

USC School of Cinematic Arts

John C. Hench Division of Animation & Digital Arts

CTAN 505 The Business of Animation

Units: 2.0

Fall 2016

Time: Mondays, 4:00-6:50 PM

Location: SCB 205

Instructor: Richard Goldsmith

Office Hours: Appointments are available upon request.

Contact Info: rgoldsmi@usc.edu

Student Assistant: Peter Zhou zhaoyuzh@usc.edu

Course Description

Summary:

An overview of the production, media and entertainment industries and fundamental business skills, with an emphasis on animation and the animation professional.

Mode of Instruction: Lecture and Guest Speakers

About the Course:

Whether you are on the academic, creative or business side of animation, having an understanding of the production, entertainment and media industries will enhance your career. This course provides a comprehensive look at the global media and entertainment businesses, from theatrical films to television to video-on-demand, and especially how they relate to animation content. It also explores how to finance, distribute and market animation to multiple platforms and ancillary businesses, including related strategies and plans. In addition, we will explore the role of the animation professional in these industries and how to seek employment. Lectures will be enhanced by regular guest speakers from top animation production and media companies.

The Final Project is a creative bible and business plan developed by each student or a team of two students for an animated production and its commercial exploitation. It is a goal that the Final Project can be used by student(s) to pitch their ideas for commercial exploitation, meaning that the Final Project, likely a feature film or television project, should be in a professional, working format for student(s) to be able to pitch their project outside of the classroom.

Learning Objectives

The goal of this course is to empower students with a working understanding of animation-related industries and best business practices for whatever career path they choose.

This course compliments the other coursework of graduate students by providing a knowledge about careers, business and economics as they relate to animated productions. Combined with other theoretical and creative courses, this course is designed to produce well-rounded, well-informed professionals.

Other Course Notes

Students are encouraged to have dialogue in the classroom with the teacher, Guest Speakers and fellow students.

Visuals will be utilized in the classroom to enhance the Lecture materials.

The order of topics by week is subject to change based on the availability of Guest Speakers.

Students are expected to attend all classes. In the event that a student has a conflict or a problem that will cause them to miss a class, be late or have early dismissal, please inform the teacher in advance to provide notice. Repeat absences will effect the student's Class Participation grade.

Reading and Assignments

Each class will include a group discussion of current industry-related news (both major entertainment and animation-related) from the week's online reading assignment. A list of free, online publications will be given to students on the first day of class. It is helpful for animation professionals to be well informed about current industry developments and trends.

Weekly written Assignments will be a combination of students' thoughts and experiences to be discussed in the class as a group in relation to a topic from the Lecture and elements that will contribute to the Final Project. Assignments may be delivered to the teacher via email or on paper.

There will be a short break between the Lecture and the Guest Speaker.

Grades

Students will be graded, in part, by class participation, but mainly on completion of Weekly Assignments and the Final Project. Students will not be graded on their creative ability or drawing skills, but rather on their level of performance that demonstrates their knowledge of the curriculum to the best of their ability.

Grading Percentages and Criteria

Class Participation 15%
Assignments 45%
Final Project 40%

Assignments and the Final Project will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- a. Accuracy of assignment guidelines
- b. Demonstration of principles covered in class
- c. Communication of ideas

Teacher Accessibility

Richard Goldsmith does not have an office at USC. If you have a question, need advice or want to schedule a meeting, please send an e-mail to rgoldsmi@usc.edu.

Use of Technology and Electronic Media in Class

You may use your laptops and mobile devices for notes, but not for emailing, texting, web surfing, social media, gaming or otherwise. Please keep phones on mute. It is urgent that students are particularly respectful of the time devoted to the class by its Guest Speakers. Not abiding by these requests will effect a student's Class Participation portion of the final grade.

Supplies

You will be expected to take notes in lectures electronically or with paper. Throughout the course you will need to store your assignments and elements of the Final Project electronically and/or as a hard copy.

Assignments, such as presentations and plans, can be enhanced with programs like Microsoft Excel, Word and PowerPoint, however, they are not required. The Final Project needs to be particularly well presented and enhanced with graphics and artwork, if possible.

Additional Policies

It is expected that all students will regularly attend the scheduled classes and complete the Reading and Assignments on time. Please contact the teacher in advance if you have any issue or problem that would prevent you from meeting these requirements (rgoldsmi@usc.edu).

Missed classes and late or incomplete assignments will negatively effect grades if not approved by the teacher in advance or if the teacher and student do not agree to an alternate plan in advance.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Summary

WEEK 1

January 9

The Business of Animation: An Overview – We begin by getting to know the students (and their professional goals) as well as the teacher. Also a broad view of the semester's lectures related to producing, distributing and marketing commercial animation. Finally, a discussion about how the coursework can be applied to students' future endeavors.

Read: Online publications (list to be provided).

Assignment: Write a list of your key accomplishments, the place and date relating to your professional experience, volunteering and education and also a separate list of your creative credits, including the name, media and date.

WEEK 2

January 16

University Holiday

No Class

WEEK 3

January 23

The Animation Professional – The various companies and career paths for animation professionals. A look at full-service studios as well as individual roles from employee to entrepreneur. Finally, strategies for seeking employment, including how to write a resume (CV) and credits.

Read: Online publications (list to be provided).

Assignment: Write a Resume, Credits and References.

WEEK 4

January 30

Television – Understanding the television market: syndication, terrestrial (broadcast), cable and satellite, major global and regional players, and an insider's view of company operations.

Read: Online publications (list to be provided).

Assignment: Write a short paragraph that describes the project that you would like to do for your Final Project. This should be a brief introduction to your characters, their story and in what media you intend to produce the project. You can either do the Final Project alone or with a partner.

WEEK 5

February 6

How to Sell Your Project – The steps to sell a TV series and movie, including sales strategies, business etiquette and tips as well as pitch materials and pitching. Traditional versus self-distribution, understanding and navigating options to distribute content via studios, networks, independent distributors and self-distribution.

Read: Online publications (list to be provided).

Assignment: Provide one visual example of a consumer product or promotion for an animated TV series or feature film that you like and answer the following questions: 1. Describe it? 2. Why did you choose this and why do you think that it was well executed? 3. Would you do anything different to improve it?

WEEK 6**February 13****Consumer Products** - The world of licensing and merchandising from t-shirts to toys to promotions based on characters and other intellectual property derived from animated content.**Read:** Online publications (list to be provided).**Assignment:** (A) Draft an outline of the key characters, settings, props/vehicles and storylines for your project. (B) Write 4 lists: 1. what devices you use to view video content 2. platforms you use to view video 3. what your favorite content is and 4. what platform would you most like to work or produce for?**WEEK 7****February 20****University Holiday****No Class****WEEK 8****February 27****Business & Legal** - Negotiating tactics, representation from agents and attorneys and strategies to manage the sales process. How to own and protect what you create via legal agreements, trademarks, copyrights and other means.**Read:** Online publications (list to be provided).**Assignment:** Write an outline of the production plan for your project: media, studio(s)/co-production partners, potential talent, etc.**WEEK 9****March 6****Theatrical Films** – A look at the film industry from independents to studios, festivals, movie theaters and ancillary distribution to other platforms.**Read:** Online publications (list to be provided).**Assignment:** Bring one example of a consumer product that you like or dislike from an animated movie or television series and write a short paragraph why.**WEEK 10****March 13****Spring Recess****No Class****WEEK 11****March 20****Economics & Finance** - How to finance productions and to profit from distributing animated content. The role of pre-sales, coproductions and government subsidies to finance productions. A look at the various types of distribution revenues including royalties, residuals and equity.**Read:** Online publications (list to be provided).**Assignment:** What are the unique graphics, vehicles, props, gadgets, weapons or other elements that will make your project special? In addition to these, as well as the characters and settings of your project, which ones can translate to consumer products and what categories?**WEEK 12****March 27****Content Everywhere** – Distributing content everywhere including airlines, hotels, educational institutions, military bases, the corporate market, clip licensing and owning and exploiting music.**Read:** Online publications (list to be provided).**Assignment:** Develop an outline for a financing plan of your project to include sources of funding and whether or not it will be a co-production.

WEEK 13**April 3**

Video-on-Demand– We focus on platforms that charge to view or own content. From retail DVD to subscription video-on-demand platforms like Netflix, Amazon, YouTube and Hulu, electronic sell-through like iTunes and pay-per-view via cable and satellite providers.

Read: Online publications (list to be provided).

Assignment: Write a detailed outline of your distribution plan for your project, including a schedule of first windows, second windows and ancillary markets such as consumer products and music.

WEEK 14**April 10**

Brands & Marketing – What are the attributes of a successful brand? How to utilize festivals, sales markets (conventions), public relations, advertising and social media to promote content to both the consumer and to the trade.

Read: Online publications (list to be provided).

Assignment: Write a brief marketing plan for your project for the trade and the consumer, including a timeline of what will be done and what the goal for each is.

WEEK 15**April 17**

Distribution Finance and You! - The basics of production budgets including what to include, creating financial projections and drafting business plans.

Read: Online publications (list to be provided).

Assignment: Organize all of the work that you have done towards completing your Final Project.

WEEK 16**April 24**

The Final Project – As a Final Project, students will create their own creative bible and business plan for an animated production, its financing and distribution. This session will focus on what is expected of students, will provide examples of professional works and provide students an opportunity for questions they may have about how to accomplish this task. For the last part of the class, each student or group of students will have one-on-one time with the instructor to review their plans and to ask any questions.

Read: None.

Assignment: Organize all of the work that you have done towards completing your Final Project.

WEEK 17**May 1****Study Days****No Class****WEEK 18****May 8****4:00 PM to 6:50 PM**

Final Project Presentation - Each student shall submit a hard/written copy of the Final Project and give a live pitch to the instructor (of no more than 5-15 minutes in length depending on the number of groups presenting) utilizing multi-media presentation materials and/or a hard copy. Room assignment may change for this date.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards*<https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct,<http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs*http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

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.

PLEASE NOTE:

**FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES
IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX**