

USC School of Cinematic Arts – CTPR 538 (Intermediate Producing) – Spring 2023

Section: 18650 (2 Units)

Adjunct Professors:	John Palmer jjpalmer@usc.edu 424.298.0292	Philip Rose philipr@usc.edu 310.892.6931	SA:	Katja Custodio pcustodi@usc.edu 332.259.7245
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Day/Time: Mondays 7pm-10pm Room: SCB 101 Office Hours: By Appt.
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COURSE DESCRIPTION and OUTLINE

OVERVIEW

Intermediate Producing (CTPR 538 – 18650) is an in-depth examination of the role of the producer. The course will examine the creative and practical producing processes behind the initiation and development of a concept; selling the project or financing the production; casting/packaging; staffing; scheduling; budgeting; and overseeing pre-production, production, post-production, and distribution/marketing. The emphasis will be on current real-world practices, focusing on developing skill sets that are essential for successful producers.

COURSE GOALS

- Develop a basic understanding of the fundamental responsibilities of the producer from the inception of a project through its release.
- Examine the producer's role in the creative process and in building the many and varied relationships with the community of collaborators necessary for success: writers, directors, senior creative craftspeople, technical crew, talent representatives, marketing professionals, and the studio executives and independent financiers that back projects.
- Develop basic knowledge and skills in the areas of pitching/concept presentation, leadership techniques, mediation and negotiating skills, line producing (including scheduling and budgeting), and creative oversight.
- Establish standards of quality and ethical conduct to guide career choices and job performance.

PROJECTS and ASSIGNMENTS:

- **WEEKLY REPORTS:** Each week one or two students will present a 10-minute in-depth report on an interesting and relevant topic, researched from a variety of industry-related news and information sources. This will be an opportunity to practice public speaking and pitch techniques, with immediate review comments from the entire class.
- **SCHEDULING:** Each student will prepare a shooting schedule for a one-hour television/episodic production.
- **BUDGETING:** Each student will complete a budgeting assignment that relates directly to the scheduling exercise. They will implement concepts learned to use the budgeting process as a creative tool to maximize the quality of the production.

- SPECIAL PROJECT: Each student will prepare a final project for presentation. The project will be a complete development of a viable, real-world production or enterprise – to be pitched to the class at the end of the term.

WEEKLY LESSONS/TOPICS

Weekly lessons/topics and all course readings, viewings, and materials will be emailed and/or posted on Blackboard or Google Drive as appropriate. Below please see a non-exhaustive summary of the course topics that will be covered.

- Different types of producers (e.g. Producer, Executive Producer, Line Producer, etc.)
- A producer’s responsibilities from concept and development through pre-production, production, post-production, and distribution/marketing
- Concept identification and presentation: pitch tips, loglines, protecting the idea
- Options & shopping agreements
- Financing & production incentives/tax credits
- Producing skills: leadership, interpersonal relationships, setting goals & prioritization
- Scheduling: breakdowns, overview principles, day out of days (DOODs)
- Budgeting: critical assumptions, globals, budget as a producing guide
- Film/episodic/media literacy & staying up to date on industry news
- Special project development: from beginning to end (pitch to marketing)

REQUIRED PROGRAMS & MATERIALS

Each student must have their own copy of Movie Magic Scheduling software and a copy of—or subscription or trial for—Movie Magic Budgeting software. If you do not already own these programs or a subscription, academic versions at discounted student prices may be available. See professor for details.

Each student must maintain an ongoing effort to stay current with industry news. The class as a whole will share recommendations and resources (articles, trades, websites, podcasts, etc.) on an ongoing basis.

GUEST SPEAKERS

Throughout the course, guest speakers may visit the class to share their knowledge and experiences. Examples of past guests include professional producers, executives, directors, ADs, designers, or creative technicians - in other words, senior creatives or executive members of a production team or the larger ecosystem. Confirmed speakers will be announced during class on an ongoing basis, subject to change based on guest availability.

GRADES

CTPR 538 is graded on a letter grade basis. Grades will be based on both subjective and objective judgments. Attentiveness, participation, clarity, generosity, and effort are all looked-for traits indicative of a growing mastery of the producer’s role. Success is predicated on engaged and ongoing interaction between all members of the class.

Grade weighting:

Class Participation: 30%

Class Presentations: 20%

Schedule & Budget Assignments: 25%

Final Project: 25%

Late or missed assignments, as well as tardiness and unexcused absences, will have a negative impact on your grade. If you must arrive late or miss class entirely, text or call your SA as soon as possible and always before class begins. Excused absences will be considered on a case-by-case basis and must be requested more than 24 hours before the class in question by contacting the professor.

Negative grade impacts:

Late assignment: -10% of assignment grade per day (*e.g. 1 day late -10%, 2 days late, -20%, etc.*)

Missed assignment or more than 5 days late: Receive 0% on assignment grade

Failure to present class presentation or final project on scheduled date: Receive 0% on presentation/project grade

Tardy: -5% of overall class grade per tardy

Unexcused absence: -10% of overall class grade per absence

COURSE OUTLINE:

Please note: This is an approximate roadmap for the course. Individual class plans, lecture topics and dates, and number of guest speakers and dates, are subject to change.

Class #1: Monday, January 9

- Housekeeping: Introductions. Course overview/review syllabus & assignments. Establish class protocols.
- Lecture & Discussion: Types of Producers, Producing Responsibilities, Making Lists & Staying Organized
- Assign weekly presentation dates

NO CLASS: MONDAY, JANUARY 16 (Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday)

Class #2: Monday, January 23

- Weekly Report/Student Presentation
- Recommendations, Events & Announcements
- Lecture & Discussion: Development - Where to Get Ideas and How to Protect Them, How to Find a Writer, How to Build Excitement Around a Project
- Introduction to Special Projects

Class #3: Monday, January 30

- Weekly Report/Student Presentation
- Recommendations, Events & Announcements
- Lecture & Discussion: Options & Shopping Agreements, Packaging

- Clip & Discussion: Practical, creative & ethical considerations as producers
- Case studies: Development, Packaging, Building Excitement

Class #4: Monday, February 6

- **DUE: ELEVATOR PITCH FOR SPECIAL PROJECT**
- Weekly Report/Student Presentation
- Recommendations, Events & Announcements
- Lecture & Discussion: How To Know If It's the Right Project, Moving a Project Forward
- Introduction to Scheduling Assignment – Breakdowns & Stripboards
- Tutorial: MM Scheduling

Class #5: Monday, February 13

- **DUE: DRAFT BREAKDOWN**
- Weekly Report/Student Presentation
- Recommendations, Events & Announcements
- Lecture & Discussion: Creative Scheduling, DOODs, Call Sheets, Production Reports
- Clip & Discussion: Practical, creative & ethical considerations as producers
- Lecture & Discussion: Pitch Materials (what's needed to pitch a feature and a series)
- Q&A: MM Scheduling

NO CLASS: MONDAY, FEBRUARY 20 (President's Day)

- **DUE: DRAFT SCHEDULE**

Class #6: Monday, February 27

- **DUE: SCHEDULING ASSIGNMENT**
- Weekly Report/Student Presentation
- Recommendations, Events & Announcements
- Debrief: Scheduling
- Lecture & Discussion: Pitch Decks
- Clip & Discussion: Practical, creative & ethical considerations as producers
- Introduction to Budgeting Assignment - Work/Pay Hours, Union Rates, Fringes, Globals
- Tutorial: MM Budgeting

Class #7: Monday, March 6

- Weekly Report/Student Presentation
- Recommendations, Events & Announcements
- Case Study & Examples: Pitch Decks
- Lecture & Discussion: Cost Reports & Tracking, Hot Costs
- Q&A: MM Budgeting

NO CLASS: MONDAY, MARCH 13 (Spring Recess)

- **DUE: DRAFT BUDGET**

Class #8: Monday, March 20

- **DUE: BUDGETING ASSIGNMENT**
- Weekly Report/Student Presentation
- Recommendations, Events & Announcements
- Debrief: Budgeting
- Clip & Discussion: Practical, creative & ethical considerations as producers
- Lecture & Discussion: Film Financing & Production Incentives
- Q&A: Special Projects

Class #9: Monday, March 27

- Weekly Report/Student Presentation
- Recommendations, Events & Announcements
- Case Studies: Film Financing
- Examples: Waterfalls, Finance Plans
- Clip & Discussion: Practical, creative & ethical considerations as producers
- Lecture & Discussion: Production Companies & Insurance, Harassment/Safety, Conflict & Resolution, Creative Collaboration, Communication, Leadership

Class #10: Monday, April 3

- Weekly Report/Student Presentation
- Recommendations, Events & Announcements
- Lecture & Discussion: Rights & Clearances, Marketing & PR, Festivals/Sales/Distribution
- Breakout Groups: Special projects soft pitches & feedback

Class #11: Monday, April 10

- Individual meetings to review special projects/final presentations

Class #12: Monday, April 17

- Recommendations, Events & Announcements
- Case Study: Distribution & Marketing
- Examples: Press Kits
- Clip & Discussion: Practical, creative & ethical considerations as producers
- Lecture/Discussion: Producing Fees & Backend, How to Build a Career as a Producer, Next Steps After School
- Assign final presentation dates

Class #13: Monday, April 24

- **SPECIAL PROJECTS/FINAL PRESENTATIONS ROUND 1**

Class #14: Week of Monday, May 1 (Date & Time TBC)

- **SPECIAL PROJECTS/FINAL PRESENTATIONS ROUND 2**

**PLEASE NOTE: FOOD AND DRINKS ARE NOT PERMITTED INDOORS
IN THE SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX DURING COVID**

All SCA Classes are In-Person Classes:

In accordance with university policy, all classes will be held in person. Students who become ill and need to self-isolate will be supported in their efforts to stay current with classwork and assignments to the extent possible.

Please contact your professor and/or your SA prior to class start time if you become ill and need to self-isolate. Do not come to class if you are experiencing any symptoms of Covid-19 or other illnesses.

Requests for longer term exemptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and require a written accommodation from the USC Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS).

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:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

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

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline – Dial 988 – 24/7 on call
988lifeline.org

A national network of local crisis centers that provides 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 and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

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

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) – (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298
equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment – (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298
usc-advocate.symplcity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services - (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 Campus Support & Intervention – (213) 821-4710
campussupport.usc.edu

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) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)
ombuds.usc.edu

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.