

SAMPLE SYLLABUS



NYU Paris

MKTB-UB 9029– Business of Film (2 credits)

Summer 2023

Tuesdays, 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

NYU Paris

57 Boulevard Saint Germain

75005 Paris

Room 408

Instructor: TBA

Google Classroom: classroom.google.com

Class Code: tqwlmoa

Office Hours:

By Appointment Only

COURSE OVERVIEW AND GOALS

This course is designed to provide an overview of the modern filmed entertainment business. We will examine the mainstream studio system, the independent film world and the rise and growing importance of streaming platforms such as Netflix and Amazon Prime.

To better understand the present, we'll review the history and evolution of the mainstream studio world and independent film arena. Other areas this course will examine include film financing, distribution, and a look at the brand profiles and business objectives of various mainstream studios, independent film units and

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streaming platforms. We'll look at the various revenue streams inherent in the exploitation of films and the importance of the global marketplace

A primary objective of the course is to provide you with an inside look and basic understanding of how things actually work in the film business and the requisite background to pursue careers in the filmed entertainment business whether it be with a studio/distributor, a production company or as a producer.

INSTRUCTOR POLICIES

Classroom Experience/Attendance

One of the prime benefits of a course such as this one is the classroom experience. Two of my main goals are to make the classroom experience as interactive as possible and to work towards building a community where we all feel connected

- It is essential that everyone contribute to the class discussions. You are expected to have read all the assignments for the day's class.
- Class participation will be graded on the quality of the interaction and will be measured against these criteria:
 - Are you prepared
 - Extent of knowledge
 - Ability to get to the heart of the matter
 - New insights
 - Building on statements of others

Questions are encouraged and welcomed both during class and either before or after class. Do not hesitate to ask me to clarify and/or clear up any confusion either during class or outside of class. **There are no dumb questions!!**

Part of my goal in this class is to have you practice the behavior that will be expected of you in the professional workplace. **I take attendance and punctuality very seriously.** No more than one unexcused absence will be permitted. More than one unexcused absence will impact your grade. Lateness will not be accepted and consistent lateness will impact your overall grade. If you are more than 15 minutes late on two occasions, those late arrivals will count as one unexcused absence.

If you're going to be absent or late, you must email me BEFORE class. Failure to notify me in advance of late attendance will result in a lateness being counted as an unexcused absence. While it is not required, you can voluntarily submit medical documentation that attests to the impossibility of attending class due to illness or genuine family emergency. Examples include a physician's note. Submitting such documentation would help me decide whether to count your absence as an excused absence or an unexcused one. You're responsible for making up work that is missed.

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Early Class Departure: Leaving class early before the scheduled end time will also count as an unexcused absence, if permission to leave early has not been given by me before class begins.

ATTENDANCE WILL BE TAKEN AT THE END OF EACH CLASS.

Eating in Class

Light snack food such as chips and granola bars will be permitted in class as well as liquids such as water, coffee, soda and juice. Fast-food burgers and other similar food will NOT be permitted. Your cooperation with this rule is greatly appreciated.

Midpoint Class Break: We will take a 20 minute break after the first 90 minutes of class time. And there likely will be other short breaks as needed.

Cheating/Plagiarism:

• The Stern School of Business Honor Code governs conduct in the course: *“I will not lie, cheat, or steal to gain an academic advantage, or tolerate those who do.”*

Academic Integrity

The entire [W NYU Stern Code of Conduct - Website Copy.docx](#) applies to all students enrolled in Stern courses and the NYU Code of Conduct. And the NYU Student Conduct Policy also applies. [University Student Conduct Policy](#)

Students with Disabilities

If you have a qualified disability and will require academic accommodation of any kind during this course, please be sure to notify me at the beginning of the course and provide a letter from the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities.

READING LIST:

Required Books/Reading

THE BIG PICTURE, THE FIGHT FOR THE FUTURE OF MOVIES, By Ben Fritz

PRODUCER TO PRODUCER: A STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO LOW-BUDGET INDEPENDENT FILM PRODUCING, 2nd Edition, by Maureen A. Ryan

Various HANDOUTS to be posted on Google Classroom.

Recommended Reading

DEALMAKING IN THE FILM & TELEVISION INDUSTRY, by Mark Litwak

HELLO, HE LIED, by Lynda Obst

SO YOU WANT TO BE A PRODUCER. by Lawrence Turman

A KILLER LIFE: HOW AN INDEPENDENT FILM PRODUCER SURVIVED DEALS AND

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DISASTERS IN HOLLYWOOD AND BEYOND, by Christine Vachon with Austin Bunn
DOWN AND DIRTY PICTURES: MIRAMAX, SUNDANCE AND THE RISE OF INDEPENDENT FILM, by Peter Biskind

Online Periodicals--Students MUST subscribe to at least one:

Indiewire.com
Deadline Hollywood, (Deadline.com)
buzzfeed.com/tvandmovies
Hollywoodreporter.com
Variety.com
Vibe.com
Vulture.com
The Wrap, thewrap.com
New York Times Business Section

ASSIGNMENT FORMATTING:

Note: We'll be using Google classroom. I will post assignment instructions on Google Classroom, including the due date.

1. Your completed assignment must be posted on Google Classroom **before the class it is due** and with the proper formatting

PLEASE NOTE:

2. Any written document you submit must have the following information at **the top left of the page:**

Your Name:
Date:
The Assignment Name
Instructor's Name
Class Title

- Please be sure to always spell check and grammar check your work.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS: The class will be divided into four homework assignment groups. Each week, after the first class, one of the homework groups (HW Group) will complete that coming week's assignment. Each member from that week's assigned group will individually do that week's homework assignment. The assignment must be completed in writing and be a minimum of one page and no more than two pages (8 ½ X 11), double or single space and 12 point font. Assignments must be posted on our Google Classroom site. Each member from a given week's assigned group also should be prepared to summarize verbally in class their homework

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assignment.

You are required to complete a homework assignment ONLY when your group receives one. If your group is not assigned on a given week, then you do not have to complete that week's assignment. Homework assignments are listed in this syllabus. I will also remind you of the coming week's assignment at the end of each class.

There will be four homework assignment groups--two of the groups will have three members and the other two will have two members. You will be assigned to a group by me. A list of the homework assignment groups will be posted on our Google Classroom site before the first class.

HOMEWORK RESEARCH/FOOTNOTES: You must list at least two separate and independent primary sources for the information and ideas used in your homework assignment and identify those sources in footnotes at the bottom of your assignment. Failure to include the required footnotes will result in a failing grade for the assignment. Wikipedia is not acceptable as an official source/footnote. You should also use reference sources to attribute facts in the body of your assignment. You can include your opinion in your assignment, but when you make a statement of fact you must attribute that fact to a reference source.

GRADING:

You will be graded on the following basis:

Class Participation: 30 % (written assignments, including homework, will count towards the class participation component of the grade)

Midterm Quiz: 30 %

Final Exam: 40 %

Written Assignments: Written assignments will count towards the class participation component of your grade. Failure to turn in written assignments will impact your grade. You are required to post on Google Classroom all written assignments BEFORE their due date. Late written assignments can also impact your grade.

MIDTERM QUIZ:

There will be a midterm quiz based on the topics covered in the classes before the quiz. It will be a multiple choice test and administered via our Google Classroom site.

Final Exam: It will also be a multiple choice test via our Google Classroom site.

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CLASS SCHEDULE

(Subject to change at the instructor's discretion)

Class 1--5/25 Review the course and syllabus. Examine the current state of the filmed entertainment business. Mainstream studios emphasis on franchise films, sequels, superhero stories and family entertainment. Pre-existing stories that can appeal to a global audience. Where do genre/horror films fit in? Box office returns vs. creative goals. How is box office success evaluated? The rise of streamers such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, etc. and their impact on the industry. The pandemic's effect on the theatrical distribution business. What is the organizational structure of studios? The role of the studio executive and how their job differs from that of a producer.

Homework Assignment for Class 2: Pick one of these film genres--action, horror, romantic comedy or drama. Select a specific film from the 1980s or early 1990s (no later than 1994) in the genre you have chosen. Compare the film you selected in terms of storyline/plot, concept, lead actors and box office with a film in the same genre that has been released since 2017. The goal is to analyze how the mainstream studio system's approach to one of these genres has evolved from the 1980s to present day. Identify the studio that released the film as well as the director and producers. If you can find it, list the budgets for the two films you selected. Give each film's domestic, international and total box office. Provide the number of screens each film was released on in their first weekend. Pick the trailers for the two films you selected and be prepared to show the trailers in class. Discuss the similarities and differences between the two trailers, and what the trailer styles say about the way the films were marketed.

READING ASSIGNMENT FOR 6/1 CLASS: Chapters 1 (*The Odd Couple: Lynton and Pascal's Glory Days at Sony*), **2** (*Reality Bites: How Everything Went Wrong for the Movie Business*), **3** (*Inception: The Secret Origin of the Superhero Movie*), **Chapters 6** (*Star Wars: The Decline of the A-List*) & **8** (*Frozen: Why Studios Stopped Making Mid-Budget Dramas*), *The Big Picture*, *Fritz*

Class 2 --6/1 An historical overview of the evolution of the modern filmed entertainment world. How did we get where we are today? We will trace the changes in mainstream studio film strategies, particularly from the 1980s to the present day. Film studios increasingly have become part of conglomerates with global objectives. How has that occurrence impacted the kinds of films that get made? The demise at the studio level of mid-budget dramas and romantic comedies. We'll also examine the evolution of the independent film world, looking at the art house cinema world of the '70s and '80s, and the emergence of the modern independent film movement, particularly from 1989 to the present. And the impact the streamers have had on the independent film world.

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Homework Assignment for Class 3: Select a film from the below list. Explain how financing for the film was put together. Was it fully financed by a mainstream studio? At what stage did the studio get involved? Did the studio pay to develop the script? Was the script based on a book, game, short story, etc. or other underlying material? Was the film co-financed by the studio and a production company with financing? If you select an independent film, explain how the financing was pieced together. Equity investors? Tax incentive?. Foreign pre-sales? Loans? Crowdsourcing? See if you can determine the film's budget. List the director, producer and main actors. How did the film do at the domestic and foreign box offices?

Film List:

The Joker

Dune

The Farewell

Jurassic World: Dominion

Call Me By Your Name

READING ASSIGNMENT FOR 6/8 CLASS: Chapter 4, (Funding), pp. 108-119, *Producer to Producer*, Ryan

Class 3 -- 6/8 The world of film financing. We'll look at a variety of film financing models. Traditional studio financing. Co-financing arrangements. Slate deals. Independent film financing, through non-studio funding sources, such as equity investors, grants, tax incentives, crowdsourcing and other alternative funding sources. We also examine the role of foreign pre-sales in film financing.

Homework Assignment for Class 4: Select a film from the below list. Explain how the film was released. Wide release? Platform release? When was it released internationally? Did it get an exclusive theatrical run? How long was its exclusive theatrical release? After how many days or weeks did the film move to online VOD sites? Was it released simultaneously in theaters and on a streaming site? Compare the film's domestic box office with its international box office returns.

Film List

Marry Me

Triangle of Sadness

Halloween Ends

The Woman King

Top Gun: Maverick

READING ASSIGNMENT FOR 6/15 CLASS: Chapter 21 (Distribution /Sales), pp. 370-374,

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Producer to Producer, Ryan

Class 4 -- 6/15 Midterm Quiz. Film Distribution. How does it work? How does distribution generate revenue in addition to theatrical box office returns? What are “windows?” We’ll examine the impact the internet has had on film distribution, especially the rise of Video on Demand (VOD). How have streaming platforms such as Netflix, Disney +, Amazon Prime, etc. impacted the traditional distribution models? We’ll also trace how the pandemic accelerated efforts to shorten the exclusive theatrical release model. The growing acceptance of new theatrical release strategies that include films screening on streaming platforms either for their initial release, shortly after their theatrical release or simultaneously with their theatrical exhibition.

Homework Assignment for Class 5: Select either a studio or production company from the below list. Do a profile of the company. Going from 2018 forward, review the films it released and/or produced. Is there a dominant type of film--a film brand/genre--that emerges? Cite examples of films to support your analysis. Select 3 films from 2018 forward that best typify the company’s brand. List the films’ budgets and box office results, both domestically and internationally. Who are the top company leaders? If you select a production company, let us know if it has a first look deal with either a studio or streamer?

Studios./Companies:

Universal

Searchlight

Blumhouse

Plan B Entertainment

Macro

Reading Assignment for 6/22 Class: Chapter 10 (*Terminator: Disney The Perfect Studio for the Franchise Age*), **Chapter 11** (*The Producers: Creativity Meets Franchise Management*) & **Chapter 14** (*Field of Dreams: Studio Defectors and the Future of Non Franchise Films*), *The Big Picture*, Fritz

Class 5 -- 6/22 The workings of the mainstream studio and independent/specialized film divisions. Based on recent releases, we’ll look at the brand profiles of various mainstream studios, independent units and streaming platforms. Case studies of recent releases from mainstream studios, independent film units and streaming platforms. What is the role of film acquisitions as opposed to all-in studio/streaming financing? The role of film festivals both as sources for film acquisitions and the launching of marketing campaigns, including awards campaigns. How do film markets differ from festivals and what role do they play? Why are awards campaigns important, especially for independent film units? Why do some streamers seek awards? How do we define a successful film? Are the success yardsticks box office success or artistic acclaim--or some combination of both?

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Class 6 -- 6/29 **Final Exam.** Followed by a recap of the semester. Students ask follow-up questions of their choice.