CNTV 457
The Entertainment Entrepreneur: Getting your First Project Made

Units: 2
Term: Fall 2021
Day—Time: Tuesdays, 7-10pm
Location: SCA 110

Professors

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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
- 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>% Value of Final Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project (Written)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Presentation</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles Shared</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Points</td>
<td>100</td>
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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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Material Covered</th>
<th>Panelists</th>
<th>Project</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Overview of Class:</strong> Introductions, Syllabus Review, Course Objectives, Format, and Final Project.</td>
<td>No Speakers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Section I: The Creative Process</strong></td>
<td>Production Company founders, Independent Producers</td>
<td>Interview and meet potential partners</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Picking the Right Project or Venture:</strong> Figuring out what you’re passionate about -- and how to formulate a project or business around it.</td>
<td>Creative Executives from Studios, Production Companies</td>
<td>Groups finalized</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td><strong>Finding the Right Partners:</strong> Having the right partners, whether talent or financial, is key to success</td>
<td>Feature Film Writers &amp; Directors</td>
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<td><strong>The Creative Perspective:</strong> How do Directors, Writers, and Talent contribute to their projects. Focus</td>
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on their process, motivations, and goals.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Section II</th>
<th>Development &amp; Production</th>
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<tr>
<td>5 DATE: Tuesday, September 21&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>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</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 DATE: Tuesday, September 28&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>TV, Digital, and New Media Ventures: Creating content for the small screen. Content creators and Distributors of mobile content and applications</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 DATE: Tuesday, October 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>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</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 DATE: Tuesday, October 12&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>MIDTERM EXAM Followed by Discussion on Budgeting Your Project Multiple Choice and Essay Producers / Line Producer</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 DATE: Tuesday, October 19&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Legal Side of the Business, creating Accountants, Lawyers, Agents, other parties to the</td>
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<td>LLC’s, managing business: How to protect yourself, your content, and ensure healthy success for all parties.</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>The Investor’s POV: What they look for and what they want.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Section III</td>
<td>Marketing and Selling your Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Pitching Your Project: Putting together your pitch from a creative and financial perspective.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Project Review in class</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Film Festivals &amp; The Sales Marketplace, both Domestic and International Selling your project. Domestic and International Sales. What can you expect for your project?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Marketing, Distribution &amp; Exhibition: Steps to market your project.</td>
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</table>
The changing landscape of getting your project out there. Digital options (VOD, etc) vs. Theatrical.

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<tr>
<th>DATE: Tuesday, November 30&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Recap of Key Topics and feedback given on project presentation drafts</th>
<th>Feedback on drafts</th>
</tr>
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**Final Exam: Monday, December 13<sup>th</sup>, 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