

# Online Research Seminar Syllabus

## 1. Course Details

<b>Title</b>	Business of Producing: Entrepreneurship in Entertainment & Media		
<b>Mode</b>	Online lectures and mentor sessions		
<b>Targeted Students</b>	Students with an interest in learning the basics of deal making and negotiations as seen through the prism of the Entertainment and Media Businesses.		
<b>Prerequisites</b>	<b>High School Students</b>	Required course/Knowledge	N/A—other than a baseline interest in the subject.
		Recommended Materials for preparing for the course	TBD
	<b>College Students</b>	Required course/Knowledge	N/A—other than a baseline interest in the subject.
		Recommended Materials for preparing for the course	TBD

## 2. Program Introduction and Objectives

<b>Introduction</b>	<p><b><u>Background and Description</u></b></p> <p>This specialized course is an examination of what it means to be a content producer. In the class we will look into what makes Film, TV, live and web content creation so distinct and challenges and opportunities in the evolving media landscape.</p> <p>The course will take a close look at the inevitable battles between commerce and art. It will focus on identifying the factors of risk versus reward in selecting projects, and seeing them to fruition.</p> <p>As potential entrepreneurial producers, the class will study techniques in leveraging limited amounts of time and capital into maximum results; while attempting to balance unbridled optimism against sensible business logic.</p>
	<p><b><u>COURSE OBJECTIVES</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the role and responsibilities of being a producer.</li> <li>• Establishing a way of judging the artistic merit and economic possibilities of a project at various stages from inception to completion.</li> <li>• To learn the infrastructures of companies in the entertainment industry, and to understand how to effectively work within them to successfully produce content.</li> <li>• • To examine morality in the film business. How to balance one's personal values and quality of life in a difficult business environment - What are a producer's objectives, and how is one willing to behave to get them achieved?</li> </ul>

### 3. Program Schedule

Week		Lecture Topic	Mentor Session (lab/case study, etc.)	Assignment	Reading Materials
1	Topic	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>Overview of the Film and Television Business and The Development Process</b>	Prepare three ideas (a one-sentence bullet point) for possible content you'd like to produce (e.g. movie, TV series, Web series, play, opera, etc.)	TBD
	Detail	<p>Framework for the course, overview of assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to course and review of syllabus.</li> <li>• Description of assignments.</li> <li>• Producing for the feature film industry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the responsibilities of the independent producer?</li> <li>• How does that differ from being a “hired gun” at a studio?</li> <li>• What do credits mean and why are they so important?</li> <li>• The infrastructure of the film business</li> <li>• Studios vs. Independents: The blending of the boundaries</li> </ul> <p>What can go wrong for an independent producer</p>		
2	Topic	<b>Building the Foundation of a Project: Idea Generation</b>	<b>Development Process and Options</b>	<p>Finalize your story choice.</p> <p>Expand your logline concept into a paragraph about the story, genre and why it's compelling</p>	TBD
	Detail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying ideas for film</li> <li>• The acquisition of underlying material – where to find it and how to get it • Life rights, sequels, English language remakes. The legal necessities</li> <li>• How creative ideas are worked into sellable properties</li> <li>• The feasibility of selling a pitch</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attaching a director and actors to a project</li> <li>• Convincing artists to share the risk with financiers</li> <li>• Commerce vs. Art</li> <li>• Using deferrals as a budgetary device</li> <li>• The representation business - agents, managers, lawyers—</li> <li>• facilitators or adversaries?</li> <li>• The transactional cost of putting a film together</li> <li>• The difference between above-the-line and below-the-line fees</li> </ul>		
3	Topic	<b>Project Financing and the Right Platform</b>	<b>Production: The Deal-Selling the Film Before Making</b>	Contemporary Media Deal Review for	TBD

	<b>Detail</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to put a financial value on your project</li> <li>Preparing a proper budget, for financing purposes</li> <li>Sources of financing – Private Equity Investors, hedge funds, state tax incentives, gap financing</li> <li>Pre-sales (foreign vs. domestic?)</li> <li>The complexities of bank loans</li> <li>Completion bonds, insurance (cast, production, E+O), etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creating a competitive sales environment</li> <li>Who negotiates and makes the deal?</li> <li>Who gets credit for the deal – the press release</li> <li>Pitching a project to a studio</li> <li>Production deal versus negative pick-up</li> <li>Hollywood accounting</li> <li>Risk vs. Reward</li> </ul>	Discussion	
4	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Production and Danger Zones</b>	<b>Positioning The Completed Project for Sales to Distributors</b>	For this week, submit a list of 3-4 comparable projects or films to yours.	TBD
	<b>Detail</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Putting together a team – delineation of producer duties</li> <li>The collaboration between producers and the director – who's the boss</li> <li>Choosing the proper department heads</li> <li>Studio shooting versus locations</li> <li>Union versus non-union crew</li> <li>Watching the costs – hiring an accountant and payroll service</li> <li>Post Production - the unpleasantness of completion and delivery</li> <li>Music and other clearances</li> <li>Satisfying the completion bonds</li> <li>Computing deferrals and other obligations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to set-up a competitive environment for a second time</li> <li>The use of Producer's representatives, and film festivals</li> <li>The anatomy of an acquisition deal</li> <li>The dangers inherent in the terms and conditions in a film contract</li> </ul>	<p>Begin to lay out your final project.</p> <p>Create a budget (I will post sample budgets you can use as guides)</p>	
5	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Marketing &amp; Distribution</b>	<b>Tying it All Together to Make Sense of the Business</b>		
	<b>Detail</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Press agents - The power and financial benefits of free publicity</li> <li>How critics and publicists can aid or hinder marketing efforts</li> <li>Test marketing and group research</li> <li>The uncertainty of tracking</li> <li>The power of the internet and alternative outreach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The "old boys club" vs. the "new way" of gaining entrance</li> <li>How new technologies factor into the financing of creative content</li> <li>New platforms for distribution and marketing</li> <li>Overall review of the role of the producer as</li> </ul>	Put together Financing Plan and Marketing & Distribution Plan	TBD

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The financial risks of awards campaigns</li> </ul>	entrepreneur, and look to see what the future holds. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is it possible to run a sustainable and profitable business over a long period of time as a producer?</li> <li>• The “survivors and winners”. How did they do it?</li> </ul>		
6	<b>Final Project Review</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review key elements of class and concepts;</li> <li>• Work with students on final projects to ensure critical thinking and analysis is incorporated into final projects (Students should have a rough draft of their presentation and approach);</li> <li>• Key Takeaways and applications to future work and classes</li> </ul>				
7	<b>Final Written Reporting and Oral Presentation</b>				

### Assignment Schedule

<b>Total Number of Assignments</b>	4 times
<b>Deadline</b>	<u>  7  </u> Days after class
<b>Mentor is needed to review and grade assignment.</b>	
<b>A standard answer will be provided.</b>	
<b>There will be <u>  0  </u> quiz.</b>	

#### **4. Requirements and Evaluations of Final Written Report and Oral Presentation**

*Final project will be a group project and presentation in teams of 3.*

Students are required to meet the following objectives before attending the session in Week 5:

- Have laid out the rough format of their final project and have created their log line, comps and analysis.

Students are required to meet the following objectives before attending the session in Week 6:

- Have completed a rough draft of their final marketing and distribution plan

#### **5.1 Final Project:**

A large portion of your grade in this course will be determined by your FINAL assignment; the assignment is an ongoing, cumulative process that culminates with a pitch that covers all aspects of production of a full-length motion picture.

Each week you will submit an assignment based on recent topics covered in class. During the last class meeting, each group will present their finalized project. Assignment requirements will be discussed at length during each class meeting.

#### **Weekly submission formatting guidelines**

- Typed
- Double-spaced
- 12-point *Times New Roman Font*
- One-inch margins

#### **Assignments will be judged on:**

- Integrating information discussed in lectures.
- Choosing material and attaching elements to create an attractive package.
- Coming up with a financial plan that makes sense from a potential profitability standpoint (could be a \$100 million budget, could be \$50,000 budget)
- Employing a sensible approach to a business that doesn't often make sense.
- Ability to collaborate organizationally and identify the strength and weaknesses of team members.
- Ability to adjust to curveballs. Responding to problems [from professor] with sound judgment and quick action.
- Making a good project – one that was worth the grief and you could be proud of.

#### **Assignments will not be graded and judged on:**

- Things that would be impossible for anyone who is not deeply experienced and has been in the industry.

#### **5.2 Final Oral Presentation**

Final Class will be fully devoted to oral presentations of finished projects (in conjunction with written papers)

Your grade will include the professor's judgment of the commercial and artistic potential of your projects, as well as the overall quality and effort of your weekly work. In the final analysis, project must make artistic and commercial sense.

Oral Presentation Requirements: Will pitch their final project and pitch deck to the Professor and the class on the final day of class.

## **6. Evaluation**

*Percentage basis of evaluation (must total 100%):*

- Participation: \_\_\_\_30%\_\_\_\_;
- Assignments/Quizzes: \_\_\_\_30%\_\_\_\_;
- Final Project: \_\_\_\_40%\_\_\_\_ (Oral: \_\_\_\_20%\_\_\_\_; Written: \_\_\_\_20%\_\_\_\_).