



**CNTV 499:**

**HOW TO MAKE “IT”: MAPPING YOUR WAY TO SUCCESS IN SHOWBIZ**

**2.0 Units**

**Spring 2024 | Tuesdays | 5pm-7:50pm**

**Location: SCI 106**

**Instructor: Steven Brookman**

**Office:** SCA 231

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays, 3:00pm-4:30pm | By Appointment

**Contact Info:** [sbrookma@usc.edu](mailto:sbrookma@usc.edu)

**Teaching Assistant: Charlotte Doyle**

**Contact Info:** [cedoyle@usc.edu](mailto:cedoyle@usc.edu)

**Course Description:**

This dynamic and practical 16-week course, inclusive of a midterm and final exam, is designed to equip students with the tools and skillsets needed to map their way to success in showbusiness. Through highly interactive classes, students will learn best practices in creating film and television projects, starting from the initial stages of sourcing material all the way through the final stages of marketing and advertising. Additionally, the course will provide insights into succeeding across a myriad of career paths in the entertainment industry. Each week, students will engage with panels of “industry insiders,” comprised of the “talent” (writers, directors, producers, and actors), their “reps” (agents, managers, entertainment lawyers, and publicists), and the “buyers” (executives from major studios, premium streaming platforms, production companies, and independent financiers). Be ready to bring your “A+ game!”

**Learning Objectives:**

At the end of this course, students will:

- Understand holistically how media entertainment projects are bought, packaged, and sold in the entertainment industry
- Identify and interpret key patterns of success that can be applied to creating, producing, and marketing entertainment projects
- Develop an entertainment project proposal (film or television-based) consistent with industry practices
- Study and analyze the *power-players*: studios, production companies, talent agencies, and the talent

**Recommended Preparation:** CNTV 375 (Note: This course is not required).

**About the Instructor:**

Steven Brookman (aka “Prof S”) began his 35 year career in Hollywood as an entertainment lawyer, joining the boutique Beverly Hills law firm, Bloom Dekom & Hergott. There he negotiated film & TV deals for top

actors, directors, writers, and producers. He also represented and made the employment deals for many of the industry's most prominent studio executives.

After a 16-year career at the firm, Steven made the move to Creative Artists Agency (CAA) where he is currently a Senior Executive in the Motion Picture Business Affairs group. At CAA, he structures and negotiates today's most sophisticated and cutting-edge deals on behalf of their prestigious talent clients (i.e., actors, directors, writers and producers). He is regularly at the center of the deals involving CAA's packaging of clients for film and television projects. Steven also teaches the Motion Picture and Television deal making course at CAA titled "Let's Make a Deal".

During his college years, Steven coached junior tournament level tennis players (Steven played for Colgate University) and was also Co-Head of the Freestyle Ski Program at Stratton Mountain, Vermont. Additionally, Steven launched the Colgate Entertainment Group ("CEG") in 2011 and Bates Entertainment Arts and Media ("BEAM") in 2019, which are the schools' respective alumni networks for all aspects of the media and entertainment business. Steven also works with Bates College as a member of their Film Advisory Board.

Steven earned his B.A. from Colgate University and his Juris Doctor from University of California, Berkeley, School of Law.

Over the past three years, Prof S refined his culinary skills and fashions himself as a "TOP CHEF" earning the added title of "Chef S."

### **Course Notes**

- This course will be conducted in person.
- No cellphone use is permitted. Laptops may be used to take notes. Laptops are NOT permitted while guest speakers are in attendance. No exceptions.
- Course notes, readings, and written weekly contributions will be conducted through Blackboard.
- A working knowledge of the media landscape, and evolving trends in all forms of media is helpful to course success.
- The course will dissect forms of media and require critical analysis to discern the following qualities: point of view, profitability, ethics, and how these qualities further media narratives.

### Optional Readings and Supplementary Materials

#### **RECOMMENDED:**

[Deadline Hollywood](#)  
[The Hollywood Reporter](#)  
[Variety](#)  
[The Wrap](#)  
[Puck](#)  
[Indiewire](#)

#### **OTHER RESOURCES:**

[Rotten Tomatoes](#)  
[IMDb](#)  
[Box Office Mojo](#)

## **Description and Assessment of Assignments**

### **LET'S MAKE "IT" ASSIGNMENT (5% of grade)**

**Assignment:** One page (double-spaced) – Discuss what you want to “make” in/ of your career? Base your paper on learnings from week 1 of class.

### **HOW TO PACKAGE A PROJECT AND “TAKE IT OUT” ASSIGNMENT (5% of grade)**

**Assignment:** One page (double-spaced) essay – Identify and state your greatest takeaways from the packaging discussion held on week 3 of class.

### **“LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION” ASSIGNMENT (5% of grade)**

**Assignment:** One page (double-spaced) essay – Imagine you are a producer “taking out” a project. Choose between developing/producing this as a studio film or an independent film. Please analyze your choice and explain your reasoning. Base your findings on week 4 of class.

### **MIDTERM PROJECT (25% of grade)**

#### **In-Class Group Presentation (“Packaging A Project + Taking It Out”)**

The class will be split into groups of approximately 5 students each. Each group will serve as the producer of a prospective project (originated/ created by the group) to be packaged and taken out to studios/financiers to “set up” for development and production. The professor will provide a list of proposed elements for the “package” (e.g., various source materials – IP; writer, director and cast lists). The professor will also provide potential studios/financiers where the “package” can be shopped.

Each group’s task is to choose from all the above elements to create the “package”/the “pitch”. Each group will also put together a “pitch deck” to be used during their presentation as they explain their reasoning as to why they have selected their specific elements, why they believe their project is highly marketable as well as their strategy in taking out the project to their selected studios/financiers.

Students will create and submit a PowerPoint presentation (7-10 slides) to Blackboard on Week 9 of the course and present on March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

### **PENS DOWN / WE’RE ROLLING ASSIGNMENT (5% of grade)**

**Assignment:** One page (double spaced) – You are a first time writer/director working on a spec script. Based on your creative headspace, what genre of film would you choose (AND WHY) as it relates to writing/directing your first project. Also, please write a short treatment upon which your spec script will be based.

### **KEEPING IT REAL: THE WORLD OF DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING (5% of grade)**

**Assignment:** One page (double spaced) essay – One page (double spaced) – If you were to create a documentary film (feature-length or short) what topic would you choose? Please discuss why you chose this topic and how you would execute it pulling from my “fireside” chat with Maggie Contreras.

### **FINAL EXAM PAPER (35% of grade)**

**Assignment:** Three page (double-spaced) Essay

Write a case study drawing upon our class lectures and guest speakers over the course of the semester. Choose an example from your specific area of interest (e.g. creating content, producing a project, being a professional working as an executive, talent representative, the “talent”, on set production personnel, etc.) and analyze how it or they made “it” (created an original piece of content) and how you will make “IT” (kickstart a successful career) in this endeavor.

You will be expected to cite three to five academic sources in your final paper.

The paper should showcase BOTH:

- 1) How an individual in the entertainment industry created a film or television project that was later commercially distributed.
- 2) How an individual in the entertainment industry created a company, transformed an existing business practice, or facilitated innovation in the entertainment industry.

## Participation (15% of grade)

### CLASS PARTICIPATION:

***Each class will require participation from students.*** Students must participate by answering questions, raising their hand to present ideas & thoughtful discussion, and attending class. Students who do not participate will not earn full credit and will receive a deducted final participation grade. Cellphone use is *not* permitted.

## Grading Breakdown

Assignment grades are weighted according to the following breakdown:

Assessment Tool (assignments)	Points	% of Grade
Let’s Make It – 1 page pager	60	5%
How to Package a Project and “Take It Out”– 1 page paper	60	5%
Lights, Camera, and Action – 1 page paper	60	5%
Midterm Project	250	25%
Pens Down / We’re Rolling – 1 page paper	60	5%
It’s a Barbenheimer World – 1 page paper	60	5%
Participation	100	15%
Final Exam Paper	350	35%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

Letter grade	Corresponding numerical point range
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

### **Assignment Submission Policy**

Paper assignments will be turned in through Turnitin on Blackboard. Assignment due dates will be given during class. The midterm presentation will be conducted in class. The final paper will be submitted through Turnitin on Blackboard.

### **Grading Timeline**

Grades will be processed and ready for a student to review within 10 days of the assignment being turned in. Weekly discussion posts will be commented on by professor within 5 days of assignment submission. Assignment grades will be posted on Blackboard for students to review.

### **Late Assignments**

Late assignments will be deducted 5% for each day late with no exceptions unless the student has contacted the professor with a strong excuse and has defined a new submittal date in agreement with the professor.

### **Attendance Policy**

In person attendance is mandatory for this class. Missing more than two classes, without a valid reason approved by the professor, will result in the loss of a half a grade (e.g. B+ to a B), an additional half grade will be deducted for each unexcused absence after the first two. Zoom does not constitute attending the class.

Please email the professor to request permission to miss class. This will only be granted in the case of severe illness or a family emergency.

### **Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies**

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

## Course Schedule

### COURSE SCHEDULE: A WEEKLY BREAKDOWN

	Topics	Deliverables/Due Dates
<b>Week 1 – Jan 9<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>INTRO: LET’S MAKE “IT”</b> ----- <b>Part 1:</b> Getting to Know Each Other ----- <b>Halftime:</b> 10 minute break ----- <b>Part 2:</b> Where We Are & Where We’re Going – The Map...	<b>Assignment:</b> One page (double spaced) – Discuss what you want to “make” in/of your career?  DUE: January 14 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59PM
<b>Week 2 – Jan 16<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>A DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH: SOURCING THE IP</b> ----- <b>Part 1:</b> An overview of IP-source material ----- <b>Halftime:</b> 10 minute break ----- <b>Part 2:</b> Conversation with... Book Agent & Author	
<b>Week 3 – Jan 23<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>TIE IT UP IN A NICE LITTLE BOW</b> ----- <b>Part 1:</b> How to Package a Project & “Take it Out” ----- <b>Halftime:</b> 10 minute break ----- <b>Part 2:</b> Conversation with... Literary Agent	<b>Assignment:</b> One page (double spaced) – Discuss your greatest takeaways from today’s “packaging” discussion.  DUE: January 28 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59PM
<b>Week 4 – Jan 30<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION</b> ----- <b>Part 1:</b> Producing a Studio Film Conversation with...Producer ----- <b>Halftime:</b> 10 minute break ----- <b>Part 2:</b> Producing an Independent Film	<b>Assignment:</b> One page (doubled spaced) – You are a producer “taking out” a project. Choose between developing/producing this as a studio film or an independent film. Please discuss your choice and why.  DUE: February 4 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59PM

	Conversation with...Indie Producer	
<b>Week 5 – Feb 6<sup>th</sup></b>	<p><b>“ENTOURAGE TIME”: MEET THE PLAYERS</b> ----- <b>Part 1:</b> Conversation with... Agent/ Manager/ Publicist ----- <b>Halftime:</b> 10 minute break ----- <b>Part 2:</b> Conversation with... Agent/Manager/ Publicist</p>	
<b>Week 6 – Feb 13<sup>th</sup></b>	<p><b>THE ART OF THE DEAL</b> ----- <b>Part 1:</b> Film/TV + Streaming Deals ----- <b>Halftime:</b> 10 minute break ----- <b>Part 2:</b> Conversation with... Entertainment Lawyer &amp; Business Affairs Executive</p>	
<b>Week 7<sup>th</sup> – Feb 20<sup>th</sup></b>	<p><b>YOU’RE THE BOSS NOW / IT’S A CINEMATIC “UNIVERSE”</b> ----- <b>Part 1:</b> Conversation with... Senior Studio Executive ----- <b>Halftime:</b> 10 minute break ----- <b>Part 2:</b> Conversation with... Development/ Creative Executive</p>	
<b>Week 8 – Feb 27<sup>th</sup></b>	<p><b>IT’S A HARD KNOCK LIFE / LET’S GET REAL</b> ----- <b>Part 1:</b> Producing a Live Stage Production Conversation with...Theater Producer ----- <b>Halftime:</b> 10 minute break ----- <b>Part 2:</b> Producing a Reality Show Conversation with...Reality Producer</p>	
<b>Week 9 – March 5<sup>th</sup></b>	<p><b>MIDTERM PROJECT</b> ----- In-Class Evaluation: Group Presentation (TBD)</p>	Students will create and submit a PowerPoint presentation (7-10 slides) to Blackboard.
<b>Week 10 – March 12<sup>th</sup></b>	<p><b>SPRING BREAK</b> -----</p>	

	<b>No Class</b>	
<b>Week 11 – March 19<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>PENS DOWN / WE'RE ROLLING</b> ----- <b>Part 1:</b> Conversation with... Writer ----- <b>Halftime:</b> 10 minute break ----- <b>Part 2:</b> Conversation with... Director	<b>Assignment:</b> One page (double spaced) – You are a first time writer/director working on a spec script. Based on your creative headspace, what genre of film would you choose (AND WHY) as it relates to writing/directing your first project. Also, please write a short treatment upon which your spec script will be based.  DUE: March 25 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59PM
<b>Week 12 – March 26<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>MUSIC TO MY EARS / IPOD + BROADCAST = PODCAST</b> ----- <b>Part 1:</b> Conversation with... Music Agent ----- <b>Halftime:</b> 10 minute break ----- <b>Part 2:</b> Conversation with... Podcast Host	
<b>Week 13 – April 2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>STAR POWER</b> ----- <b>Part 1:</b> Conversation with... Actor ----- <b>Halftime:</b> 10 minute break ----- <b>Part 2:</b> Conversation with... Casting Director	
<b>Week 14 – April 9<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>FROM THE GROUND-UP: BUILDING A PRODUCTION COMPANY</b> ----- <b>Part 1:</b> Conversation with...TBD ----- <b>Halftime:</b> 10 minute break ----- <b>Part 2:</b> Conversation with...TBD	
<b>Week 15 – April 16<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>KEEPING IT REAL: THE WORLD OF DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING</b> ----- <b>Part 1:</b> Conversation with... Documentary Filmmaker ----- <b>Halftime:</b> 10 minute break ----- <b>Part 2:</b> Conversation with... Documentary Filmmaker	<b>Assignment:</b> One page (double spaced) – If you were to create a documentary film (feature-length or short) what topic would you choose? Please discuss why you chose this topic and how you would execute it pulling from my “fireside” chat with Maggie Contreras.  DUE: April 21 <sup>st</sup> , 11:59PM



<p><b>Week 16 – April 23<sup>rd</sup></b></p>	<p><b>BUILDING YOUR BRAND / THE PRESENT IS ALL WE HAVE</b></p> <p>-----</p> <p><b>Part 1:</b> A discussion about being the best version of yourself and the importance of “high-impact” work.</p> <p>-----</p> <p><b>Halftime:</b> 10 minute break</p> <p>-----</p> <p><b>Part 2:</b> A discussion about staying in your lane and keeping your eye on the ball.</p>	
<p><b>FINAL EXAM – May 7<sup>th</sup>, 5pm</b></p>	<p><b>THAT’S A WRAP</b></p> <p>-----</p> <p>Final thoughts...YOU’VE “MADE IT!”*</p>	<p><b>DUE: May 7<sup>nd</sup>, 5PM</b></p> <p>Three page (double-spaced) essay (see assignment description)</p>

**\*Class Theme Song: We are the Champions by Queen**

## Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

### Academic Integrity

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see [the student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

### Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. [The Office of Student Accessibility Services](#) (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at [osas.usc.edu](http://osas.usc.edu). You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto:osasfrontdesk@usc.edu).

### Support Systems:

[Counseling and Mental Health](#) - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

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

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086

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

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

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101

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

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

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

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.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or [otfp@med.usc.edu](mailto:otfp@med.usc.edu)

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.