

**COMM 306**  
**The Communication Revolution, Entertainment & The Arts**  
**Spring 2010**

**PROFESSOR JONATHAN TAPLIN**

Class Hours: Mon/Wed. 3:30-4:50  
 Office Hours: Mon 1:00-3:00 by appt.  
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**TEACHING ASSISTANTS**

**Deborah E. R. Hanan**

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

The revolution in communication technology brought about by the rise of digital networks is only 25 years old, but it has already changed every facet of the entertainment business. This course will attempt to take a fresh look at the rise of the Age of Entertainment from 1980 to the present. It focuses on the global strategies of companies across a variety of industry sectors: broadcasting, film, telecommunications, the Internet, video games, and the music industry. Employing film, music and art, this course will examine how the communications revolution is affecting the interaction of entertainment and culture. The focus will be on the American entertainment and communications industries. However, given the historical and continuing cross-fertilization of cultures in this country, and accelerating trends toward globalization, conglomeration, convergence, and synergy, international aspects will be an important part of the course. We will use both written texts and various films viewed in class as reference points. In addition, using the new book *The Power of Pull*, students will be given basic training in the entrepreneurial culture of the digital age.

**CAREER RELEVANCE**

As the revolution in communication technologies creates truly global markets, the ability to understand both the domestic and international dimension of the commercial decisions with which organizations are confronted has become a critical managerial skill. The success of the American knowledge economy rests on the confluence of entertainment, technology and artistic merit. An understanding of how these three forces interact is a prerequisite to a deep knowledge of the contemporary culture. The course should be of relevance to both those interested in a cultural critique of modern entertainment as well as those interested in where the entertainment business of the future is going.

**REQUIRED TEXTS/READINGS:**

Hagel, Brown & Davison, *The Power of Pull*, Basic Books, 2010

All other course reading materials are posted on Blackboard (BB) and course reserves, which can be accessed through USC Libraries' Electronic Reserves System (ARES).

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

There are four requirements for the course:

1. **Class participation:** 10% of each student's grade is based on their participation during class discussion and on the online discussion boards.
2. **Attendance:** Students are expected to attend (in full) every lecture and screening, and will be allowed up to three unexcused absences without receiving a penalty. However, after their third unexcused absence, students will lose 5 percentage points for their 4<sup>th</sup> unexcused absence (e.g. 95% becomes 90%) and an additional 5 percentage points for their 5<sup>th</sup> unexcused absence (e.g. 95% becomes 85%). Students with six or more unexcused absences will automatically receive a final grade of "Incomplete". Excused absences are those for which a student has provided a signed medical excuse from a health service provider, an athletic supervisor, or one that your professor has authorized.
3. **Midterm Exam.** The midterm exam will be given on Wednesday September 29. It will be a combination of multiple choice questions and an optional written question.
4. **Take-home Final** –The final written exam will be handed out on Monday, November 22 and will be due **Wednesday, December 8 at 3:30 PM.** No late or e-mailed finals will be accepted.

**EVALUATION:**

Midterm Exam: 45%

Final Exam: 45%

Class Participation: 10%

**A BRIEF ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS:**

Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from the DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DPS is open Monday-Friday, 8:30-5:00. The office is in Student Union 301 and their phone number is (213) 740-0776.

The School of Communication is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and ethical support. It endorses and acts on the SCampus policies and procedures detailed in the section titled "University Sanction Guidelines." These policies, procedures, and guidelines will be assiduously upheld. They protect your rights, as well as those of the faculty. It is particularly important that you are aware of and avoid plagiarism, cheating on exams, fabricating data for a project, submitting a paper to more than one professor, or submitting a paper authored by anyone but yourself. Violations of this policy will result in a failing grade in the course and be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. If you have doubts about any of these policies, you must confer with the professor.

**Please note:**

Your professor reserves the right to modify this syllabus and the following schedule if it becomes necessary.

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## SCHEDULE AND AGENDA

### WEEK 1

**AUG.23 – INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE**

**AUG.25 – WELCOME TO THE INTERREGNUM**

**Reading:**

Taplin, *The Artistic Interregnum*

### WEEK 2

**AUG. 30-THE AMERICAN VANGUARD**

**SEPT. 1 - THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION**

**READINGS**

Hagel, Brown & Davison, *The Power of Pull*, Introduction

**Screening:** *The Century of The Self*

### WEEK 3

**SEPT. 6 –LABOR DAY- NO CLASS**

**SEPT. 8- READING DISCUSSION**

**Readings:**

Hagel, Brown & Davison, *The Power of Pull*, Chapter 1

### WEEK 4

**SEPT. 13 – THE U.S. MOVIE BUSINESS**

**SEPT. 15**

**Readings:**

Hagel, Brown & Davison, *The Power of Pull*, Chapter 2

**Screening:** *Easy Riders & Raging Bulls*

### WEEK 5

**SEPT. 20 – THE INTERNATIONAL MOVIE BUSINESS**

**SEPT. 22**

**Readings:**

J. Taplin, “*Crouching Tigers*,” pp 1-21 (BB)

**Screening:** *Slumdog Millionaire*

**WEEK 6**

SEPT. 27- *Music & CONVERGENCE CULTURE*

SEPT. 29 –  
**Midterm Exam**

**WEEK 7**

OCT. 4- *THE DIGITAL MUSIC REVOLUTION*

OCT. 6

**Readings:**

Hagel, Brown & Davison, *The Power of Pull*, Chapter 3

**WEEK 8**

OCT. 11 - *BROADCASTING*

OCT. 13 -

**Readings:**

Hagel, Brown & Davison, *The Power of Pull*, Chapter 4

L. Hirschberg, “Giving Them What They Want,” *NY Times Magazine*, pp 30-42 (BB)

**Screening:** *Goodnight & Good Luck*

**WEEK 9**

OCT. 18 - *THE FUTURE OF TELEVISION*

OCT. 20

**Readings:**

Hagel, Brown & Davison, *The Power of Pull*, Chapter 5

**Screening:** *The Persuaders*

**WEEK 10**

OCT. 25 - *ENTERTAINMENT, ART & FASHION*

OCT. 27

**Readings:**

Hagel, Brown & Davison, *The Power of Pull*, Chapter 6

**Screening:** *Unzipped*

**WEEK 11****NOV. 1 - *MARKETING & ENTERTAINMENT*****NOV. 3****Readings:**Hagel, Brown & Davison, *The Power of Pull*, Chapter 7**Screening:** *The Merchants of Cool***WEEK 12****NOV. 8- *COMMUNICATION & POLITICS*****NOV. 10****Readings:**Hagel, Brown & Davison, *The Power of Pull*, Epilogue**Screening:** *The Power of Nightmares, Pt. 1***WEEK 13****NOV. 15 – *SOCIAL MEDIA*****NOV. 17****Readings:**N. Carr, *Is Google Making Us Stupid* at<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/07/is-google-making-us-stupid/6868/>**Screening-** *The Power of Nightmares, Pt. 2***WEEK 14****NOV. 22-*VIDEO GAMES*****(Final Exam Distributed)****NOV.24 –*THANKSGIVING-NO CLASS*****WEEK 15****NOV. 29 – *FINAL EXAM REVIEW*****DEC. 1 - *ART, GENIUS & PROGRESS*****DEC. 8- FINAL EXAMS DUE AT 3:30 PM**