Elizabeth Coffman School of Communication, Room 003 Loyola University Chicago Fall 2015

# COMM 371: Producing Film and Digital Media

## **Course Objectives:**

Producing Film and Digital Media examines how to create, budget, finance, visualize and translate knowledge into accessible media formats. Students will research story topics, develop proposals, practice 'pitching', casting, identifying financial support, and translating their ideas into a prospectus and related formats. Students will produce and deliver (both individually and as groups) presentations, web sites, short videos and/or 'teasers' while learning standard software for producing feature films. Students will each propose their own project, but will work in groups to deliver materials. (You will assist at least two other students). We will review relevant films, interactive sites, games, educational materials and other applied promotional, media opportunities.

### **Learning outcomes:**

Story development in multi-media environments, prospectus/preproduction work, data visualization, public speaking, movie budgeting software basics (Movie Magic), collaborative skills, fundraising, persuasive writing techniques, networking techniques, educational applications, broadcast requirements

### **Required Readings and Materials:**

- Producing and Directing the Short Film, 5<sup>th</sup> ed, Peter Rea, Focal Press, 2015
- Podcasts—KCRW's "<u>The Business</u>"—great collection of info on film scene
- Articles, available on Sakai

If you have questions, concerns or documented disability, please see me and/or the Wellness Center before there is a problem. Turn in documentation to Wellness Center.

# Assignments:

Story Script/Treatment/Landscape Survey	5 points	
Pitch session (presentation)	5 points	
Lookbook	5 points	
Prospectus with Schedule, Budget,	10 points	
Midterm Exam	35 points	
Final Project:		
Final Prospectus: script/treatment/ budget/schedule/teaser/ distribution plan,		
Public Presentation (Group)	35 points	
Participation	5 points	

# **Grade Requirements and Course Expectations:**

Regular attendance is strongly encouraged. A note from the doctor or infirmary will excuse you for illness. Send me an email if missing class. Work must be turned in on time. Speak with me *before* the deadline is you have a conflict. A late grade results in a 10% reduction per week. Always Xerox/Print/Backup a copy of your work for yourself in case my copy disappears. Written work must be typed and must be done for this course. Plagiarism (the copying of material without appropriate acknowledgement) results in an "F" for the course.

Syllabus may change during the semester. You are responsible for checking Sakai site every week.

Grade scale is standard but based on numerical scores. Percentage grades are not rounded up. An 89.45% is a B+, not an A-. There is no final exam in this class.

# **Course Outline:**

Week 1 INTRODUCTION Aug. 25th

- Producing for the 21st century web, television and feature film industry
- What are the responsibilities of the independent producer?
- Infrastructure of the broadcast media business; transmedia and interactive possibilities for entertainment, information & education
- Screenplay presentations
- Do a landscape survey—What else is out there.
- Identifying ideas and research opportunities
- Call experts in field and ask them what they think should be in there.
- Good proposal writing and outlines; Designing impact plan first.
- HOMEWORK: Identify script, documentary story, or transmedia/web project; Read Rea, Ch. 1, 2
- Listen to "The Business." Search podcasts and be prepared to report on one on a topic that interests you. You are welcome to find another relevant podcast.

## Week 2 THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS/DESIGNING FOR IMPACT Sept.. 1

- Due: Story/Script ideas and/or excerpt on Assignments.
- The acquisition of underlying material book options, scripts, etc..
- Legal necessities
- How to put a financial value on your project. Preparing a proper budget, for financing purposes
- Sources of financing Private Equity Investors, state tax incentives, grants, foundations, loans
- Digital fundraising—Kickstarter, Indie GoGo—weary audience?.
- Guest Speakers: Scott Foley, Josh Rosenberg, Aaron Greer
- HOMEWORK: Work on landscape survey; lookbook; prospectus/treatment draft. Read Rea, Ch. 3,4

- DUE: Prospectus draft (sans top sheet); landscape survey
- Attaching directors, writers, experts, scientists or other relevant participants to a project
- Convincing participants to share the risk with financiers
- The difference between above-the-line and below-the-line fees
- Networking and social media
- Establish final project teams
- Sustainable media practices—process, test screenings, content,
- Movie Magic—scheduling, budgeting the script
- Movie Magic overview, **SKYPE Michael Sable**
- HOMEWORK: Work on Budget, Schedule; Read Rea Ch. 5; "Film festivals" on Sakai

### Week 4 PROPOSALS DUE--PROJECT FINANCING, CASTING Sept. 15

- DUE: Schedule, Budget draft
- Auditions, casting agents
- Media Distributors—educational, commercial; community screenings, Digital/VOD, self-distribution), supply chains, marketing, impact plan
- GUEST SPEAKERS: Aaron Greer, Troy Pryor
- HOMEWORK, Prepare Pitch, finish prospectus

## Week 5 LOOKBOOKS DUE -- THE DEAL – PITCHING Sept. 22nd

- DUE: Pitch in-class
- Pitching a project to a studio or other potential partners, commissioning editors, etc...
- Production deal versus negative pick-up
- Ins and outs of grant world; private donors
- GUEST SPEAKERS (Tom Weinberg, Michael Zarouny)
- HOMEWORK, Read Rea, Ch. 19; Watch 48 Hours on Amanda Knox

#### Week 6 CALENDARS DUE - PRODUCTION DANGER ZONES Sept. 29th

- **DUE: Final Prospectus** with Schedule, budget
- Putting together a team delineation of producer duties
- The collaboration between producers and the director (or others)– who's the boss
- Choosing the proper department heads; location shooting, union crews
- Hiring an accountant and payroll service
- Post Production planning—closed captions, animation work, etc..
- Music and other clearances
- Producer's representatives and film/media festival planning
- Acquisition deals, contracts and markets
- GUEST SPEAKER, Bob Hercules
- HOMEWORK, Complete Midterm online by 10/12

## NO CLASS OCT. 6<sup>TH</sup>-- FALL BREAK

Week 8	BMARKETING, OUTREACH AND DISTRIBUTION	Oct. 13th
•	Press agents - The power and financial benefits of free publicity Educational components and support Test marketing and group research The power of the internet and alternative outreach GUEST SPEAKER: Beckie Stocchetti, Kartemquin Films HOMEWORK, Work on distribution plans	
Week 9	PRODUCING FOR BROADCAST, CABLE, VOD, Web	Oct 20 <sup>th</sup>
•	How new technologies factor into the financing of creative content New platforms for distribution and marketing Creating and selling a reality TV or specialty series (science, travel, comedy, GUEST SPEAKER, Doug Longhini, producer, CBS 48 Hours HOMEWORK, Work on outreach plan	etc)
Week 1	WEB, DISTRIBUTION & OUTREACH PLAN	Oct. 27 <sup>th</sup>
•	Is it possible to run a sustainable and profitable business over a long period of freestanding media producer? Educational examples SKYPE Brigid Maher; Mama Sherpas, designing for impact Work in Groups; HOMEWORK: Revise scripts for final, teasers, etc	
Week 1	1 FIELD VISIT	Nov. 3 <sup>rd</sup>
•	TBA; HOMEWORK: Work on teasers	
Week 1	2 Producing for WTTW	Nov. 10 <sup>th</sup>
•	DUE: Draft work for final proposals with visualization Guest speaker; (IFP) Location scouting HOMEWORK: Work on team projects	
Week 1	Work on Group Prospectus in Class	Nov. 17th
•	Films screening; Meet at Damen to see alumni T.J. Berden's "Full of Grace" Post screening discussion with T.J.	at 7:00
Week 1	4 PUBLIC PRESENTATION	Nov. 24 <sup>h</sup>
•	DUE: GROUPS PRESENT PROSPECTUS, FINANCING, STORYBOA OUTREACH AND DISTRIBUTION PLANS 10 – 12 minute presentation	
Week 1	FINAL PROSPECTUS AND MEDIA PROJECTS DUE BY	Dec. 1 <sup>st</sup>