CTPR 410 - THE MOVIE BUSINESS: From Story Concept to Exhibitions

Spring 2023 Syllabus
Units: 2
Mondays, 6PM-9PM | Room - SCA 110

Instructor: John Orlando
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

An overview of the Motion Picture Industry from story conception through script development and packaging, production and postproduction, and distribution and marketing. Most weeks will include a guest speaker that is intimately involved in a different aspect of the movie and TV making process in the more traditional financier system, the streaming business, as well as the indie world.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Students will learn about the various roles played by all those involved in creating movies and TV – and the steps needed to get it in front of an audience.

REQUIRED READINGS:

The Movie Business Book (4th Edition), by Jason Squire, available at the USC Bookstore.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS:

The Business of Film: A Practical Introduction (2nd Edition), by Paula Landry & Stephen R. Greenwald, available on Amazon or any other book retailer.

DESCRIPTION AND ASSESSMENT OF ASSIGNMENTS:

Midterm: Students will be tested on practical application of concepts learned in class discussions, reading materials, as well as commentary from guest speakers.

Term Project: As their final project, students will be divided into teams and will present a concept as well as a production, distribution, and marketing plan as it would be pitched to a financier or distributor. This will require
each group to:

- Decide upon a concept (original, adaptation or remake), which could conceivably be turned into a contemporary movie or TV series.

- Choose a writer, director, producers, and principal cast.

- Discuss possible budget and production locations.

- Discuss overall target audience and how that determines the potential buyers/distributors as well as marketing and distribution strategy.

Class Participation: Students are expected to be active participants in class discussions, ask questions of guest speakers, and provide feedback to other students on their presentations.

EVALUATION CRITERIA:

- Evidence of growth and understanding of materials throughout the semester.

- Ability to translate general concepts to specific examples.

- Innovative, thorough, and creative use of different ideas discussed in class.

- The ability to work with others in a collaborative effort.

GRADING BREAKDOWN:
Midterm (20%)
Term Project (45%)
Class Participation (35%)

GRADING SCALE

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

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

PRODUCTION DIVISION ATTENDANCE POLICY:

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

If a student misses class due to an emergency, the student must contact the professor prior to class or contact the Production Office at 213-740-3317.

Students will have mid-term conferences with informal grades and evaluations; students in danger of failing will be notified at that time.

ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION POLICY:

Class presentations are due per the course schedule. Midterm will be due on the assigned date.

GRADING TIMELINE:

The Midterm grades will be available 2 weeks after they are turned in. Term Project grade and final grade will be available prior to the end of the term.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Use of electronic devices is permitted for note taking and access of information pertinent to class discussion. No personal use of devices is permitted.

COURSE SCHEDULE: A WEEKLY BREAKDOWN   SPRING 2023

January 9 –   An Overview

• Introductions

• Discussion of syllabus

• Art vs Commerce

• Everything begins with a concept

• The process of bringing the concept to an audience

   Changing landscapes

• **Assignment:** The Movie Business Book: Chapter 1 (Introduction), Chapter 5 (The

   Screenwriter), pages 1-15, 55-66

• **Optional Reading:** The Business of Film: Chapter 1, 2, & 3 (A Brief History of the Film

   Industry, A Business Overview of Film, Movie Development), pages 1-67

January 16 –   Martin Luther King's Birthday   NO CLASS!

January 23 – The Writer

• Where do ideas come from? What makes them valuable? Writing original ideas versus IP.

• Pitching vs. Specing

• The development process: Drafts, notes, production

• Writing for movies vs. Writing for TV

• **Assignment:** The Movie Business Book: Chapters 3 & 4 (The Director & A Filmmaker's

   Journey), pages 30-51

January 30 – The Director

• Bringing the director's vision to the screen

• Writer-Director, TV vs Feature Directing

• Adjusting the vision for budget, audience

• Communicating the vision in development, production, post-production
    Previews, focus groups, and a growing audience from beginning to end
    Working inside the system vs. outside the system

• **Assignment:** The Movie Business Book: Chapter 2, 15, 24, 33, 34 (The Entrepreneurial

    Producer, The Independent Spirit, Film Festivals and Markets, DIY: An Introduction,
    Producing in the DIY Model), pages 19-29, 165-172, 312-326, 459-484

February 6 – The Producer (Indie)

• What are the challenges and benefits of working within the system vs. outside of it?

•Finding financing for a movie

•Tax Credits, Locations, etc.

• Private equity vs. international sales vs. financiers

• Controlling the production, bond companies, contingencies

•Film festivals and angling for distribution

• **Assignment:** The Movie Business Book: Chapters 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 (Money, Money

and Madness, Getting Paid, Analyzing Movie Companies, A Chairman's Perspective,
Marvel Studios, The Movie Company as Financier-Distributor), pages 97-164

February 13 – The Producer (Studio)

• Where do projects come from?

• How projects are set up with financiers / studios / networks

• Navigating shifting landscapes and formats based on the story

• The development process and protecting the creative

• First-look deals

• Development, Packaging, and Budgeting Exercise

• **Midterm Preview / Assignment**

• **Assignment:** The Movie Business Book: Chapters 25, 26 (Release Windows and Revenue • Streams, Studio Accounting), pages 329-367

• **Optional Reading:** The Business of Film: Chapter 9 (Movie Accounting), pages 210-228

February 27 – Studios & Financiers

• How financiers pick projects

• The process of studio development

• The importance of packaging

• The changing landscape of movie-going and the impact on material

• Adjusting packages based on international value and financing around international pre-sales

• **Midterm Due**

• **Assignment:** The Movie Business Book: Chapters 36, 37, 38 (Global Markets, An Overview of the Chinese Film Industry, Entertainment Technologies: Past, Present and Future), pages 505-581

March 6 – New Platforms (Streaming, TV, Short Form) & New Markets

• How have stories changed and how will they evolve?

• New distribution windows, new audiences, new markets

• Creating cultural urgency around the world

• Reaching new audiences

• **Assignment:** The Movie Business Book: Chapter 6, 8, 16, 17, & 19 (Representing the Screenwriter, Exploiting Intellectual Property Rights, The Entertainment Lawyer, Business Affairs, & The Talent Agent), pages 67-77, 87-95, 175-198, 213-220)

Spring Recess   Sun-Sun   March 12-19

March 2 – Representatives

• Managers vs. Literary Agents vs. Talent Agents

• The importance of a representative in getting a movie or TV show made

• Determining a roster of clients

• Development from the perspective of a representative

• **Assignment:** The Movie Business Book: Chapter 20 & 21 (Production Management &
    The Social Network: Production Workflow), pages 223-274

• **Optional Reading:** The Business of Film: Chapter 4 & 5 (Movie Financing & Movie
    Production), pages 68-118

March 27 – Budgeting & Making a Movie

• How big should a movie be?

• Size of budget vs. size of audience

• Budget determining marketing and distribution spend

• Indie budgeting vs. Studio budgeting

• Building a production team

• **Assignment:** The Movie Business Book: Chapter 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32 (Studio
    Distribution, Independent Distribution, The Exhibition Business, The Independent
    Distributor, Home Entertainment, Online Self-Distribution), pages 371-457

• **Optional Reading:** The Business of Film: Chapter 6 & 8 (Movie Distribution & Film
    Exhibition, Retail and Consumption), pages 119-154, 172-209

April 3 – Distribution, Exhibition, and Acquisitions

• What happens to a movie after it's made?

• What do exhibitors look for in a movie?

• The pipeline of monetization across formats, windows, etc.

• How have streaming services impacted distribution?

• Why distributors acquire movies

• **Assignment:** The Movie Business Book: Chapter 22, 23 (Motion Picture Marketing, Marketing Research), pages 277-311

• **Optional Reading:** The Business of Film: Chapter 7 (Movie Marketing), pages 155-171

April 10 – Marketing

• How to cut through the clutter and capture the audience's attention

• The importance of concept in selling a movie

• How marketing impacts production

• The importance of IP and pre-awareness

April 17 – Presentation of Term Projects Pt. 1

April 24 – Presentation of Term Projects Pt. 2

Classes End

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://campussupport.usc.edu/students/health-and-wellness/health-leave-of-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 Student Accessibility Services - (213) 821-9620 - https://osas.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.

USC COVID-19 RESOURCE CENTER:

https://coronavirus.usc.edu/covid-19-vaccine-information-center/covid-19-vaccine-faq

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PLEASE NOTE:

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