



USCSchool
of Cinematic Arts

CNTV 457

**The Entertainment Entrepreneur:
Getting your First Project Made**

Units: 2

Term: Fall 2021

Day—Time: Tuesdays, 7-10pm

Location: SCA 110

Professors

Sam Canter
CEO/Partner, Psycho Films
E-mail: scanter@usc.edu
Office: (303)956-0609

Christian Sutton
Partner/Director, Psycho Films
E-mail: [cgsutton@usc.edu](mailto:cdsutton@usc.edu)

Course Description

This course will cover the practical aspects of why it is essential to be entrepreneurial within the changing landscape of the entertainment industry. Whether you strive to be a content creator, producer, writer, director, executive, or form your own business/creative venture, this course will help you identify how and why you should be creating your own projects.

The content of this course will cover the benefits and pitfalls of developing your own content, companies, and/or partnerships. We will also explore the practical and real obstacles and opportunities you face as you leave USC SCA and begin to work in the entertainment industry. Where should I work? How do I make my projects? How do I start my own company or brand? In addition, key aspects of the producing process from both a creative and business executive side will be covered in the Film, TV, VR, and digital media spaces.

The class will be broken down into 3 sections, **“The Creative Process,” “Development and Production,”** and **“Marketing and Selling your Project.”**

Each class will feature panels or select speakers of industry professionals. Including top talent, producers, directors, studio executives, heads of production companies, lawyers, agents, managers, etc. In addition to seasoned veterans of the entertainment industry, this course will also include a series of guest speakers, all who began forging their own path in the industry during or immediately after college. Incorporating expertise from individuals currently at the

forefront of an ever-changing industry allows the course to provide students with relevant and timely insight to approaching their own aspirations and endeavors. These panels will be open discussions between the panelists, moderators, and questions from the class.

Suggested Reading

BOOKS:

CREATIVITY, INC. – OVERCOMING THE UNSEEN FORCES THAT STAND IN THE WAY OF TRUE INSPIRATION, by Ed Catmull (President of Pixar Animation and Disney Animation).

THE MAILROOM: HOLLYWOOD HISTORY FROM THE BOTTOM UP, by David Rensin.

MUSTS, MAYBES, AND NEVERS, by David Picker

THE KID STAYS IN THE PICTURE, by Robert Evans

THE MONK AND THE RIDDLE, by Randy Komisar

Required Materials

It is encouraged that you read on a consistent basis the key news publications revolving around entertainment. We will discuss current articles from these and other related publications.

Possible, but not exclusive articles can come from the following publications:

- The Hollywood Reporter
- Variety
- Deadline Hollywood
- IndieWire
- Filmmaker Magazine
- Techcrunch
- Advertising Age
- New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Wall Street Journal
- Wired

We will also be sharing scripts and other projects during the course of the semester that will help you prepare for the speakers and guests.

Office Hours

If students have any questions about the material covered in the class they should not hesitate to see one of us. **Email** is the preferred method to contact us to schedule an appointment as our email messages are checked frequently. Office hours will be by appointment only.

Grading Summary

The course grading is based on the following criteria:

Assessment	% Value of Final Grade
Midterm Exam	25
Final Project (Written)	25
Final Presentation	25
Articles Shared	5
Participation	20
Total Points	100

Absences: ***It is expected that you attend class every week.*** If you have an emergency and cannot attend, you must email both professors and the Teaching Assistant (TA) the day before class. Your participation grade will be affected by missing class for any other reason besides a medical or family emergency. You will not be penalized for missing class for any medical or family emergency.

Participation: We will be bringing in working professionals who are extremely busy and value their time immensely. They are coming to interact with you and share their experiences. Preparing well thought out questions and having lively discussions will be the best way for all of us to gain value from their presence. During guest panels we would prefer you to use notebooks or iPads to take notes instead of laptops. Please keep your eyes and full attention on our guests!

IP Pitch: Over the course of the semester you will be required to present at least one article, social media post, picture, book, or other relevant and recent IP with a plan of how you would adapt it into a Film, TV show, VR experience, etc. (Who owns the rights? What network/studio would be a good match? Who would you hire to write? Direct? Star?)

Final Project and Final Exam

Students will be required to prepare a written leave behind booklet (A minimum of 10 pages in length is required) and a 10-minute pitch presentation. The booklet and presentation will be based on an entertainment content project or venture you would like to create. The key is that this is a project or venture you are passionate about and has marketable potential. This can be a film, TV show, video game, app, VR piece, digital project, or another type of entertainment-based venture/business. You can come up with a concept on your own, work with someone else in the class, or base the idea on a property you think you can get the rights to. (IE: Book, novel, Comic book, video games, etc.)

It is encouraged that you partner with two or three other students in the class who have complementary skill sets. For example: If you are a producer, team with a writer and director and vice versa.

The written report should include the details specific to your project or venture.

For example, for a film project a report would consist of:

- Plot Synopsis
- Logline
- Brief Story treatment or outline
- Character Breakdown
- Visuals
- Financial Section
- Marketing Plan
- Distribution Plan

And for an App, Brand, or other Venture:

- Business / Product Overview
- Elevator Pitch / Logline (Why You? Why Now?)
- Financial Plan / Capital Needed
- Marketing Plan
- Market Analysis
- Growth / Scale Plan

The presentation will take place during the scheduled final exam period. We will bring in executives from the industry to help judge and provide immediate feedback for your projects. The presentation will be set up just like you are pitching to studio executives and/or financiers.

Your final presentation must be both visually stimulating and show that you have thought about the business side of the project (Marketing, distribution, financing, return on investment, etc.).

There will be project checkpoints throughout the course of the semester where we can discuss progression and provide feedback.

Course Schedule

Week	Material Covered	Panelists	Project
1 DATE: Tuesday, August 24 th	Overview of Class: Introductions, Syllabus Review, Course Objectives, Format, and Final Project.	No Speakers	
Section I	The Creative Process		
2 DATE: Tuesday, August 31 st	Picking the Right Project or Venture: Figuring out what you're passionate about -- and how to formulate a project or business around it.	Production Company founders, Independent Producers	Interview and meet potential partners
3 DATE: Tuesday, September 7 th	Finding the Right Partners: Having the right partners, whether talent or financial, is key to success	Creative Executives from Studios, Production Companies	Groups finalized
4 DATE: Tuesday, September 14 th	The Creative Perspective: How do Directors, Writers, and Talent contribute to their projects. Focus	Feature Film Writers & Directors	

	on their process, motivations, and goals.		
Section II	Development & Production		
5 DATE: Tuesday, September 21 st	The Independent Producer: How to get your project off the ground. Utilizing your school and personal relationships to find your first feature.	Producers of successful films	Project/Venture selected
6 DATE: Tuesday, September 28 th	TV, Digital, and New Media Ventures: Creating content for the small screen.	Content creators and Distributors of mobile content and applications	
7 DATE: Tuesday, October 5 th	Working with Agencies and Management Companies: The good and the bad of the Agency world.	Lit and talent agents from CAA, WME, ICM, Verve, and UTA. Lit and talent managers from Anonymous, Management 360, Gotham Group	
8 DATE: Tuesday, October 12 th	MIDTERM EXAM <i>Followed by</i> Discussion on Budgeting Your Project	Multiple Choice and Essay Producers / Line Producer	
9 DATE: Tuesday, October 19 th	Legal Side of the Business, creating	Accountants, Lawyers, Agents, other parties to the	

	LLC's, managing business: How to protect yourself, your content, and ensure healthy success for all parties.	legal side of producing a project & starting a business	
10 DATE: Tuesday, October 26 th	The Investor's POV: What they look for and what they want.	Investors in Independent film and new media projects	Pitch elements draft due for feedback
Section III	Marketing and Selling your Project		
11 DATE: Tuesday, November 2 nd	Pitching Your Project: Putting together your pitch from a creative and financial perspective.	Directors, Creative Executives, Buyers	Business / Project elements due for feedback
12 DATE: Tuesday, November 9 th	Project Review in class	Up & Coming writers come to discuss their craft	One-on-one meetings with professors about projects
13 DATE: Tuesday, November 16 th	Film Festivals & The Sales Marketplace, both Domestic and International Selling your project. Domestic and International Sales. What can you expect for your project?	Domestic and International sales agents, Representatives from Film Festivals	
14 DATE: Tuesday, November 23 rd	Marketing, Distribution & Exhibition: Steps to market your project.	Marketers from Sony, Warner Bros., and other smaller distribution companies	Draft presentation outline and draft leave behind due

	The changing landscape of getting your project out there. Digital options (VOD, etc) vs. Theatrical.		
15 DATE: Tuesday, November 30 th	Recap of Key Topics and feedback given on project presentation drafts		Feedback on drafts

Final Exam: Monday, December 13th, 2021 at 7pm - Final Presentations to a panel of industry professionals

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.

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