an advisor to take them off this mailing list. Remember that doing so may result in missing out on an opportunity.

**Please note:** It is not possible to reply to these announcements and send a message to the whole student body.

Students wishing to send an announcement should email a prepared message to Richard Edinger (redinger@usc.edu) at least **3 days prior** to the event. Multiple messages for the same event will not be sent, and we will not send out an announcement received on the same day as an event. Announcements will be screened before being sent out so please avoid profanity or other forms of offensive content. Announcements that may suggest Thematic Option has an opinion or stance on a controversial issue may not be sent. For example, do not ask TO to send out an email that seems to endorse your candidacy for student body president.

2. Emails announcing Thematic Option events, relaying important information about advisement and registration, or any other vital announcement or information will come directly from one of the advisors. If you receive an email from an advisor please read it promptly and respond if necessary.

**Because the primary method of contact will be via email, it is important that students keep their inbox below quota in order to avoid missing messages.**

3. Your professors and writing instructors may also announce events relevant to class through Blackboard. Please be diligent in checking that system.

## **Thematic Option Events**

Unless otherwise noted, Thematic Option events are only open to TO students. Please do not bring along a friend from outside the program unless you have received permission to do so.

Many of Thematic Option's events are ticketed and/or require bus transportation, so seating may be limited. Such events will have a sign up list. If you sign up for an event, please show courtesy to your fellow students by attending. If you find that you will be unable to attend, please notify one of the advisors at least 24 hours before the event so they can give your spot to someone on the waitlist as early as possible.

In addition, many Thematic Option events are arranged at great effort and expense so you may enjoy them with little to no cost. If you sign up, please attend or, if you cannot, let an advisor know with enough notice so another student may have your spot. Occasionally, very expensive events will require a small fee to offset expenses or a collateral charge that will be reimbursed when you attend.

Many events will be posted on the calendar available on the Thematic Option website, [www.usc.edu/thematicoption](http://www.usc.edu/thematicoption). however faculty can schedule additional events that may not appear on the calendar.

## Classroom Etiquette

The following are ways by which you can demonstrate your seriousness to your instructors:

- Come to class on time.
- Be sure to **turn off** (not silent mode!) all cell phones before entering the classroom.
- Bring writing equipment and paper along with your required texts.
- Laptops are **not** permitted in CORE 111 and CORE 112. Faculty may prohibit laptop use in other T.O. courses as they interfere with discussion.
- Read your syllabus carefully. You are responsible for all information contained in it: assignments, due dates, procedures, and policies set by your instructor.
- Take careful notes during lectures and discussions. Pay attention to deadlines and to examination schedules.
- Turn in assignments on time and pay attention to format instructions.
- Never read newspapers, study for other classes, surf the web, explore facebook, use twitter, etc. or mumble, chat, eat, sleep, or in other ways violate the rules of polite behavior during a class.
- If you have been ill or have a legitimate excuse for missing a class, notify your instructor as soon as possible and make arrangements to make up any work you might have missed. It is your responsibility to ask to borrow another student's notes when you miss a lecture. Keep your classmates' phone numbers and e-mail addresses handy.
- Ask your instructors how they wish to be addressed; don't assume that you are on a first-name basis with your professors or staff members.
- Ask for permission before you inquire about an instructor's personal life. This includes inquiries about marital status, and political and religious beliefs.

## **Faculty Office Hours**

Faculty members are available to students during regularly scheduled office hours. Most of them enjoy informal discussions with their students and often lament that students rarely take advantage of their office hours. If you have a question or an idea you wish to discuss, schedule an appointment or drop by during your instructor's office hours. If you cannot attend the faculty member's regularly scheduled office hours, ask to meet with him or her at another time. Do not simply arrive at the faculty member's office expecting them to be available to talk with you. Use good judgment; for instance, during exam times it is likely that many students will want to see their instructors, so it would be wise to schedule an appointment in advance. If you set an appointment, always email your instructor the day before to confirm your appointment.

## **Letters of Recommendation**

Believe it or not, your freshman year is not too soon to think about recommendations for graduate schools or future employment. In three or four years when you begin seeking recommendations you will find the process much easier if you have already established relationships with faculty and instructors who know you and your work well. Employers and professional schools consider both the quality of a recommendation (how well it's written and what it says about you) and the expertise of the evaluator (how well she or he knows you and how well qualified he or she is to judge your suitability for the field you choose). Even if you don't know now what you want to do when you graduate, you will find that the more relationships you have with teachers from a wide variety of disciplines the easier it will be to request a letter of recommendation.

Many graduate and professional schools will require three letters of recommendation. Even when only two are required it never hurts to supply one or two more. Variety, however, is important. If you're applying to medical school, for example, you might want a recommendation from a humanities professor or a social science professor or both, as well as from one of your science faculty. You may also want to include a recommendation from an employer.

Like our faculty, the program staff is more than willing to write letters on your behalf. However, we cannot emphasize enough the importance of letters from faculty and the advice given above. In most cases we can only discuss the earliest phase of your academic career and unless you have been very actively involved in program events or other Thematic Option extracurricular activities, our letters will tend to be strong but somewhat pro forma.

The Thematic Option Office has a formal procedure for requesting letters of recommendation. Because we often include brochures and other materials with

our letters, it won't be necessary for you to provide us with envelopes or postage. However, we require a minimum of two weeks notice for letters, so be organized and get your requests in early.

Below are some practical guidelines and etiquette for requesting letters of recommendation from faculty and from the program:

- Be professional.
- Provide a stamped, addressed envelope.
- Provide your personal information on any recommendation forms you need completed.
- Provide a resume or short synopsis of your strengths, accomplishments and goals. The more information you provide the easier it will be to write a credible and timely letter.
- Provide copies of graded assignments from class to aid faculty in conveying your academic strengths.
- Be sure to ask the faculty member's permission before having recommendation forms sent to him or her or before having prospective employers call for a reference.
- Allow plenty of time.
- Never make the person regret having agreed to provide you with a recommendation.

## Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism is the attempt, successful or not, to pass off someone else's ideas or words as your own. Plagiarism is not limited to unattributed quotations; you have plagiarized if you have expressed another person's ideas in your own words. These ideas may derive from a book, paper, film or conversation. If the idea did not originate with you, you must cite its source. When presenting or discussing well-known historical or scientific facts, cite your source if you consulted a text when you gathered these facts. However, it is unnecessary to cite facts that are considered common knowledge; a mathematics major, for example, won't have to cite the quadratic formula, nor would a history major when discussing the date of the Norman Conquest as 1066.

The Thematic Option Program's policy in cases of plagiarism (which is easy to detect, by the way) is that the student will receive an F on the paper and he or she may, at the instructor's discretion, receive an F in the course. The student's name will be sent to the Office of Student Conduct, where a notation will be made in the student's permanent file. If you plagiarize more than once, you may be expelled from USC.

Thematic Option, because it is an honors program, considers any form of cheating to be grounds for failure in a class and possible dismissal from the program.

It is dishonest to pay or to persuade another person to write papers, take tests, do homework, or perform research tasks for you. This includes research or term paper services. If you need help, seek it from your instructors. Do not offer illicit help to a friend; no friend compromises another's integrity.

It is unacceptable to turn in a paper for credit in more than one class without prior permission from both faculty members. Some instructors find this practice acceptable; others do not.

Please note that many instructors do not approve of published study guides, such as the various "Notes" series. Inquire before using such aids.

For a University-wide policy statement, please refer to the University Governance section in the SCampus.

## Academic Probation

The Office of Academic Records and Registrar and the Committee on Academic Policies and Procedures (CAPP) reserve the right to review, amend or revoke academic statuses and/or registration at any time.

Undergraduate students are placed on academic probation when their cumulative USC GPA falls below 2.0. Students who do not raise their cumulative GPA to a 2.0 after two semesters of subsequent enrollment (exempting summer enrollment) will be academically disqualified **unless** they earn a minimum semester GPA of 2.3 in the second and all subsequent probation semesters. Actions such as Corrections of Grades, Completion of Incompletes, Removal of Missing Grades, and Exception Requests **will not** result in academic statuses being retroactively changed.

While on probation, students must seek advisement from their departmental advisor, an Authorized School Signer, and an Academic Review Counselor prior to registration and before making any subsequent program changes. An academic Review Advisement Record form, available in the Academic Review Office (JHH 113), must be completed and signed by the departmental advisor and Authorized School Signer during the advisement process. In addition to this completed form, students should bring their Permit to Register or Change of Program form to the Academic Review Office to meet with a counselor for final approval.

Within Thematic Option, we maintain a higher standard. If, on his or her midterm report, an instructor determines that a student's work, attitude, or behavior has been unsatisfactory, a student may be placed on probation within the Thematic Option Program. Within Thematic Option, probation may be academic, disciplinary, or both.\* The student will remain on probation until his or her performance is deemed satisfactory.

\* Please note that a student's invitation to Thematic Option may be revoked if it is deemed that continuation will jeopardize the student's academic success.

More information can be found on the Academic Review website ([www.usc.edu/dept/ARR/academicreview/probation/index.html/](http://www.usc.edu/dept/ARR/academicreview/probation/index.html/)) including grounds for Academic Disqualification and procedures for Readmission.

## University Grading Policy

A system of grade points is used to determine a student's grade point average. The following grade points are earned for each unit of a letter graded course. To calculate your grade point average, use the following formula:

Grade points (see chart below) x units in each course = grade points earned for a particular class

Add up the total grade points earned for all courses, and then divide by the total number of units in all courses.

The resulting number is your grade point average (GPA).

| Letter Grade / Mark | Grade Points Earned |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| A                   | 4.0                 |
| A-                  | 3.7                 |
| B+                  | 3.3                 |
| B                   | 3.0                 |
| B-                  | 2.7                 |
| C+                  | 2.3                 |
| C                   | 2.0                 |
| C-                  | 1.7                 |
| D+                  | 1.3                 |
| D                   | 1.0                 |
| D-                  | 0.7                 |
| F                   | 0                   |

Minimum passing grade is D- for undergraduate credit.

Some additional marks are also used for undergraduate courses. The chart below shows those marks, when they are used, and how they affect a student's GPA, if at all.

| Mark | When Used   | Effect on GPA                                      |
|------|---|--|
| CR   | Mark of "Credit." Passing grade for credit/ no credit courses. Equivalent to C- quality or above. | No effect.   |
| NC   | Mark of "No Credit." Less than the equivalent of C- quality work.                                 | No effect, but no credit is earned for the course. |

|    |  |   |
|----|--|---|
| P  | Mark of “Pass.” Passing grade for pass/no pass course. Equivalent to C- quality or above.  | No effect.  |
| NP | Mark of “No Pass.” Less than the equivalent of C- quality work.  | No effect, but no credit is earned for the course.  |
| W  | “Withdrawn.” Used when a course is dropped after the 3rd week of classes and before the end of the 12th week of classes.   | No effect.  |
| IP | “In Progress.” Interim mark for a course exceeding one semester.   | No effect. Failure to complete a course with a mark of IP will be assigned a grade of NC.   |
| UW | “Unofficial Withdrawal.” This mark is given if a student stops attending class prior to the end of the 12th week of classes without officially withdrawing.  | A mark of UW earns a student 0 grade points, and affects the GPA similarly to a grade of F.   |
| MG | “Missing Grade” is an administrative mark used in cases when the instructor fails to submit a final course grade for a student.  | No effect. See the following section on Missing Grades.   |
| IN | “Incomplete” for work that is not completed due to a documented illness or some other emergency occurring after the 12th week of the semester. Arrangements for the IN should be initiated by the student and agreed to by the instructor before the final exam. | No effect if the course is completed within the allowed time. See mark of IX for information on an IN not completed in a timely manner. |
| IX | “Expired Incomplete.” If an course receiving a mark of “IN” is not completed within 1 year of the “IN” being awarded, the mark changes to “IX.”  | A mark of IX earns a student 0 grade points, and affects the GPA similarly to a grade of F.   |

We have learned two lessons about Thematic Option students and their grades: (1) most students who enter the Thematic Option Program are capable of fine work; (2) most students who enter Thematic Option underestimate our standards.

Students learn early and dramatically that A-level work in college is not the same as A-level work in high school. It is not unusual in Thematic Option,

especially at the beginning of the semester, for students to deserve and receive low grades on papers.

The grading standards in CORE classes are extremely high, but our expectation is that students of the quality selected for the program should be able to achieve at least a grade of B if they make a serious commitment to fulfilling course requirements. A serious commitment includes regular class attendance and participation, timely completion of reading and paper assignments, and demonstration that the student has taken written comments on papers seriously and has discussed with faculty ways to improve.

## Pass/No Pass

A maximum of 24 units of undergraduate course work taken on a Pass/No Pass basis may be used toward an undergraduate degree and a maximum of 4 of these 24 units may be applied to the general education requirements. Use of Pass/No Pass course work to fulfill major requirements must be approved in writing by the academic department. Individual academic departments may have placed further restrictions on whether a course taken on a Pass/No Pass basis can be used to fulfill specific requirements.

Students may elect to take classes using the Pass/No Pass option through the web registration system. Courses taken on a Pass/No Pass basis are not calculated into a student's GPA.

**Please note:** CORE 102, 101, 103, 104, 111, and 112 **must** be taken for a letter grade. These courses cannot be taken Pass/No Pass. However, you may take one theme course Pass/No Pass. Remember, though, most departments do not approve of coursework applied to a major or a minor being taken Pass/No Pass. If you are planning on double-counting your theme course toward a major or minor, it is best not to take Pass/No Pass.

In addition, your diversity course and your foreign language courses may be taken Pass/No Pass. Again, most departments do not approve of coursework applied to a major or a minor being taken Pass/No Pass, so if you are planning on double-counting your diversity course or foreign language toward a major or minor, it is best not to take Pass/No Pass.

## Auditing Courses

Students may choose to audit a course of interest if it is not required for their degree. Courses taken for audit will not receive credit and will not appear on the USC transcript. Students who audit a course generally participate in class activities but may not complete homework assignments, projects or exams. An agreement should be reached with the instructor ahead of time as to what level of participation is expected.

Audited courses are assessed at the regular tuition rate and will be indicated with a mark of "V" on the registration confirmation. Students can elect the Audit option during the first three weeks of the semester, but changing to Audit is not available through Web Registration. The form is available in the Registration Building (REG).

## **Registering for more than 20 Units**

The Web Registration system allows you to register for a maximum of 20 units. If you wish to register for 21 units or more, you must obtain written permission from your major department. Thematic Option discourages students from taking over 18 units a semester. Though many of our students are capable, it may be difficult to devote as much time as is necessary to each course. In addition, remember that you will be charged extra tuition if you exceed 18 units.

## Withdrawing from a Class

### During the first three weeks of classes:

Students can drop and add classes during this time period without any effect on their transcripts. Anyone considering dropping a course or changing their classes for the semester should speak with an academic advisor before doing so to discuss any potential consequences.

Classes can be dropped either online using Web Registration or in-person by going to the Registrar's Office (REG) and filling out a blue drop/add form. Students attempting to drop a class using Web Registration should double-check their schedule to make sure they have properly dropped the course and verify any changes with an advisor.

During this time period, some departments (i.e. Mathematics), require additional Departmental Clearances (D-Clearances) to register for their courses. Classes requiring D-Clearances are indicated by the letter 'D' following the five digit class number. Please consult the Schedule of Classes to see if extra clearances are needed when changing classes.

### After the third week of classes (and before the end of the 12th week of classes):

During this period, students can drop a course, and that class will appear on the transcript with a mark of "W" (for withdrawn). A mark of "W" does not affect a student's gpa. Classes cannot be added during this period and courses cannot be dropped after the 12th week deadline.

First, students considering dropping a course by the 12th week deadline need to speak with an academic advisor to discuss the consequences of that action. Students should ask themselves, "Have I spoken to my professor and TA?" "Is this a prerequisite course for other major requirements?" "Can I make up this course in the summer?"

Second, determine if your financial aid eligibility will be affected. Remember, you are required to complete at least 12 units, on average, every semester and maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP). Generally, if you fall below twelve units after the third week of class, your financial aid for that semester is NOT altered; however, you are still held to SAP guidelines, outlined in detail in the University Catalogue.

Classes can be dropped either online using Web Registration or by going in-person to the Registrar's Office (REG) and filling out a blue drop/add form. Students attempting to drop a class using Web Registration should double-check their schedule to make sure they have properly dropped the course and

should verify their schedule change with an advisor. If you are dropping all course work for the semester, you must do so in person at the Registration Building and complete a Leave of Absence form with your major department.

#### Unofficial Withdrawals:

If a student stops attending a course after the third week of classes and before the end of the 12th week without officially dropping the class, the student may be awarded a mark of UW (unofficial withdrawal) by the instructor, which is calculated into the GPA like a grade of F. Students are responsible for all of their registered courses and are expected to either complete all courses accordingly or to withdraw from them by the 12th week deadline.

#### After the 12th Week of Classes:

See the following section on incompletes.

## **Incompletes**

An incomplete (IN) is awarded on the basis of an agreement between the instructor and the student. Incompletes can be awarded only as a result of a documented illness or emergency occurring after the 12th week of classes.

An IN can be removed only by completing the portion of work not finished as a result of the documented illness or emergency. The Incomplete (IN) Completion form, which is completed by the instructor, details the work that must be done to remove the IN.

### Time Limit for the Removal of an Incomplete

Students are given one calendar year in which to complete an IN. It is not possible to remove an IN by re-registering for the course, even within the designated time.

If the IN is not removed within the designated time, the course is considered “lapsed,” and the grade is changed to an “IX.” An “IX” will be calculated into the grade point average as 0 points. Courses offered on a Credit/No Credit basis or taken on a Pass/No Pass basis for which a mark of Incomplete is assigned will be lapsed with a mark of NC or NP and will not be calculated into the grade point average.

### Extension of Time for Removal of an Incomplete

Removing the IN within the one-year period should be the student’s highest priority. A student may petition the Committee on Academic Policies and Procedures (CAPP) for an extension of time for the removal of an IN; however, extensions beyond the specified time limit are rarely approved if the student has enrolled in subsequent semesters.

In all cases, a petition for an extension of time for removal of an IN must have departmental approval and include a statement from the instructor explaining what is needed to complete the course and why the student should be given further time for completion.

## Leave of Absence

It is possible for students to take a Leave of Absence (LOA) from the University for a specified period of time. Students might choose to take an LOA for a variety of reasons including academic difficulties, financial problems, family emergencies, employment opportunities or simply wanting some time off from academics.

If you plan to take a leave of absence from USC, please take the following steps prior to leaving:

1. Access the Undergraduate Handbook for Leave of Absence at [www.usc.edu/dept/ARR/loa.html](http://www.usc.edu/dept/ARR/loa.html)
2. Print copies of the Leave of Absence Form and the Guidelines for Withdrawal Checklist located at the end of the Handbook.
3. Contact an advisor in your major department (Thematic Option if you are undeclared) to discuss your reasons for leaving USC and complete the Leave of Absence Form.
4. If you will be gone for more than one semester and would like to take classes while you are gone, you may **only** transfer in courses that are taken during the summer term. Only under extreme, extenuating circumstances may you have fall or spring courses **pre-approved** for transfer credit. Please discuss this option with your major advisor.
5. Follow all procedures for transferring course work.
6. Contact the Financial Aid Office and discuss your current aid package and future eligibility. Students should also discuss repayment policies on any of their loans.
7. Be aware of future Financial Aid deadlines
8. Finally, make sure you review and complete all relevant items on the Withdrawal Checklist found online:  
[www.usc.edu/dept/ARR/degreeprogress/undergradfaq.html](http://www.usc.edu/dept/ARR/degreeprogress/undergradfaq.html)

## Freshman Forgiveness

Students who enter as first-time freshmen (not enrolled at another college for a fall or spring semester prior to enrolling at USC) may repeat a maximum of three courses taken during the first two semesters of enrollment at USC in which grades of D+ or below (including UW and IX) were received. These courses must be retaken at USC.

Only the subsequent grade, even if lower, will be calculated in the grade point average, but **both courses and the grades received will appear on the transcript.** The same course may only be repeated once for the benefit of substitution of grade. Students must repeat a course **before** taking any other courses for which it is a prerequisite.

Students who have been assigned a grade as a result of a Student Conduct sanction may not repeat the course under the Freshman Forgiveness policy.

**Please note:** Because CORE 102 and CORE 111 are only open to first year freshmen, these courses are not available for repeating through Freshman Forgiveness.

### Repeating Other Courses at USC

See below for the available options which depend on the grade earned in the course. Keep in mind that students must repeat a course **before** taking any other courses for which it is a prerequisite.

#### **Courses with a grade of D+ or below (but which do not fall under the Freshman Forgiveness policy):**

The course can be retaken and both grades will be calculated in the grade point average.

The unit credit can only be earned once.

#### **Courses with a grade of C+, C, or C-:**

The course can be retaken, but a petition must be submitted to the Committee on Academic Policies and Procedures (CAPP) for permission to get the subsequent grade calculated in the GPA.

This petition must be approved prior to re-registering in the course.

These petitions are rarely approved.

#### **Courses with a grade of B- or better:**

No student may repeat a course in which a grade of B- or better was received.

## Grade Disputes

All grading includes both objective and subjective judgments. If you feel that you have been assigned a grade unfairly, that your instructor was mistaken or in other ways unjust, this is the procedure to follow. Remember that class attendance and participation are important components of your final grade.

1. Arrange a conference with the instructor who assigned the grade. Bring all your written work with you. Explain your reasons for believing you have earned a higher grade. Even instructors make errors; so don't assume that your instructor has a grudge against you. If you can't produce evidence (such as good papers) to support your claim, you have no basis for an appeal. Instructors will not be moved by attempts to win sympathy (such as needing an A to get into medical school). On the other hand, a legitimate argument will be listened to.

2. If you and your instructor are unable to reach an agreement and you still believe that you've received an incorrect grade, put your grievance in writing. Submit the grievance and your supporting work to the Director of Thematic Option, Dr. Von Helmolt. Include anything pertinent about your attendance and your participation in class discussions and your relationship with your instructor. Don't neglect to mention any factors that may work against you; describe your defense, if you have one. The instructor will be consulted for his or her opinion and if you have been dishonest, it will hurt your case. When your case has been examined, you will be asked to an appointment with Dr. Von Helmolt.

3. If your request to have your grade reconsidered is again denied, and you still aren't satisfied, you have one last resort. You may follow the grade appeal process for the College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences listed in SCampus: Student Guidebook under "Disputed Academic Evaluation Procedures." The grade appeal process includes a written appeal which must be filed by the end of the following semester (excluding the summer session) after you received the disputed grade.

## Scholarship Information

For the most up-to-date information please contact the Academic Recognition office or go to [www.usc.edu/student-affairs/LSS/arp/](http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/LSS/arp/).

The following criteria must be met in order for the USC Competitive Scholarship to be renewed each year:

- You must maintain a cumulative USC grade point average of at least 3.0. If your cumulative grade point average drops below 3.0, you will be placed on scholarship probation for a maximum of two semesters. During that period you must bring your cumulative USC GPA to 3.0 or you will lose your scholarship. Grades earned at other colleges and universities will not be included in the calculation of the USC GPA. You are only allowed one probationary period for GPA or unit requirements.
- You must make satisfactory academic progress toward your undergraduate degree during the academic year (not including summer). If you complete fewer than 32 units in one academic year, your academic record will be reviewed to determine if you are making sufficient progress toward your degree to graduate within 8 semesters (10 semesters for students in the 5-year Bachelor of Architecture program). Your course of study, Advanced Placement units, and work at other colleges will be taken into consideration. If you are not making progress, you will be placed on scholarship probation for a maximum of 2 semesters, during which you must complete at least 16 units per semester, or you will lose your scholarship. You are only allowed one probationary period for GPA or unit requirements.
- You must uphold USC's conduct and academic integrity standards. If you are found responsible, through the Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards Office, for a serious academic or non-academic conduct violation, resulting in your suspension or expulsion from the University, your competitive scholarship award will be revoked.

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **Can my scholarship be extended beyond 8 semesters?**

No, all scholarships are awarded for a maximum of 8 semesters, (10 semesters for Architecture students), contingent upon the satisfactory completion of renewal requirements. There is an opportunity to apply for additional funding for use during the 8 semesters of scholarship eligibility. Please refer to the Exceptional Funding page for detailed information.

#### **How do I request Exceptional Funding?**

Please visit the Exceptional Funding website for detailed information about

the policy and process. Exceptional Funding is available only to Trustee & Presidential scholars who entered the institution as freshmen. See below for more information.

**I am a Presidential Scholar, can I upgrade my scholarship to a Trustee?**

No, Trustee and Presidential Scholarships are granted by the Office of Admission specifically to freshmen. Selection criteria is based on academic excellence, leadership, and service during a student's tenure at their high school or previous college.

**Does the Academic Recognition office provide other scholarships?**

No, the Academic Recognition Programs office does not actively support other campus or local scholarships. If you are interested in international fellowships, please visit the ARP fellowships website.

ARP also recommend talking to advisors in your major/minor department and visiting the Financial Aid website for scholarship resources.

**Important policy:**

\*Trustee Scholars are not eligible to receive any other scholarships from a USC source.

\*Presidential Scholars may retain up to \$2,500 of scholarship(s) from other USC sources.

\*Learn more about combining scholarships and need-based aid by reviewing the full scholarship policy.

**What kind of advisement does Academic Recognition Programs provide?**

ARP advises students on issues directly related to their scholarship, including; GPA & unit requirements, scholarship probation, exceptional funding, leaves of absence, and general policy issues.

**How can I meet with an advisor in the ARP office?**

Schedule an appointment with the staff in Academic Recognition Programs by calling (213) 740-9116. You can also schedule an appointment by emailing your availability M - F between 9-5 to arpstaff@usc.edu.

**Will auditing a course effect my scholarship?**

Yes, it can. Grades or units are not earned in courses which are audited. The Financial Aid Office will not factor the unearned course units into the 32 units required per academic year to renew your scholarship. You will be placed on scholarship probation if you earn under the 32 unit requirement, or lose your scholarship if you are currently on scholarship probation. An academic year is comprised of the fall and spring semesters. Units earned during the summer term are not counted toward the 32 unit requirement!

Additionally, to receive your scholarship funds each semester, you must be enrolled in a full-time schedule (12 or more units for which you will earn academic credit). If your audited course is part of those 12 units, you will receive a bill for the semester's tuition.

### **My scholarship hasn't yet been applied and the bill is due immediately. What is going on?**

1. Are you currently enrolled in at least 12 units? The scholarship only credits your bill at 12 or more units.
2. If you are enrolled in 12 or more units, please contact the ARP office immediately: (213) 740-9116

### **Can I take a leave of absence?**

Yes, but you must first clear it with your academic advisor. Once your academic advisor has approved your request, please bring a copy of the completed form to the Academic Recognition Program's Office. The ARP office will then notify the Financial Aid Office of your intention in order to protect your remaining scholarship eligibility.

When you are ready to return, notify both the Academic Recognition Programs and Financial Aid offices in writing one semester in advance.

**Keep in mind:** If you enroll at another institution during your leave of absence, you will lose one semester of scholarship eligibility for every 16 units (or full-time equivalent) earned.

### **Can I take classes for Pass/No Pass?**

Yes, but you should consult with your academic advisor before enrolling in any course on a Pass/No Pass basis. A "Pass" grade will not alter your gpa and the units will count toward the 32 units required per academic (fall/spring) year. However, keep in mind that you will not receive unit credit for a course with a grade of "No Pass."

### **Do Trustee & Presidential Scholars receive priority registration?**

There is no priority registration for Trustee or Presidential Scholars. Registration dates are assigned based on the number of units you have earned. This is addressed briefly on the Registrar's website (see "Most Commonly Asked Questions" section, question #2): [www.usc.edu/dept/ARR/registration](http://www.usc.edu/dept/ARR/registration)

### **I am a graduating senior, can I take a reduced course load in my final semester at USC?**

Yes, if you are in good academic standing (not under scholarship probation), there are two possibilities:

1. Enrollment in 12-15 units: Formal approval not required, however you must inform the ARP staff of your intention.

2. Enrollment in under 12 units (less than full-time): Advanced approval is required from the ARP office. Please contact the ARP staff for approval and additional information.

### **Does tuition insurance protect my scholarship?**

We recommend you carefully consider this elective insurance. It may help protect your scholarship for future terms in case of serious illness or accident. Please contact the Financial Aid office for more information regarding this insurance.

### Exceptional Funding

See the website ([www.usc.edu/student-affairs/arp/funding.htm](http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/arp/funding.htm)) for deadlines (which come up very fast) and application forms.

Your scholarship covers a set percentage of flat-rate tuition (up to 18 units) for the Fall and Spring semesters. The purpose of Exceptional Funding is to support academic pursuits in addition to this academic course load within the eight semesters (ten for Architecture) of scholarship eligibility. Exceptional Funding cannot be used to compensate for past semesters of underenrollment. It is available to Trustee & Presidential Scholars who entered the university as Freshmen.

Examples of appropriate reasons to request exceptional funding include, but not limited to:

- \* Additional courses are required to complete a second major or minor that cause enrollment in more than 18 units a semester
- \* Additional major courses are required that cause enrollment in more than 18 units a semester
- \* Summer study abroad where USC tuition is charged and USC credit is earned
- \* Summer classes at USC

Trustee Scholars: Maximum amount of 8 units may be funded

Presidential Scholars: Maximum amount of 8 half-tuition units may be funded

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **Can I use the Exceptional Funding units to extend my scholarship beyond 8 semesters?**

No. Exceptional Funding can only be used within the 8 semesters (10 for Architecture) of scholarship eligibility.

#### **Do I need to pay for the extra units myself to be later reimbursed by Financial**

**Aid?**

No. If you have been approved for extra funding, and you are registered for all of your classes, Financial Aid will apply the extra funding toward your tuition before the tuition settlement deadline (published in the Schedule of Classes).

**You approved me for “x” units of extra funding, and it still hasn’t appeared on my bill.**

The additional scholarship will be credited by the tuition settlement deadline published in the Schedule of Classes, if you are already registered for the extra units. If the scholarship has not been credited by the tuition deadline, please contact the ARP staff.

**As a Presidential Scholar, can I combine the half-tuition units to pay for 1 full unit?**

Half-units cannot be combined into one unit. A Presidential Scholarship is a 50% tuition scholarship, which also applies to Exceptional Funding. At no time will Exceptional Funding pay for 100% of extra tuition costs for Presidential Scholars.





