

CP 310-830: Film Production Company Development

Winter Quarter 2022-2023

Mondays - 5:45pm-9:00pm cst

Location: Online, Synchronous via Zoom (<https://depaul.zoom.us/j/3878089093>)

Instructor: Abby Plante

Office Hours: Mondays 4:15pm-5:45pm via Zoom; additional availability virtually via Zoom session. Please schedule with me via email.

Email: gplante@depaul.edu (please allow 48 hours for a response)

Course Description:

This course introduces students to how a production company operates. Students will learn how to build a slate by identifying intellectual properties and developing them into viable projects. There will be an emphasis on story development with a focus on optioning material, talent packaging, and fundraising.

Course Goals

- Students will understand the role of the creative producer from a creative project's concept to completion defined by the PGA guidelines for the "Produced By" credit.
- Students will become familiar with the importance of a clear chain of title for distribution and how to option a property.
- Students will understand the use of state incentives for film financing.
- Students will demonstrate knowledge of the ins and outs of a production company and the development process, from concept to pitching to industry buyers.

Additional Material:

Additional reading and screenings may be provided by the instructor, either linked in the syllabus or posted to D2L. Specifics to be outlined during the course.

D2L

You will be using D2L extensively in this course. To log on, go to: <https://d2l.depaul.edu/d2l/home> and enter using your Campus Connect login and password. Once you are logged on, click on the course number link and you will find links to the syllabus, course outline, video lectures, discussion forums, weekly assignments, etc.

Course Policies

All students should use their depaul.edu email addresses and ensure this information is up to date in D2L.

Changes to Syllabus

This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during the quarter. If a change occurs, it will be thoroughly addressed during class, sent via email, and/or posted under Announcements in D2L.

As a portion of this course may include discussions with guest speakers, please note guests' schedules are subject to availability and may change at the last minute, in which case students will be notified via email and an alternative will be provided for class.

COVID-19 Health and Safety Precautions

Keeping our DePaul community safe is of utmost importance in the pandemic. Students, faculty and staff are expected to (1) wear a mask as required at all times while indoors on campus; (2) refrain from eating and drinking in classrooms; (3) keep current with their COVID-19 vaccinations or exemptions; (4) stay home if sick; (5) participate in any required COVID-19 testing; (6) complete the online Health and Safety Guidelines for Returning to Campus training; and (7) abide by the Chicago Emergency Travel Advisory. By doing these things, we are Taking Care of DePaul, Together. The recommendations may change as local, state, and federal guidelines evolve. Students who do not abide by the mask requirement may be subject to the student conduct process and will be referred to the Dean of Students Office. Students who have a medical reason for not complying with any requirements should register with DePaul's Center for Student with Disabilities (CSD).

All faculty, staff and students must inform the university if they have tested positive for COVID-19, received a COVID-19 diagnosis, they learn of a positive COVID-19 case at DePaul, or they believe they were exposed to COVID-19. Learn more and find how to report a case about yourself or someone else on DePaul's [COVID-19 Reporting Protocol webpage](#).

Respect for Diversity and Inclusion at DePaul University as aligned with our Vincentian Values

At DePaul, our mission calls us to explore "what must be done" in order to respect the inherent dignity and identity of each human person. We value diversity because it is part of our history, our traditions and our future. We see diversity as an asset and a strength that adds to the richness of classroom learning. In my course, I strive to include a range of perspectives and teaching pedagogies. I also encourage open dialogue and spaces for students to express their unique identities and perspectives. I am open to having difficult conversations and will strive to create an inclusive space that values all perspectives. If at any time the classroom experience does not live up to this expectation, please feel free to contact me via email or at office hours.

DePaul University's Land Acknowledgement

At DePaul University, we acknowledge that we live and work on traditional Native lands that are

home to well over one hundred different tribal nations. We extend our respect to all of them, including the Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Odawa nations, who signed the Treaty of Chicago in 1821 and 1833. We also recognize the Ho-Chunk, Myaamia, Menominee, Illinois Confederacy, and Peoria people who also maintained relationships with this land.

We acknowledge that these sacred homelands were ruptured by the European invasion of the Americas. In 1493, Pope Alexander VI promulgated the Doctrine of Discovery, which seized Native lands and resources with impunity. This doctrine has been used by countries throughout the Americas, including the U.S., to legitimize colonial policies of displacement and genocide toward Native peoples and to justify colonial legacies of white superiority and global capitalism.

We appreciate that today Chicago is home to the sixth-largest urban Native population in the United States. We further recognize and support the enduring presence of Native peoples among our faculty, staff, and student body. And in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul, we reaffirm our commitment, both as an institution and as individuals, to help make our community and our society a more equitable, welcoming, and just place for all.

Online Course Evaluations

Evaluations are a way for students to provide valuable feedback regarding their instructor and the course. Detailed feedback will enable the instructor to continuously tailor teaching methods and course content to meet the learning goals of the course and the academic needs of the students. They are a requirement of the course and are key to continue to provide you with the highest quality of teaching. The evaluations are anonymous; the instructor and administration do not track who entered what responses. A program is used to check if the student completed the evaluations, but the evaluation is completely separate from the student's identity. Since 100% participation is our goal, students are sent periodic reminders over three weeks. Students do not receive reminders once they complete the evaluation. Please see <https://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching/Pages/online-teaching-evaluations.aspx> for additional information.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. All students are expected to abide by the University's Academic Integrity Policy which prohibits cheating and other misconduct in student coursework. Publicly sharing or posting online any prior or current materials from this course (including exam questions or answers), is considered to be providing unauthorized assistance prohibited by the policy. Both students who share/post and students who access or use such materials are considered to be cheating under the Policy and will be subject to sanctions for violations of Academic Integrity. More information can be found at <https://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching/academic-integrity/Pages/default.aspx>.

Posting work on online sites, such as Hero

All students are expected to abide by the University's Academic Integrity Policy which prohibits cheating and other misconduct in student coursework. Publicly sharing or posting online any prior or current materials from this course (including exam questions or answers), is considered to be providing unauthorized assistance prohibited by the policy. Both students who share/post and students who access or use such materials are considered to be cheating under the Policy and will be subject to sanctions for violations of Academic Integrity.

Copyright Statement:

The materials and discussions provided by the instructor in this course are for the use of the students enrolled in the course. Copyrighted course materials and others may not be further disseminated.

Academic Policies

All students are required to manage their class schedules each term in accordance with the deadlines for enrolling and withdrawing as indicated in the [University Academic Calendar](#).

Information on enrollment, withdrawal, grading and incompletes can be found at:

<http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/PoliciesandProcedures.aspx>

Incomplete Grades

An incomplete grade is a special, temporary grade that may be assigned by an instructor when unforeseeable circumstances prevent a student from completing course requirements by the end of the term and when otherwise the student had a record of satisfactory progress in the course. All incomplete requests must be approved by the instructor of the course and a CDM Associate Dean. Only exceptions cases will receive such approval. Information about the Incomplete Grades policy can be found at

<http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/Grading-Policies.aspx>

Preferred Name & Gender Pronouns

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. I will gladly honor addressing you by a preferred name and/or personal pronouns. Please advise me of this early in the quarter so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. Please also note that students may choose to identify within the University community with a preferred first name that differs from their legal name and may also update their gender. The preferred first name will appear in University related systems and documents except where the use of the legal name is necessitated or required by University business or legal need. For more information and instructions on how to do so,

please see the Student Preferred Name and Gender Policy at <http://policies.depaul.edu/policy/policy.aspx?pid=332>

Students with Disabilities

Students seeking disability-related accommodations are required to register with DePaul's Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) enabling them to access accommodations and support services to assist with their success. There are two office locations:

- Loop Campus (312) 362-8002; Lincoln Park Campus (773) 325-1677; Email: csd@depaul.edu

Please note this is a safe space and any need for an accommodation due to a disability of any kind will be honored by me. Students who register with the Center for Students with Disabilities are also invited to contact Dr. Gregory Moorhead, Director of the Center, privately to discuss how he may assist in facilitating the accommodations to be used in a course. This is best done early in the term. The conversation will remain confidential to the extent possible. Please see <https://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/about/departments/Pages/csd.aspx> for Services and Contact Information.

Trigger Warnings

The films, shows, clips, readings, lectures, student work, and class discussions in this course may engage deeply with potentially sensitive or traumatizing material, such as: violence, sexual assault/rape, sexism, racism, police brutality, transphobia, homophobia, abuse, suicide, blood, and body-shaming among other issues. I will note especially graphic/intense content that intend to present and will do my best to foster a classroom environment in which we can relate safely, courageously, compassionately, and contemplatively with difficult and important content each week.

In that spirit, I ask that you label potential triggers in your written work submitted on D2L, and then again before we read aloud or discuss that work in class.

If you would like more specific or personalized triggers identified throughout the course (especially ones not named above), email me and I will do my best to flag them for you. If you believe any piece of course content may be potentially triggering to you, I will happily search for replacement material that you may view or read instead.

Content Changes – Depending on time factors, the assignments projected for the term may require slight alteration or rescheduling. I will contact you via email with any deviations from the syllabus. Please ensure that mail sent to the email address that you provided to the school is readily accessible.

Grading:

25% - Participation

10% - Attendance

10% - Trades Assignments

15% - Reflection Papers*

40% - Final

A = 100-93, A- = 92-90, B+ = 89-88, B = 87-83, B- = 82-80, C+ = 79-78, C = 77-73, C- = 72-70, D+ = 69-68, D = 67-63, D- = 62-60, F = 59-0.

A indicates excellence, B indicates good work, C indicates satisfactory work, D work is unsatisfactory, F is substantially unsatisfactory

*As these are often creative assignments, they are in part subjective but with objective components (these are the components the assignment states you need to include). In evaluating, I will be measuring effort given for asterisked items. Students need to apply thoughtful analysis, insightful critique and reach the minimum page count/run time (if applicable).

Assignments

*Late assignments will not be accepted without the prior consent of the instructor and will result in a reduction in the assignment's grade by 50%. **All work submitted should be to D2L by the start of the next class**, unless otherwise stated, and in pdf form, unless otherwise stated. Please contact the instructor as soon as possible should you need an extension.*

Weekly Development-based Trades News

Every week, each student will source, identify and summarize one **development-based** news article from the trades that week using resources listed in the syllabus, or their own (Deadline Hollywood, Hollywood Reporter, Variety, etc.) that interests them and write a one paragraph analysis. Students are to report on development deals/production company deals/first look deals, etc., and research and define the type of deal, as discussed during week one. Students may also report on company buyouts or mergers, as these also affects development slates. To be discussed further during week one, please take notes.

Each week at the beginning of class the professor will randomly choose three students to present their news. The students will then give a 5-10 minute presentation (approximately) and open it up to discussion with the rest of the students and professor. Note: If another student picks the same story, you will be selected to present a different week.

Reflection Papers

Reflection papers are to be completed for all reading/listening assignments and case studies throughout the quarter, as outlined in the syllabus. In the reflection paper, students should articulate in 1-2 paragraphs each per each individual reading/assigned homework/case study: what they learned, what surprised them, and a tool/skill/anecdote gleaned that they could apply to their creative development/producing work in the future. There will be instances where reflection papers are to be completed as homework, and instances where we will watch or listen to something during class for which students need to note their reflections. Students should then bring their reflection paper to the subsequent class to use as reference for group discussions.

Final Project

Discussed during class, each student is to submit a final deck and give a final pitch presentation. The grade for the final includes two elements, a pitch deck that you will work on throughout the quarter, and a pitch to the class conducted during the last two class sessions and using your deck as a visual. To be outlined further in class, but the deck should include: logline, one page treatment, attachments, images, production company ethos, development slate, production notes, and targets. It is advised students spread out tasks for the deck throughout the quarter and complete each item the week the instructor assigns it, and not wait until the last minute. The verbal pitch should include mentions of everything in the deck, as well as: target audience, targeted buyers and why your project is a good fit for those buyers. Deck can be created in any program the student likes but should be saved and uploaded to D2L as a pdf.

Resources:

Entertainment News Resources:

<https://www.imdb.com/news/top>

<https://blog.finaldraft.com/>

<https://variety.com/>

<https://deadline.com/>

<https://www.kcrw.com/culture/shows>

<https://www.tracking-board.com/>

Job Resources:

<https://staffmeup.com/>

<https://freethework.com/jobs>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/PAJobsLA/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/filmcrewjobs/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/223959770973083/>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ineedapa/>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/PaidProductionJobs/>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/505485066224030/>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/419747488193888/>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/602848553166707/>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1444645689098503/>

Resources for Screenwriting:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/latvwriters>
<https://www.networkisa.org/>
<https://www.coverfly.com/>
<https://blcklst.com/>
<https://scriptpipeline.com/>

Networking:

<https://hrts.org/hrts-events-calendar/>
<https://www.womenmedia.com/events/>
<https://www.backstage.com/magazine/article/networking-organizations-know-54532/>
<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/lists/hollywoods-top-14-inclusive-networking-groups-1205291/>

Mentorship:

<https://hrts.org/hrts-mentorship-program-2021/>
<https://www.unlockherpotential.com/>
<https://womeninfilm.org/programs/mentoring/>
<https://eipma.org/resources.html>
<https://www.cinemaexchange.org/nefl6-industry-mentors/>

Course Outline

Week 1:

Monday, 1/2

Introduction: Introductions, Syllabus, Final project

Lecture: Course Overview and the role of the Creative Producer

Assignment due by next class:

- Read article by Maureen A. Ryan from *Producer to Producer* posted on D2L and linked [here](#)

Week 2:

Monday, 1/9

Group Discussion: Trades Discussions

Lecture: Production Companies and Development

Case Study #1

Screening for Case Study #1

Assignment due by next class:

- Complete reflection paper for Case Study #1:
- Complete checklist for your own production company as noted during class

Week 3:

Monday, 1/16

NO CLASS - UNIVERSITY CLOSED FOR MLK JR. DAY

Week 4:

Monday, 1/23

Group Discussion: Trades Discussions

Group Discussion: Reflect on Case Study #1

Lecture: Identifying Properties: IP, Original Concept, and Reboots

Screening: Watch Development Producer episode of podcast taping by Carolina Groppa of *Angle on Producers* with guest Paige Simpson posted on D2L and linked [here](#)

Assignment due by next class:

- Complete reflection paper on *Angle on Producers* with guest Paige Simpson
- Identify one IP, one original concept, and one reboot idea for development purposes, as noted during class lecture. Write loglines for each, submit to D2L.

Week 5:

Monday, 1/30

Group Discussion: Trades Discussions

Group Discussion: Reflect on *Angle on Producers* with guest Paige Simpson

Breakout Groups: Development feedback on loglines in small groups

Lecture: Developing Pitch Materials

Assignment due by next class:

- Read pdf excerpt of Chapter 6 from *The Executive Chair* book by Kelly Edwards posted on D2L
- Complete reflection paper from this week's reading (Chapter 6 as noted in first bullet)
- Select one concept from Week 4 as the basis for final deck project, based on feedback. Build deck template for final project.

Week 6:

Monday, 2/6

Group Discussion: Trades Discussions

Group Discussion: Reflect on *The Executive Chair* reading

Lecture: Deals, Packaging and Attachments

Screening: Watch Manager/Producer episode of podcast taping by Carolina Groppa of *Angle on Producers* with guest Jermaine Johnson of 3Arts posted on D2L and linked [here](#)

Assignment due by next class:

- Complete reflection paper on *Angle on Producers* with guest Jermaine Johnson
- Continue to work on final deck project, including attachments

Week 7:

Monday, 2/13

Group Discussion: Trades Discussions

Group Discussion: Reflect on *Angle on Producers* with guest Jermaine Johnson

Lecture: Market Potential

Case Study #2

Assignment due by next class:

- Read pdf excerpt of Chapter 2 from *The Executive Chair* book by Kelly Edwards posted on D2L
- Listen to podcast by Jason E. Squire: *Changes in Entertainment Market Research* posted on D2L and linked [here](#)
- Complete reflection paper on the reading & listening assignments, and Case Study #2 (all in one submission)

Week 8:

Monday, 2/20

Group Discussion: Trades Discussions

Group Discussion: Reflect on most recent reflection paper

Topic: Financing

Guest Speaker: Film Financing Executive

Assignment due by next class:

- Listen to podcast by Jason E. Squire: *How Production Companies Look at Financing* posted on D2L and linked [here](#)
- Listen to Indie Producer episode of podcast by Carolina Groppa of *Angle on Producers* with guest Christine Vachon posted on D2L and linked [here](#)
- Complete reflection paper on *Angle on Producers* with guest Christine Vachon and *How Production Companies Look at Financing*, and Guest Speaker (all in one submission)

Week 9:

Monday, 2/27

Group Discussion: Trades Discussions

Group Discussion: Reflect on most recent reflection paper

Lecture: Pre-Production and Production

Touch-base: Overview of Final

Assignment due by next class:

- Listen to Creative vs. Physical producing episode of podcast by Carolina Groppa of *Angle on Producers* with guest Fiona Walsh Heinz posted on D2L and linked [here](#)
- Complete reflection paper on *Angle on Producers* with guest Fiona Walsh Heinz
- Submit final project to D2L, prepare for final pitch

Week 10:

Monday, 3/6

Group Discussion: Trades Discussions

Present Final Projects

Final:

Monday, 3/13

Group Discussion: Trades Discussions

Present Final Projects