

CTPR 438 - PRACTICUM IN PRODUCING
SYLLABUS
2 UNITS

USC SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS
Fall 2023

Pre-requisite: CTPR 310 - Intermediate Production or
CTPR 425 - Production Planning

MEETING TIMES: Tuesday 4-6:50 pm

CLASSROOM: RZC 111

INSTRUCTOR: Dan Lupovitz
lupovitz@usc.edu
Office Hours: by appointment

STUDENT ASSISTANT: Aric Lopez
ariclope@usc.edu

NOTE: THIS CLASS MAY NOT BE AUDITED.

CLASS OVERVIEW:

This course will provide a comprehensive overview of the world of producing. It is designed to provide the skills for producing a CTPR 480 project and projects produced outside of USC.

We will look at how projects are conceived, developed, packaged, financed and marketed.

Who are you as a producer? What kind of projects do you want to make? How do you get them made?

We'll cover the nuts and bolts of short and long form projects. By the end of the semester, each student should have the practical skills to pitch a project, develop a script, package the talent, schedule and budget a screenplay, manage a production and see it thru it's marketing and distribution.

The course will consist of lecture, discussion, audiovisual presentations and if possible given schedules, guest speakers from within the industry.

PROJECTS:

1. Production Company Name and Logo: Each student will create a name and a logo for their production company. **Due August 29th.**
2. Movie Release Report: Each student will report on a movie, either theatrical, cable or for streaming, released during the term. Reports need to include either distributor or streaming/broadcast venue, creative elements, marketing profile and Rotten Tomatoes score. If theatrical, release needs to include the opening weekend box office, number of screens and per screen average, as published on boxofficemojo.com and the-numbers.com. If cable or streaming, look for any audience hits/scores information published and marketing profile in the trades. Tom Bruggemann's release round up on Mondays published in Indie Wire often shows this. **Due date will be scheduled based on selection.**
3. IP Acquisition Project: Each student will chose a piece of source material such as a book, play, magazine article, remake, etc., from which a screenplay could be adapted. Students will track down who represents the rights and contact them to find out if they are available and any other information on what the representative would require to option the material. Report to class what your source material is and who represents it **by September 26th.** Report to class the results of your pitch to rep to theoretically acquire rights **due by October 31st.**
4. Individual Project Pitch: Each student will pitch a feature idea to the class. The pitch should last no longer than 7 minutes. The class will respond and discuss. **Due September 12th.** Using this input, students will adjust their pitch, and add the creative package of writer, director and cast. **Due October 17th/24th.**
4. Final Pitch: "Production Slate" Pitch: Each student will create a slate of three projects. The centerpiece will be the project they've been pitching, adding to their creative package a budget figure, a production plan, a marketing and a distribution plan with a poster and a tag line. The other two projects will be ideas only for projects in a medium of your choice. The slate as a whole should have a cohesive "personality" that reflects the identity of the producer and their production company. Final projects should be handed in on a digital file. **November 21st/28th.**

GRADING:

Class Participation	15%
Production Company and Logo	5%
Movie Release Presentation	5%
Individual Project Pitch Part One.	15%
Individual Project Pitch Part Two.	15%
IP Acquisition Project	15%
Final Pitch	30%

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	50 and below

Students are expected to be on time and prepared for each class.

Devices

Computers are allowed for the purposes of taking notes and sourcing information for class discussion ONLY. This must be strictly adhered to and will be revoked if not respected.

ABSENCES

Two absences will result in your grade being lowered by one full point (ex: A >B). A third absence will result in your grade being lowered another full point (B >C). Your grade will be lowered by a point for every subsequent absence. Two late arrivals equals one full absence.

If a student misses class due to an emergency, the student must contact the professor prior to class (also please contact, and copy, the class Student Assistant).

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Note: This schedule is approximate. It may be adjusted as required.

Week 1 - August 22nd: COURSE OVERVIEW and WHAT IS A PRODUCER?

Introductions
Course overview
Review syllabus, projects and grading.

What is a producer?

Producer titles and definitions—various types of producers.

What is the work, the craft?

Who are you as a producer?

Assignment: [Students will come up with a name of their production company and a logo. Email your logo to Aric before next class.](#)

Week 2 - August 29th: WHAT DO I WANT TO PRODUCE?

Presentations: [Production Companies and Logos](#)

Creating your slate

Where do ideas come from?

What will work in the market place? How do you know?

What's the right medium for the idea?

What's source material?

What is the marketplace landscape we're in now and how can you make it work for you?

Week 3 - September 5th: STEP ONE: THE ART OF THE PITCH

What makes a good pitch?

What's the story?

Who's the audience

Why should this be made now?

Who are you pitching to?

Pitching with a writer and/or director.

Length, characters, visual language, presentation, the art of the meeting.

Originals versus Adaptations

Log Line Game

Assignment: [Bring an idea to pitch for your Pitch Project. Pitch must be for a feature film.](#)

Week 4 - September 12th: PITCHING

Presentations: Pitch Projects ideas. The class will respond and give input.

Assignment: Adjust your pitch in ways you see it can be improved based on the input from the class.

Choose source material for IP acquisition project

Week 5 - September 19th: WORKING WITH THE WRITER

Presentations: Finish Pitch Projects

Script Strategies

Adaptations versus Originals

Writing steps: drafts and polishes

How does the producer work with the writer? With and without a director.

How to give script notes.

How and when should you replace the writer?

WGA versus non-WGA

Assignment: Choose a writer for your Pitch Project

Prepare to present your source material for IP acquisition project: what is it, who's the author, are they represented, what's your strategy to contact rep and investigate if rights are available and how you could acquire them.

Week 6 - September 26th : WORKING WITH THE DIRECTOR

Presentations: IP Acquisition Project: what is it, who wrote it, who represents it, how will you approach to acquire rights.

Directors

How do you choose a director?

How does the producer work with the director? In development, in preproduction, in production, in post-post-production.

Writer/directors and Director/Producers

How a director brands your project

Assignment: Choose a director for your Pitch Project

Based on feedback, work on your IP Acquisition Project investigation

Week 7 - October 3rd: TALENT PACKING

Actors: Strategies for attaching lead cast

Working with the casting director

Character breakdowns

Who should be in your project and how do you get them?

Marquee value versus Creative Concerns: do they always have to be in conflict

How actors brand your project

Assignment: Choose lead cast for your Pitch Project

Continue work on your IP Acquisition Project Investigation

Week 8 - October 10th: DEALS

Writer Deals: Deal memos, shopping agreements, option purchase agreements, chain of title

Director deals: holding deals, production deals

Actor deals: actor reps, when do you make the deal, what are the components?

Production deals: crew, cast, E&O Insurance

Producer deals: how to take care of yourself

Personal attorneys versus Production attorneys

Negotiation Exercise: Are you a buyer or a seller?

Report to class what the Source Material your source material is and who represents it.

Assignment: Prepare Second Pitch of Pitch Project with creative elements of Writer, Director and key cast.

Continue work on your IP Acquisition Project Investigation

Week 9 - October 17th: STUDIO v INDEPENDENT v INTERNATIONAL

Presentations: Second Pitch, First half

How do you know what kind of project you have and how to best get it made.
Identifying and distinguishing between projects that are right for the studio system, the independent marketplace or the international production or co-production structure.

Sales agents and Pre-sales

Assignment: [Start to determine if your Pitch Project is a Studio, Independent or International production or co-production, what budget level it will be and where you'll shoot it.](#)

[Continue work on your IP Acquisition Project Investigation](#)

Week 10 - October 24th: Television

Presentations: [Second Pitch, Second half](#)

Producing in Television

Format: returning series v limited series v one-offs

Buyers: streamers, broadcasters, premium cable v network, international sales

The producer in television: show runner v non writing produce

Assignment: [Prepare to report on progress on IP Acquisition Project](#)
[Begin to invent ideas for your 2nd and 3rd projects for your slate](#)

Week 11 - October 31st: THE ROLE OF THE PRODUCER IN PRODUCTION

Presentation: [IP Acquisition Project Results](#)

The Producer In Production

Working with the director

Working with department heads

Managing a budget and a schedule

How to determine what size project you have based on your idea and your creative elements.

How to figure out where and how to shoot.

Tax credits, subsidies and rebates...and does the location have the crew? What you save versus what you spend

Assignment: Continue working on your second and third project for your slate. Start to determine if your Pitch Project is a Studio, Independent or International production or co-production, what budget level it will be and where you'll shoot it.

Week 12 - November 7th: MARKETING AND DISTRIBUTION

Marketing campaigns
Advertising versus Publicity
What works and what doesn't?
How does the producer work with the marketing team?
What make a good poster and trailer

Distribution models: platform, limited, wide
VOD, Day and Date
The Collapsing Window

Streamers: Netflix, Amazon, Apple, Hulu

Assignment: Choose a distribution plan and a first choice distributor for your Pitch Project. Create a poster and a tag line for your marketing campaign.
Continue working on idea for your second and third project for your slate

Week 13 - November 14th: FILM FESTIVALS, FILM MARKETS AND FINDING YOUR DISTRIBUTOR

The difference between Festivals and Markets
How do use festivals to find distribution
How to use festivals to launch your film if you already have distribution
The pros and cons of festivals
How to choose the right festival
How to use a film market

Assignment: Prepare to pitch your final version of your Pitch Project, complete with writer, director, lead cast, budget level, production plan, distribution plan and ideal distributor, target audience, a movie poster and a tag line.

Week 14 - November 21st: FINAL PITCH PROJECTS, PART ONE

Week 15 - November 28th: FINAL PITCH PROJECTS, PART TWO

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 Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standard*- <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Safety:

All students are expected to abide by USC School of Cinematic Arts Safety Guidelines. Violations of any of the safety guidelines may result in disciplinary action ranging from confiscation of footage to expulsion from the University.

Stressful Times:

These are stressful times in our country, and Graduate School in and of itself is stressful. I encourage you to take care of yourself and your fellow students. USC provides opportunities for Mindful Meditation <http://mindful.usc.edu> and Mental health counseling is available at the Engemann Student Health Center, 1031 W. 34th Street, 213-740-9355.

Support Systems:

Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call.

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicide crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - 213-740-4900
24/7 on call*

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- based harm. <https://enemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting, options, and additional resources, visit the website: / <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/ Title IX Compliance - (213) 740 5086

Works with Faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class /

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity <http://equity.usc.edu/>

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and micro-aggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentsaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations.

<http://dsp.usc.edu>

Student Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student. EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

Diversity at USC

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. <https://diversity.usc.edu/>

USC Emergency Information

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus unfeasible, <http://emergency.usc.edu/>

USC Department of Public Safety - 213-740-4321 (UPC) and 323-442-1000 (HSC) for 24-hour emergency assistance to report a crime.
Provides overall safety to USC community. <http://dps.usc.edu>

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 OR ROBERT ZEMECKIS COMPLEX