

Breaking Into the Film Industry
University of Southern California
School of Cinematic Arts
CNTV 375- 2 Units
Fall 2014 for a 15-week course

Instructor/Professor: Krista Parkinson

Location: Classroom SCA 363 (New Cinema Building)

Time: Thursdays from 4-7pm

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Email: parkinson@contentllc.com

Office hours: Available by phone on Friday mornings from 9am-noon, email anytime.

Course description:

This 15-week course, plus a final exam is designed to help undergrads learn about the interworkings of Hollywood with the objective of finding a job. Students will be learning the social and practical skills necessary to create a resume, look for work, interview, network effectively, learn necessary resources and know the first steps in building a long term career in the entertainment industry. It will be a very practical overview of how the entertainment business works, the importance of an assistant, expectations of a first job, how a first job turns into a career and types of employment available with a film or broadcasting degree. Students will learn the terminology specific to Hollywood (rolling calls, leaving word etc....) This is **not** a class about how to sell a film, run a TV show, pitch a concept, market a film etc.... The sole purpose of this course is prepare each student to get his or her first job in Hollywood as a production assistant, agent's assistant, personal assistant etc....

Course is structured for basic Hollywood training at a talent agency, work on a set as a production assistant and various "first jobs." Emphasis is on television and film, but the course assignments and speakers can be adjusted to fit the specific interests and needs of the class. Speakers will be industry professionals ranging from those working at trade publications, agencies, showrunners, studio executives, digital companies etc... Students will gain exposure to the possibilities of jobs they might not even know existed.

Depending on class size and interest, field trips to sets, production offices and studios so students will gain familiarity will be arranged.

Guest Speakers:

At the time that this syllabus is being written, the guest speakers and their specific dates of speaking have not finalized. They will all be industry professionals. Before each class, it is incumbent upon students to look up the speakers online and know a little bit

about them professional before they come to class. Being prepared with questions of genuine interest is appreciated.

About the Instructor:

KRISTA PARKINSON began her 17 year career in Hollywood at the iconic William Morris Agency in 1997. She worked her way up the career ladder from “assistant” to “talent agent” in the then burgeoning reality TV department. She represented and worked with clients such as Ryan Seacrest, Snoop, The Judds, Brooke Burke, Bill Weir, Tony Hawk, and many producers, directors and writers in the alternative television arena. She secured and negotiated deals with most of the major television outlets such as; CBS, ABC, Fox, NBC, HBO, Bravo, E!/Style, MTV, VH-1, TV Guide Channel, GSN, Paramount Syndication, Sony Distribution, Buena Vista Television and Telepictures. With this experience, she left the representation business to work as the VP of Development for Tony Hawk’s production company, 900 Films. She also started First Step Media, a company designed to help recent college graduates get their first jobs in entertainment.

Currently, Ms. Parkinson is the President of Content Partners, LLC, a unique entertainment finance company that buys backend profit participations in Film and Television. She is responsible for developing and maintaining strong relationships with lawyers, managers, wealth managers, and others who have entertainment industry clients. In addition, she is the Executive Producer of a project at ABC Family based on some of her life’s experiences. She earned her B.A. from Brigham Young University in Broadcast Communications in 1997.

Required Reading:

To be determined by each class period
Variety.com

Course Evaluation:

Midterm Exam:	20%
Final Exam:	25%
Quizzes	10%
Assignments:	45%

Week 1-Aug 28- Basics of a the Hollywood landscape

Get to know instructor and students. Introduction to the basics of Hollywood structure: Agencies, management companies, law firms, business management firms, studios, entertainment finance companies, networks, publicity houses, executives etc... Learn who they are, what they do and how they contribute to the Hollywood community.

2nd hour/Assignment: Get to know the students in the class. Who they are and what their current interest is in Hollywood landscape.

Week 2 –Sept 4- What to read? What to see?

Class begins with a 5 question written quiz based on last week's class.

Information is currency in Hollywood. The better equipped you are with knowledge, the better you will be. Gain familiarity with trade publications such as: Hollywood Reporter, Variety, Media Week, and Entertainment Weekly etc... Gossip sites such as Perezhilton.com, thesuperficial.com, thewrap.com etc.... Books: "Desperate Networks" by Bill Carter, "Hollywood Assistant's Handbook," by Hillary Stamm and Peter Norwalk "Jump In!" by Mark Burnett, "Get On TV" by Jacqui Jordan, "The Mailroom" by David Resin etc....TV Shows- Anyone working in TV must watch a lot of TV and have seen at least one episode of every network and major cable show.

2nd hour: Guest Speaker: Mark Hoebich, President, Variety Insight & Founder, TVtracker

Assignment: Log on to Variety Insight and familiarize yourself with the functionality of it. Come prepared next week to talk about the information you can find on the site.

Week 3 –Sept 11- Mentors

Class begins with a 5 question written quiz based on last week's class.

Relationships are very important in the entertainment business. Students will learn the fundamentals of building a strong network of professional relationships starting with a mentor, how to keep connected after a job has ended, how to reach out cold to a person you would like to have a relationship with, how to deal with getting fired and other awkward situations with grace and ease.

2nd hour: Guest Speaker: TBD

Assignment: Have each person in the class find a leader in his or her field of interest. And write a letter requesting an informational interview.

Week 4 –Sept 18-Show me the Money: How money is made in Hollywood.

Class begins with a 5 question written quiz based on last week's class.

Students will learn that Hollywood is a real business. It is not just about living your dreams, but rather how to turn an idea into cash. This hour will focus on how money flows in Television and Film.

Backend profit participations are a major revenue source in the Film business. This hour will discuss who the profit participants are, how studios make money, how participants make money etc....

2nd hour: Guest Speaker: TBD

Week 5- Sept 25-Location, Location, Location (Rosh Hashanah for those who observe)

Class begins with a 5 question written quiz based on last week's class.

Since the first job will most likely be a PA or some kind of assistant job, it is important to know the geography of the town. Where is Paramount? Daily Variety? CAA?

2nd hour: Guest Speaker: TBD

Assignment: Students will go to all of the studios, networks, agencies and have them take a picture of themselves out front. Ideally, students will work together with the purpose of gaining geographic familiarity of the town and building bonds with classmates.

Week 6- Oct 2 - Learn the basics of TV and Motion Picture businesses

Class begins with a 5 question written quiz based on last week's class.

Students will learn the details about the structure of departments at Networks (News Division, Daytime, Development-Drama/Comedy/Alternative, Current, Syndication, Ad Sales, Marketing, Publicity etc...), Studios, Specific shows and films (understanding the difference between and Executive Producer in TV vs. an Executive Producer on a film)

2nd hour: TBD

Week 7- Oct 9- Types of jobs available in TV (and how much you can expect to make)

Class begins with a 5 question written quiz based on last week's class.

It doesn't matter how good you are in any area, you will most likely not get hired for that job until people know who you are. Production assistant jobs are great for getting your foot in the door. I want to walk you through a day in the life of a PA, agent's assistant, receptionist etc... You may not think these jobs will get you anywhere, but everyone starts somewhere. I'll go through expected salaries and job descriptions of the areas of interest for the class.

2nd hour: Guest speaker-Brad Wollack, EP and Comedian for "Chelsea Handler Show"

Week 8- Oct 16- MIDTERM EXAM

Midterm Exam- Multiple choice questions and essay about material covered to date.

Week 9- Oct 23- Know the power players

It's important to know who is running the show at every major studio, network, major production companies, agencies etc... Students will know the names of all the network presidents, studio heads, major production companies etc....

2nd hour: TBA

Assignment: Create a personal directory of the key power players with associated pictures depending on your area of interest (TV, Film, Music, digital)

Week 10 – Oct 30- Networking

Class begins with a 5 question written quiz based on last week's class.

What is this really and how do you do it? Explain in its simplest terms what it means and practice it. Learn about groups you can join like HRTS Junior, Step-Up Women's Network, Women in Film, etc.....but just being in the right places can really help. This is really about volunteering to go, work, and/or support ANYTHING that your boss is doing. IF she is having a holiday party, volunteer to address invitations, greet people at the door, valet or whatever.

2nd hour: TBD

Assignment: Go to a hot night spot and meet someone new. Hand in a one page write up of how you approached that person and what you talked about due the next week of class.

Week 11- Nov 6- On the Set

Class begins with a 5 question written quiz based on last week's class.

Instructor will arrange for a set visit. Will depend on what is taping at the time. Will have the EP or another producer talk to the class and give a tour of the facility. Learn the etiquette of a set visit. Who is allowed, what kind of credentials are needed, how do you get your boss to the right place etc.... A visit of a reality tv show, news program, radio show, TV show or movie set. How to get it if you are not on the list etc....

Week 12- Nov 13- Finding Job opportunities and Resume writing

Class begins with a 5 question written quiz based on last week's class.

Discuss where to look for employment and how to go about approaching the job. Discuss the dos and don'ts of resume writing. After reviewing thousands of resumes over the past decade, I know what gets attention on a resume (both positive and negative.) We'll go over templates, cover letters and how to follow up appropriately.

2nd hour Guest Speaker: TBD

Week 13-Nov 20- Interviewing and getting the job

Class begins with a 5 question written quiz based on last week's class.

Discuss the "dos" and "don'ts" and take the fear out of the in-person interview process. We'll go over questions that are really asked and how to dress for each interview. How to relax and just be your best self for an interview is very important and this class will give you the tools to handle stressful interviews.

2nd hour Guest Speaker: TBD

Week 14- Nov 27- Thanksgiving Holiday- NO CLASS

Week 15- Dec 4 – Making the most of your first Hollywood job to get ahead.

This class we will go over the specific job of an assistant, terms like leaving word, basic office etiquette, what do wear, how to address people etc...Most importantly, how to make the most of this apprentice position in order to get promoted.

2nd hour guest speaker- TBD

Week 16- Dec. 11- FINAL EXAM- 4:30pm-6:30pm

Everyone must have a professional resume ready to submit, cover letter and be prepared to interview. The Final exam will consist of each student finding 3 legitimate jobs and I will have a one on one interview with each student so we can practice how to get a job. It only gets easier the more times you do it. Everyone will have to apply for a real job and this final exam will be a dry run through for just that! It will be a one on one, mock interview with instructor.

USC Policy:

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. Website and contact information for DSP:

http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html, (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

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, (www.usc.edu/scampus or <http://scampus.usc.edu>) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

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/>. Information on intellectual property at USC is available at: <http://usc.edu/academe/acsen/issues/ipr/index.html>.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies. Please activate your course in Blackboard with access to the course syllabus. Whether or not you use Blackboard regularly, these preparations will be crucial in an emergency. USC's Blackboard learning management system and support information is available at blackboard.usc.edu.

Disruptive Student Behavior

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.