

Managing Communication in the Entertainment Industry
CMGT 543
Spring 2014

Professor: Ted Frank
Annenberg School for Communication
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Day/Times: Thursdays, 6:30-9:20
Classroom: Annenberg 232
Office Hours: By appt.; please email your request

Course description: The entertainment industry, the media, the cultural industries—whatever we call them, these are endeavors that inherently exist in a state of dynamic tension. With other commercial enterprises, they share the imperative of building a customer base, generating revenues and making profits. But they accomplish these goals—or fail to do so—based on the collaborative efforts of creative individuals whose contributions are paramount to the success of the undertaking. These are uniquely people-based businesses, and the people who are drawn to them are attracted by the opportunity to participate in this world of creativity. To the outsider, these employees may seem to be engaged in the production of a commodity, the “content” that everyone who looks at this world as a business now agrees is “king.” But to the individuals on the inside, these industries are more than a little about playing in an arena of story-telling, dreams and magic, and the thrill of having a hand in producing something wonderful that reaches out and touches an audience.

This course explores the strategies of media management within traditional Hollywood media corporations, and it does that with a special focus on the notion that most of the people managing in this realm are themselves unique. Very often they have come up from the ranks of those involved in the creative aspects of the entertainment business—because these are businesses that rise and fall based on the results of their creative endeavors.

The class will be focused in the world of television. Issues that will be examined include the growing primacy of cable networks versus broadcast networks, the importance of ownership of programming as opposed to distribution, the upheaval in audience measurement as platforms proliferate, the development of new program forms, and the explosive impact of social media.

The class will have many opportunities to hear directly from industry leaders about these issues, and about the passion for communicating to audiences that is at the center of their commitment. Students will develop case studies on specific media companies and the crises that they face. And there will be an emphasis on career paths in the many areas of the entertainment industry that offer the chance for participation in the excitement of businesses steeped in creativity.

GUEST SPEAKERS

Guest appearances by high-level professionals in the entertainment industry are an integral part of the course. Among those committed to the class are:

Garry Hart Former President, Paramount Network Television
Kate Juergens Executive Vice President, Programming and Development, Chief Creative Officer, ABC Family
John Landgraf Chief Executive Officer, FX Networks
David Nevins President of Entertainment, Showtime
Beth Roberts Executive Vice President, Business Operations, Cable Entertainment Group, NBC Universal
Steve Stark President of Television Production, MGM

This list is subject to change, and specific dates listed in the syllabus should all be considered tentative.

ABOUT THE PROFESSOR:

Ted Frank is a veteran television executive with more than 25 years served at NBC. During his tenure with the network, he has been head of program research, scheduling and current scripted programs. In 2004 he was named Executive Vice President, Current Series, and the next year he became EVP Entertainment Strategy and Programs. He played a central role in the development of the NBC Entertainment Associates Program, and the Writers on the Verge program.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Weekly Participation: In addition to the assigned readings, students will be expected to keep up-to-date with current developments in the television industry. Appropriate websites for scanning are listed below, but there are others that could serve as well.

- Deadline Hollywood
- Los Angeles Times "Company Town"
- TV by the Numbers
- Showbuzz Daily

Each week students will be required to write a brief commentary on one or two of the articles they have read, with links to the articles. This should only be a paragraph, relating the articles to themes from class discussions, assigned readings, or guest speakers. Students should also be prepared to comment on their articles in class if asked to do so.

Note: The instructor will sometimes distribute current articles to the class. Students should write their commentaries on articles they have unearthed themselves, not on these distributed articles.

Group Presentation: Students will be separated into small groups, and each group will be assigned an entertainment company. Groups will research and analyze their companies, considering the crises and opportunities they face in the rapidly evolving media landscape. They will evaluate the companies' strengths and weaknesses and discuss the strategic decisions that they face. Each group will do a 15-20 minute presentation in class.

Individual Paper: After the group presentations, students will write individual essays following up with their personal take on the companies they studied. These papers should be about 2 pages long. They should not just restate the findings of their groups; they should comment and elaborate on aspects of the group report. They should emphasize different perspectives or even contradict points made in the group report.

Assigned Papers: During the term, students will be assigned two papers in which they will respond to questions posed by the instructor on subjects inspired by guest speaker presentations. Students will submit answers of about one or two pages in length, emailing their papers to the instructor by 6pm on the due date.

Final Essay Exam: Students will have one week to complete a take home exam consisting of essay questions. This exam will draw on class discussions, assignments, lectures, readings, and guest speaker presentations. On this last note, it is recommended that students take notes on speakers.

COURSE GRADING:

15% Weekly Participation
15% Assigned Paper #1
15% Assigned Paper #2
20% Group Presentation
15% Individual Paper
20% Final Essay Exam

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Hesmondhalgh, David. *The Cultural Industries*. Sage: 3rd Edition, 2013.
Kung, Lucy. *Strategic Management in the Media: Theory to Practice*. Sage, 2008.

Other recommended reading:

Carter, Bill. *Desperate Networks*. Doubleday, 2006.

Sepinwall, Alan. *The Revolution Was Televised*. Simon and Schuster, 2012.

Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard or emailed, and are subject to change.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS/EMERGENCIES: No late assignments will be accepted. If you have a legitimate and verifiable emergency that makes it impossible to turn in your assignment on time, you must: (1) email me before the beginning of the class the day the assignment is due to notify me of your emergency, (2) provide official proof (doctor's note or other evidence) and (3) arrange to email the assignment at a time to be determined.

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. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

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, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>. 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/>.

All work you submit must be your own and you may not inappropriately assist other students in their work beyond the confines of a particular assignment. **There is a no-tolerance policy for academic misconduct in this course!** The minimum penalty for academic misconduct will be a failing grade (F) for the course – further academic and disciplinary penalties may be assessed.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Classes will consist of lectures, discussions and appearances by guest speakers. Because of the need for flexibility in scheduling of guest speakers, there will be some fluidity in the class schedule. The schedule below will provide you with an approximation of the layout of the class. Names of specific guest speakers are not slotted into the schedule at this time.

1/16/14	Introduction to the course; the creative force in the cultural industries	
1/23/14	Television 101; development and distribution of content; cable vs. broadcast; establishing groups for project	Kung, Chapters 1-2
1/30/14	Creating a company to create content GUEST SPEAKER	Kung, Chapters 3-6
2/6/14	Developing a TV show GUEST SPEAKER	Kung, Chapters 7-11
2/13/14	Developing a new program model GUEST SPEAKER	DH, Intro, Chapter 1
2/20/14	Strategy and scheduling GUEST SPEAKER	Assigned Paper #1 due
2/27/14	Premium cable networks GUEST SPEAKER	DH, Chapters 2-3
3/6/14	The role of the studio GUEST SPEAKER	DH, Chapters 4-5
3/13/14	Television as a writer's medium	Assigned Paper #2 due
3/20/14	SPRING BREAK	NO ASSIGNMENTS
3/27/14	Managing cable networks; managing content GUEST SPEAKER	DH, Chapters 6-7
4/3/14	The business side; owning content GUEST SPEAKER	DH, Chapters 8-9
4/10/14	GROUP PRESENTATIONS	No reading assignment

4/17/14	Marketing in a changing environment; social media GUEST SPEAKER	Individual Papers due
4/24/14	The future of television GUEST SPEAKER	DH, Chapters 10-11 And Conclusions
5/1/14	Putting it all together Take home final exam question distributed	No Assignment
5/8/14	Final Essay Exam Due	