

USC SCA CTPR 538  
Section: 18650 (2 Units)

INTERMEDIATE PRODUCING

SPRING 2018

Adjunct Professor: Sev Ohanian  
Email: sohanian@usc.edu  
Cell: 818-429-2482

Student Assistant: Dez Gallegos  
Email: dezgalle@usc.edu  
Cell: 707-338-7102

Class is Mondays @ 7-10pm  
Room SCA 255  
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Office Hours on Mondays @ 6-7pm  
Room SCA 410

### COURSE DESCRIPTION and OUTLINE

#### OVERVIEW:

Intermediate Producing (CTPR 538 – 18650) is an in-depth examination of the role of the producer in motion picture, television and new media production. The course will examine the creative producing process behind the initiation, pitching and selling of a concept, funding the production, and the practical processes of casting, staffing, scheduling, budgeting, overseeing the shoot, post production and marketing. What does it mean to be a producer? What does it take to be a *good* producer?

The emphasis will be on current real world practices, focusing on developing skill sets that are essential for successful producers. And most importantly: how to build a career out of film school that can help you land jobs like that in the first place.

#### COURSE GOALS:

- Develop an understanding of the fundamental responsibilities of the producer from the inception of the project through release.
- Examine the Producer's role in the creative process and in building the many and varied relationships with the community of collaborators necessary for success: writers, directors, senior creative craftsmen, technical crew, marketing professionals, and the studio executives and independent financiers that back the project.
- Develop basic knowledge and skills in the areas of pitching, concept presentation, leadership techniques, mediation and negotiating skills, line producing and creative oversight. We will cover feature filmmaking, but also dive into tv, digital series, and beyond.
- Establish standards of quality and ethical conduct to guide career choices.

### PROJECTS and ASSIGNMENTS:

- Each week one student will present a 15-minute in-depth report on interesting and relevant news from a variety of entertainment news sources.
- In groups, students will prepare a pitch for a short film.
- Each student (in pairs) will schedule and budget an indie feature film.
- Additional homework on breakdowns, readings, and viewings will be assigned.
- A top secret "Question" project.
- Final Project: Each student will prepare a final project for presentation. The project will be a complete development of an independent feature film – to be pitched to the class at the end of the term.

### COURSE TOPICS TO BE COVERED – a short list:

- Producing skills: leadership, interpersonal relationships, prioritization
- A producer's responsibilities from concept through preproduction, production, postproduction
  - Scheduling – Breakdowns, Overview principles, Day out of days
- Budgeting – Critical Assumptions, Globals, Budget as a producing guide
- Concept identification and presentation – pitch tips, loglines, protecting the idea
- Optioning material – term period, cost, extensions, exclusions, vs. attachment agreements
- Final Project Development – From beginning to the end: from pitch to marketing

### RESEARCH AND READING MATERIALS:

- It is fully expected and required that each student maintain an ongoing effort to stay current with industry news. These sources are constantly changing and the class as a whole will develop an up to date list of resources.
- Each student must have their own copy of Movie Magic (or EP) scheduling programs. These were provided to the students during their first year at SCA. Movie Magic Budgeting will be made available for a discount with a USC coupon.

### GUEST SPEAKERS:

- Throughout the course we will have guest speakers visit the class to share their knowledge and experiences. Each of them is a professional producer, writer, director, executive, designer, or creative technician - in other words a senior creative or executive member of a production team. The exact speaker schedule will be announced during class, subject to change based on the guests' own production schedules.
- The emphasis with guest speakers in this class will be to go beyond "fluff" conversations, and to go deeper with each speaker. The goal is to fully understand how they have succeeded and what actionable, tangible lessons students can apply to their own careers..

*Syllabus and schedule may change during the course.*

### GRADES:

CTPR 538 is graded on a letter grade basis. Grades will be based on both subjective and objective judgments. Intelligence, participation, clarity, generosity and effort are all looked-for traits indicative of a growing mastery of the producer's role. Success is predicated on an energetic and ongoing interaction between all members of the class. Tardiness and unexcused absences will have a negative impact on your grade. If you must miss class, contact your SA as soon as possible and always before class begins.

#### *Grade weighting:*

Class Presentations: 15%

Class Participation: 15%

Schedule & Budget: 20%

Assignments: 20%

Final Project: 30%

### 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 the TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301, and is open 8:30am-5:00pm Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

### CLASS SCHEDULE:

All classes will be on Monday evenings, from 7pm to 10pm.

1/08: Class #1

1/15: \*NO CLASS\* = MLK Day

1/22: \*NO CLASS\* = Sev @ Sundance

1/29: Class #2

2/05: Class #3

2/12: Class #4

2/19: \*NO CLASS\* = President's Day

2/26: Class #5

3/05: Class #6

3/12: \*NO CLASS\* = Spring Recess

3/19: Class #7

3/26: Class #8

4/02: Class #9

4/09: Class #10

4/16: Class #11

4/23: Class #12

## COURSE TOPICS TO BE COVERED:

### Producing Skills

#### Concepts of leadership

Earning respect

Do your homework to know as much as possible about what your colleagues need to get the job done

Working in an ETHICAL fashion with consistency

List making and prioritization of tasks

Understand production is a series of never ending problems to solve.

Be consistent, fair and kind

Hold your ground when appropriate

Authority is taken, not given.

#### Interpersonal relationships

It's all "who you know"

Collect people – they are the foundation of your life and work

Follow up with everyone and be open to new relationships

You will be judged on the passion and drive and commitment you bring

Be memorable - Never be boring

### Final Project Development

Short description/ pitch – your elevator moment

Statement of why project is viable in today's market

Potential buyers, including brands

Who is the audience?

Option agreement elements

Production plan

Creative partners

Budget and schedule for entire project - development through delivery

Marketing plan

References for your information that you can call upon in a pitch meeting

Most important – bring your personality and passion to the presentation

### Scheduling – using Movie Magic Scheduling

Script breakdown procedures

Scheduling concepts – prioritizing time allowed

Balancing pages of work per day while considering what each scene requires

Location, cast, sets and other considerations when scheduling

Day out of Days forms

Strip design, report design

Knowing the script in all its details to activate your producer decision making powers

### Budgeting – using Movie Magic Budgeting

- Work hours versus pay hours
- Working with the templates
- Setting up and inserting Globals
- Setting up and using Groups
- Setting up and applying Fringes
- Assigning tax credit/incentives to various line items
- Using the budget as a checklist for all your producer responsibilities
- Cost reporting – using the cost report to massage money from one category to another
- Using Globals and Groups to aide in figuring out “what if” scenarios
- For budgeting of series – prep, wrap, all series and amortization budgets

### Options

- Getting an agreement in writing
- Option Period – amount of time
- Option Price – with extensions
- Extending the Option
- Pre negotiated purchase price Credits
- Sequels, remakes, other platforms covered
- What markets are covered
- Figuring out amounts and percentages to pay based on platform
- Force majeure, where adjudicated, warranties, indemnifications, assignment
- Now all of that ^ vs. doing an Attachment Agreement instead

### Tax incentives / Tax Credits / Tax rebates

- Deciding where to shoot your production
- Comparing offers from competing locations
- What is a “qualified spend?”
- Procedure for receiving consideration – lottery, applications, etc
- Selling your credit – what are they worth?

## 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](mailto: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](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.