

# USC School of Cinematic Arts

*John C. Hench Division of Animation & Digital Arts*

## CTAN 505 The Business of Animation

Units: 2.0

### **Spring 2020**

<b>Time:</b>	<b>Mondays, 4:00-6:50 PM</b>
<b>Location:</b>	<b>SCB 205</b>
<b><u>Instructor:</u></b>	<b>Richard Goldsmith, Adjunct Associate Professor</b>
<b><u>Office Hours:</u></b>	<b>By appointment, before or after class</b>
<b><u>Office Telephone:</u></b>	<b>(424) 341-4920</b>
<b><u>Email:</u></b>	<b>rgoldsmi@usc.edu</b>
<b><u>Student Assistant:</u></b>	<b>Cheng Guo guo676@usc.edu</b>

## **Course Description**

**Summary:** An overview of the global 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 work in the academic, creative or business side of animation, having an understanding of the production, entertainment and media industries can enhance your career. This course provides a comprehensive look at the global media and entertainment businesses, including feature films and television and especially how they relate to animated content. It also provides a basic understanding of business practices, such as how to legally protect creative works. This course explores how to finance, distribute and market animated productions to various platforms and ancillary businesses, such as consumer products, including related strategies and plans. In addition, we will focus on the role of the animation professional in these industries and also how to seek employment and “market” yourself. Lectures will be enhanced by guest speakers from top animation production and media companies. Past guests have visited from companies such as Netflix, Amazon, Hulu, Disney, Warner Bros., Stoopid Buddies and Bento Box.

The Final Project is a complete “pitch package,” including creative bible and business plan, developed by each student for an animated production (likely a feature film or television production) intended for commercial exploitation. It is a goal that the Final Project can be used by student(s) to pitch their ideas 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 for a career in animation.

## **Other Course Notes**

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

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

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

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 be absent, late or have early dismissal, please notify the instructor in advance. Multiple absences will affect the student’s final grade.

## **Reading and Assignments**

Each week, students will read major online publications about current industry-related news (both general entertainment and animation-related) and will write a short essay summarizing one article of interest along with your personal observations as to why you chose the article and what you found to be relevant to our class curriculum or your career in animation. Several essays will be chosen for a group discussion in class as the weekly news is reviewed. A list of free, online publications will be provided to students. Being well informed about current industry developments and trends can enhance an individual’s academic and professional career.

Additional weekly written Assignments will be a combination of (a) students' thoughts and experiences as well as other tasks related to topics from Lectures (some of which will be discussed in the class as a group) and (b) various creative and business assignments that will help prepare for the Final Project. Assignments may be delivered to the instructor via email or on paper.

## 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 judged on their creative ability or drawing skills, but will rather be assessed on the level of performance that demonstrates their knowledge of the curriculum and applying it to Assignments.

## Grading Percentages and Criteria

The following Grading Scale will be used for the Reading and weekly Assignments and Final Project:

A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

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 and presentation of ideas
- d. Timely delivery

The Final Grade will be determined as follows:

Class Participation	15%
Assignments	45%
Final Project	40%

## Instructor Accessibility

Richard Goldsmith does not have an office at USC. If you have a question, need advice or want to schedule a meeting, please call his office at (424) 341-4920 or send an e-mail to [rgoldsmi@usc.edu](mailto: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 affect 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 some of 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 word processing, spreadsheet and presentation software (such as Microsoft Excel, Word and PowerPoint, however, it is not required). The Final Project is expected to be particularly well presented and enhanced with a reasonable amount of graphics and artwork.

## Additional Policies

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

Absence from classes and late or incomplete assignments will negatively affect grades, if not approved by the instructor in advance or if the instructor and student do not agree to an alternate plan in advance.

## Course Schedule: A Weekly Summary

### WEEK 1

January 13

**The Business of Animation: An Overview** – We begin by getting to know the students and their professional goals) followed by 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 to prepare your CV: your titles, the places, dates and cities relating to your professional experience, volunteering and education and also a separate list of your creative credits: the name of the project, your role, type of media and date.

### WEEK 2

January 20

**HOLIDAY: MARTIN LUTHER KING'S BIRTHDAY**

### WEEK 3

January 27

**The Animation Professional** – The various companies and career paths for animation professionals. A look at animation studios and media companies 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 (CV), Credits and References.

**WEEK 4****February 3****Feature Films** – A look at the feature film industry from independents to studios, festivals, movie theaters and ancillary distribution to other platforms.**Read:** Online publications (list to be provided).**Assignment:** Write an essay about your favorite animated film and why. What made it special creatively and from a business perspective (marketing, consumer products, etc.)? Was it a commercial success? Was it a global or regional success?**WEEK 5****February 10****Elements of Modern Animated Feature Films** - Watch WAKING SLEEPING BEAUTY documentary about how The Walt Disney Company modernized animated feature films.**Read:** Online publications (list to be provided).**Assignment:** 1. Write an essay about the top 3 reasons (in your opinion) that The Walt Disney Company transformed the animated feature film industry, why these were important to the industry, how they ultimately changed the industry and if these changes are still relevant for modern-day audiences. 2. Write 4 lists: What devices do you use to view video content? What platforms do you use to view video? What is your favorite content? What platform would you most like to work for or produce for?**WEEK 6****February 17****HOLIDAY: PRESIDENT'S DAY****WEEK 7****February 24****Television** – Understanding the traditional television market: syndication, terrestrial (broadcast), basic and pay networks, major global and regional players, the history of animated TV content and an insider's view of typical company operations.**Read:** Online publications (list to be provided).**Assignment:** Write an essay about your favorite TV series and why. What made it special creatively and from a business perspective (marketing, consumer products, etc.)? Was it a commercial success? Was it a global or regional success?**WEEK 8****March 2****Video-on-Demand**– On-demand platforms including ad-supported and subscription video-on-demand brands like Netflix, Amazon, Disney+, Apple TV+ and YouTube, OTT platforms, electronic sell-through like iTunes and pay-per-view via cable and satellite providers.**Read:** Online publications (list to be provided).**Assignment:** Write a business proposal for a new subscription video-on-demand (SVOD) platform that features some form of animated content. Include your strategies for content, target audience, subscription fee, user interface and marketing. What is the platform's name? Why would people pay to watch it?**WEEK 9****March 9****How to Sell Your Project** – The steps to sell TV series and feature films, including sales strategies, business etiquette and tips as well as pitch materials and pitching. The difference between 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:** Write a “sales pitch” that describes the project that you would like to do for your Final Project. This should be an introduction to your key characters, the general storyline, key settings, key props and vehicles, and in what animated style you intend to produce the project.

## **WEEK 10**

**March 16**

### **SPRING RECESS**

## **WEEK 11**

**March 23**

### **Ancillary Revenues**

**Content Everywhere** – Producing and distributing content everywhere including airlines, hotels, the corporate market, clip licensing and owning and monetizing music.

**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 characters and content.

**Read:** Online publications (list to be provided).

**Assignment:** What are the unique and most prominent graphics, vehicles, props, gadgets, weapons, music 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) and to other ancillary revenue sources such as recorded music? Write a business plan on how you plan to develop, monetize and market the ancillary products from your project.

## **WEEK 12**

**March 30**

**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 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 step is. Include strategies for advertising, social media and YouTube content and other ways to reach your target audience.

## **WEEK 13**

**April 6**

**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:** Assume that you are an attorney for an animation artist who has been offered a senior position on a production (you can pick the role and the type of production). Write a letter to the studio requesting what deal points you would like to be included in your client’s deal, including their employment and any revenue or equity participations in the production.

## **WEEK 14**

**April 13**

**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:** 1. Develop a pitch for the financing plan of your project to include sources of funding and whether or not it will be a co-production. 2. Write a detailed proposal of your distribution plan for your project, including first and second windows, including rationale for your strategy.

**WEEK 15****April 20**

**Distribution Finance and You!** - The basics of production budgets and schedules, creating financial projections and drafting business plans.

**Read:** Online publications (list to be provided).

**Assignment:** 1. Write a production plan for your project that describes the animation style(s), studio(s) and/or co-production partners, potential talent, etc. Create a production budget and schedule. 2. Compile and organize all of the work that you have done towards completing your Final Project for review with the instructor.

**WEEK 16****April 27**

**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 professional examples and give students an opportunity for questions they may have about how to be successful with their project. 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:** Complete your Final Project.

**WEEK 17****May 4****STUDY DAYS****WEEK 18****May 11****FINAL EXAMS****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 less than 5 and no more than 10 minutes in length) utilizing multi-media presentation materials and/or a hard copy. The room assignment may change for this date.

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**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 Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” [policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b](http://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, [policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

**Support Systems:**

**Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call**  
engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

**Student Health Leave Coordinator – 213-821-4710**

Located in the USC Support and Advocacy office, the Health Leave Coordinator processes requests for health leaves of absence and advocates for students taking such leaves when needed.

<https://policy.usc.edu/student-health-leave-absence/>

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call**  
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call**  
engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

**Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) | Title IX - (213) 740-5086**  
equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help a survivor of harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations.

**Bias Assessment Response and Support - (213) 740-2421**  
studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions for appropriate investigation and response.

**The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776**  
dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

**USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710**  
studentaffairs.usc.edu/ss

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

**Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101**



[diversity.usc.edu](http://diversity.usc.edu)

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

#### Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity and Inclusion are foundational to the SCA community. We are committed to fostering a welcoming and supportive environment where students of all identities and backgrounds can flourish. The classroom should be a space for open discussion of ideas and self-expression; however, SCA will not tolerate verbal or written abuse, threats, harassment, intimidation or violence against person or property. If students are concerned about these matters in the classroom setting they are encouraged to contact their SCA Diversity and Inclusion

Liaison, <http://cinema.usc.edu/about/diversity.cfm>; e-mail [diversity@cinema.usc.edu](mailto:diversity@cinema.usc.edu). You can also report discrimination based on a protected class here <https://equity.usc.edu/harassment-or-discrimination/>

#### 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**