

University of Southern California
School of Cinematic Arts
Production Division
Spring, 2020

CTPR 460: **The Movie Business Seminar**
Film Business Procedures and Distribution

Tuesdays, 1pm, via Zoom (18559R, 2 units)

Professor: Jason E. Squire
jsquire@usc.edu

Student Assistant: Julia Evans
juliaeli@usc.edu

Course Description: Welcome to this introduction of the global entertainment industry from the point-of-view of the movie business. This class offers a unique overview of a glamour business whose inner workings are veiled in secrecy.

Content covers the entire movie industrial process (hobbled by Covid-19), from screenplay acquisition, through deal-making, financing, production, marketing, distribution (traditional and DIY), exhibition, revenue streams, DVD, streaming, target-audience demographics, future technologies and more.

Learning Objectives: The goal is to become familiar with the principles and practices of the movie business--through current events, role-playing, required reading and individual research--as a template for what goes on in the global entertainment industry.

Emphasis is on researching and absorbing information, organizing and marinating it through your own personal filter, and recreating it--in discussions, comments, the oral report and especially the two required papers. **This internal process is a fundamental exercise of your intellectual life.** It will prepare you to excel in your careers, whether in entertainment or elsewhere.

Curiosity and comments are required. You are encouraged to be vocal in applying plain common sense to the issues at hand. This will help develop the kind of critical thinking that will serve you well during class discussions, when writing papers, and in the business world.

It is important to keep up with the required reading in the schedule on the following pages. This will enhance your participation in discussions about practical issues, current events, and the wide variety of topics that will come up.

At the start of the semester, you will select a job title and company that will become the basis for your oral report. Although only a few students will report each

week, you should be ready, in advance, to present your oral report, along with a **one-page topic handout**, based on your required reading and other research. These oral reports will be scheduled by your S.A. Julia Evans.

On Tuesday, **September 22**, a briefing paper (2 pages, double-spaced plus a references page) is due as the **midterm**. Imagine you are reporting to company colleagues about recent business activities and future strategies. It is a short assignment, designed to sharpen your editing skills.

The **final paper** (3 pages, double-spaced, with footnotes plus references page), due **October 27**, will be a distillation of your reading, research and strategic thinking. Specifically, you must find **two management decisions you disagree with and offer your alternative approaches**. The paper should feature the background and outcome of each actual decision, descriptions of each of your alternatives, plus -- in detail -- **some specific hypothetical results** of your alternatives.

In case of absence on any due day, an electronic version of your paper must be submitted by class time. Missing any deadlines will have a negative impact on your grade; meeting deadlines are a basic example of professionalism.

Grading Breakdown: The midterm paper, final paper and oral reports will make up roughly 70% of your grade; classroom participation and performance will make up roughly 30%.

Production Division Attendance Policy: Students are expected to be on time and prepared for each class. Two unexcused absences will result in a student's grade being lowered by one full letter (i.e., A becomes B). A third unexcused absence will result in a student's grade being lowered by one additional full letter (B becomes C). A student's grade will be lowered by one full letter for each additional unexcused absence. Two late class arrivals equate to one full absence.

In order for an absence to be excused, the student must have approval from the professor and provide documentation at the next attended class session. If a student misses class due to an emergency, the student must contact the S.A. and the professor prior to class.

Required Reading

The Movie Business Book Fourth Edition, edited by Jason E. Squire.
Routledge/Focal Press, 2017.

Deadline.com, THR's Today in Entertainment.

Class Schedule and Assignments

1. Tuesday, August 18, 2020 Introductions; uniqueness of the business; role-play job titles/ topics assigned.
2. August 25 Economic history of the industry; the players; the life-cycle of a motion picture including revenue streams.
Due: Oral report.
Read: Pages xix-51.
3. September 1 The property: Evolution of a screenplay; lawyers and agents; deal-making; deal-point checklist; details of the option deal.
Due: Oral report.
Read: Pages 55-95.
4. September 8 The money: Independent financing; revenue flow chart from box office to copyright owner; deductions and fees; break-even; profit/ gross participations.
Due: Oral report.
Read: Pages 99-135.
5. September 15 Management issues: Interpersonal skills; chart of typical company structure; elements of the green light; role-playing as movie execs.
Due: Oral report.
Read: Pages 139-220.
6. September 22 Bring your textbook to class.
Shooting: Behind-schedule strategies; tour of budget topsheet; sample production paperwork; production scheduling; breakdown sheet; one-liner; call sheet; production report; money and temperament.
Due: Oral report.
Read: Pages 223-274.
Due: Midterm Briefing Paper (2 pp.).

7. September 29
Marketing: Creative advertising (print and trailer), publicity, third-party promotions, market research, media buying, overseas; social media; putting it all together via executive marketing summary of a well-known movie.
Due: Oral report.
Read: Pages 277-326.
8. October 6
Journey turning point. Review of revenue streams. Theatrical distribution: Structure and procedures; release patterns; scheduling strategies; theatre relations; marketing expenses and decision-making; role-playing as distributors scheduling actual distribution calendar.
Due: Oral report.
Read: Pages 329-352; 371-397.
9. October 13
Exhibition overview: Typical exhibition deals with distributors; chains vs. independents; buy or lease; multiplexes; service deals; concessions sales; role-playing as exhibitors; day-and-date.
Due: Oral report.
Read: Pages 401-429.
10. October 20
DIY distribution and marketing: History; knowing your target audience; communities; timelines of festivals; kickstarter.com; Vimeo On Demand, sample trailers.
Due: Oral report.
Read: Pages 433-458.
11. October 27
More DIY distribution and marketing:
Self-distribution via video-sharing sites (YouTube); aggregators (Quiver Digital); self-distribution tools (FilmHub, Vimeo On Demand); more sample trailers.
Due: FINAL PAPER (3 pp.);
Due: Oral report.
Read: Pages 461-484.
12. November 3
The international market: Studio vs. independent; the China movie industry; American Film Market; key export countries; overseas deal-making; role-playing as global executives.
Due: Oral report.
Read: Pages 505-540.

13. November 10 Future technologies; role-playing as futurists; show & tell. VR, AR, PC vs. smart phones vs. tablet vs. cable. Netflix, Disney+, Apple TV+, HBO Max, Amazon Prime, Hulu; Quibi, Peacock, Roku, Playstation 4, Xbox 360; Chromecast.
Due: Oral report.
Read: Pages 543-581.

Suggested Additional Reading

- Anderson, Chris. The Long Tail. Hyperion, 2006.
- Elberse, Anita. Blockbusters: Hit-Making, Risk-Taking and the Big Business of Entertainment. Henry Holt and Company, 2013.
- Fisher, Roger and William Ury. Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In. Houghton Mifflin, 1981.
- Fritz, Ben. The Big Picture: The Fight for the Future of Movies. Eamon Dolan/Houghton Mifflin, 2018.
- Iger, Robert. The Ride of a Lifetime: Lessons Learned From 15 Years as CEO of the Walt Disney Company. Random House, 2019.
- Miller, James A. Powerhouse: The Untold Story of Hollywood's Creative Artists Agency. Custom House, 2016.
- Obst, Linda. Sleepless in Hollywood: Tales From the New Abnormal in the Movie Business. Simon & Schuster, 2013.
- Picker, David V. Musts, Maybes, and Nevers: A Book About the Movies. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013.
- Puttnam, David with Neil Watson. Movies and Money. Vintage Press, 1999.
- Reiss, Jon. Think Outside the Box Office: the Ultimate Guide to Film Distribution and Marketing for the Digital Era. Hybrid Cinema Publishing, 2010.
- Vogel, Harold L. Entertainment Industry Economics, Ninth Edition. Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- and Wall Street Journal, New York Times.

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. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, 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/ssa

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

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, 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

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. 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.