

## **BUSINESS OF PRODUCING**

Spring 2026

Course: MKTG-GB.2116.30

March 31, 2026 - May 5, 2026 (6 weeks)

Tuesdays: 6:00pm - 9:00pm

Location: KMC 3-60

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**Professor: Peter Newman**

**Email:** [prn2@nyu.edu](mailto:prn2@nyu.edu)

### **COURSE BACKGROUND**

This specialized EMT course is a “soup to nuts” examination of what it means to be an independent film and television producer. Through real life experiences it looks into what makes film and TV such unique businesses.

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.

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.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- Understand the role and responsibilities of being an independent producer.
- Establishing a way of judging the artistic merit and economic possibilities of a project at various stages from inception to completion.
- To learn the infrastructures of companies in the entertainment industry, and to understand how to effectively work within them to successfully produce content.
- 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?

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Class participation will be extremely important, since much of the study of the role of the producer will be obtained from specific lectures, articles, assignments, video clips, some selected texts, and experienced guest speakers.

## GRADING

The class will be graded on the following basis: Class

Participation                    30%

Paper/Presentation        70%

### Instructor Policies:

#### ***Lateness:***

Late assignments are not accepted. If you miss any assignment deadlines, i.e., at the start of a class period on the due date, you forfeit a grade on that assignment.

Absences/tardiness will lower your class participation grade significantly.

#### ***Class Preparation:***

Topics for each lecture are identified in the syllabus. It is critical that you do the assigned reading for the week in advance of the lecture since that session will build on the reading material. It is recommended that when you are preparing for the class, read the assigned chapter(s) from the text.

#### ***Class Participation:***

You will be evaluated on class participation by both the professor and lecturers. It is pertinent we learn your names for fair grading and interpersonal interaction. **Do be sure to complete the information sheet. In addition, you are encouraged to create and use nameplates in each session.**

Please contribute to class sessions. **This is meant to be a dialogue, not a monologue.** Be ready to disagree with others and develop your own position, and engage others (rather than just the professor) in lively discussion.

In a good class session, the majority of the learning comes from each participant attempting to understand the issues, limitation of theory, case problems, alternatives, etc. If successful, your increased insights and understanding will come from within and from your interactions with one another rather than from the instructor. Please continue with the reading assignments as scheduled regardless of whether the class activities at times fall behind schedule.

## REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

No Required Textbook. I will be sending you articles on a weekly basis that I will ask you to read through prior to class.

## RECOMMENDED READING

Although there is no required textbook for this course, students are encouraged to stay up to date with industry news. A convenient way of doing so is by visiting the following sites on **INFO IS KING AND QUEEN (see handout)** on a regular basis. Below are a sample of the websites –

1. [www.deadline.com/hollywood/](http://www.deadline.com/hollywood/) (Nikki Finke XXX)
2. [www.variety.com](http://www.variety.com)
3. [www.hollywoodreporter.com](http://www.hollywoodreporter.com)
4. [www.indiewire.com](http://www.indiewire.com)
5. <http://www.thewrap.com/>
6. <https://puck.news/author/matthew-belloni/> (Subscription)
7. <https://theankler.com/> (Subscription)
8. <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/>
9. <https://www.boxofficepro.com/>
10. <https://www.rottentomatoes.com/>
11. <http://www.metacritic.com/>
12. [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com)
13. [www.imdbpro.com](http://www.imdbpro.com)
14. [www.filmfreeway.com](http://www.filmfreeway.com)
15. <http://www.thelocationguide.com>
16. <http://www.ep.com/>

17. <http://screeninternational.com>
18. <https://stephenfollows.com/>

## **STERN POLICIES:**

### **Academic Integrity**

We take pride in our well-rounded education and approach our academics with honesty and integrity. Indeed, integrity is critical to all that we do here at NYU Stern. As members of our community, all students agree to abide by the [NYU Academic Integrity Policies](#) as well as the NYU Stern Student Code of Conduct, which includes a commitment to:

- Exercise integrity in all aspects of one's academic work including, but not limited to, the preparation and completion of exams, papers and all other course requirements by not engaging in any method or means that provides an unfair advantage.
- Clearly acknowledge the work and efforts of others when submitting written work as one's own. Ideas, data, direct quotations (which should be designated with quotation marks), paraphrasing, creative expression, or any other incorporation of the work of others should be fully referenced.
- Refrain from behaving in ways that knowingly support, assist, or in any way attempt to enable another person to engage in any violation of the Code of Conduct. Our support also includes reporting any observed violations of this Code of Conduct or other School and University policies that are deemed to adversely affect the NYU Stern community.

## **STERN CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Stern Code of Conduct and Judiciary Process applies to all students enrolled in Stern courses.

For graduate students, information can be found here:

<https://www.stern.nyu.edu/uc/codeofconduct>.

For undergraduates, information can be found here:

<https://www.stern.nyu.edu/portal-partners/current-students/undergraduate/community/community-expectations>

To help ensure the integrity of our learning community, prose assignments you submit to NYU Brightspace will be submitted to Turnitin. Turnitin will compare your submission to a database of prior submissions to Turnitin, current and archived Web pages, periodicals, journals, and publications. Additionally, your document will become part of the Turnitin database.

### **INTEGRITY OF CREDIT**

All course syllabi must demonstrate compliance with the University's policy on assigning course credit hours. Required instructional activities related to the integrity of credit. Information can be presented in the following formats: narrative (below), activity grid format (see sample activity grid on page 2), or other clear and identifiable format. Please refer to the Credit hour resource page for more information.

- Example #1: Students will meet 2x a week for 1.5 hours for 15 weeks for this 3-credit course
- Example #2: This 4-credit course will meet for a lecture with the instructor twice per week for 75 minutes each, for fifteen weeks. Outside of lecture, students will also participate in fifteen-50 minute weekly group discussion supervised by the course TA centered around each week's assigned readings.

### **GENERAL CONDUCT & BEHAVIOR**

Students are also expected to maintain and abide by the highest standards of professional conduct and behavior. Please familiarize yourself with Stern's Policy in Regard to In-Class Behavior & Expectations for Graduate and Undergraduate students.

(<https://www.stern.nyu.edu/portal-partners/registrar/policies-procedures/general-policies/code-conduct>)

(<http://www.stern.nyu.edu/portal-partners/current-students/undergraduate/resources-policies/academic-policies/index.htm>) and the NYU Student Conduct Policy

(<https://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/university-student-conduct-policy.html>).

### **STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY**

If you will require academic accommodation of any kind during this course, you must notify me at the beginning of the course and provide a letter from the Moses Center for Student Accessibility ([212-998-4980](tel:212-998-4980), [mosescsa@nyu.edu](mailto:mosescsa@nyu.edu)) verifying your registration and outlining the accommodations they recommend. If you will need to take an exam at the Moses Center for Student Accessibility, you must submit a completed Exam Accommodations Form to them at least one week prior to the scheduled exam time to be guaranteed accommodation. For more information, visit the CSA website:

<https://www.nyu.edu/students/communities-and-groups/student-accessibility.html>

### **STUDENT WELLNESS**

Our aim is for students to be as successful academically as they can, and to help them overcome any impediments to that. Any student who may be struggling and believes this may affect their performance in this course is urged to contact the Moses Center for Student Accessibility (see also the Student Accessibility section of this syllabus) at 212-998-4980 to discuss academic accommodations. If mental health assistance is needed, call the NYU's 24/7 Wellness Exchange hotline 212-443-9999. Furthermore, please approach me if you feel comfortable doing so. This will enable me to provide relevant resources or referrals. There are also drop in hours and

appointments. Find out more at

<http://www.nyu.edu/students/health-and-wellness/counseling-services.html>

Graduate students can also reach out to the Academic Advising team at [academicaffairs@stern.nyu.edu](mailto:academicaffairs@stern.nyu.edu) if you would like to receive more information or further support.

### **RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES AND OTHER ABSENCES**

NYU's [Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](#) states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. You must notify me in advance of religious holidays or observances that might coincide with exams, assignments, or class times to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives. Students may also contact [religiousaccommodations@nyu.edu](mailto:religiousaccommodations@nyu.edu) for assistance.

Except for religious observances or other absences that may be required in compliance with nondiscrimination law, this class otherwise requires attendance and participation and cannot accommodate conflicts. Please review all class dates at the start of the semester and review all course requirements to identify any foreseeable conflicts with exams, course assignments, projects, or other items required for participation and attendance. If you are aware of a potential conflict, it is strongly recommended that you do not take this class.

### **INCLUSION STATEMENT**

*This course strives to support and cultivate diversity of thought, perspectives, and experiences. The intent is to present materials and activities that will challenge your current perspectives with a goal of understanding how others might see situations differently. By participating in this course, it is the expectation that everyone commits to making this an inclusive learning environment for all.*

## WEEKLY CURRICULUM

1a.	<b>WEEK 1</b>	<b>Producing as an Entrepreneurial Venture – Doing It On Your Own: Introduction and Framework for course</b>
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- Introduction to course and review of syllabus. Description of assignments.
- Producing for the feature film industry
  - o What are the responsibilities of the independent producer?
  - o How does that differ from being a “hired gun” at a studio?
  - o What do credits mean and why are they so important?
  - o The infrastructure of the film business
  - o Studios vs. Independents: The blending of the boundaries
  - o Personal war stories – what can go wrong for an independent producer
- Form groups for team assignment

1b.		<b>The Development Process</b>
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- Identifying ideas for film
- The acquisition of underlying material – where to find it and how to get it
- Life rights, sequels, English language remakes. The legal necessities
- How creative ideas are worked into sellable properties
- The feasibility of selling a pitch

2a.	<b>WEEK 2</b>	<b>Building the Foundation of a Film project</b>
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- Attaching a director and actors to a project
- Convincing artists to share the risk with financiers
- Commerce vs. Art
- Using deferrals as a budgetary device
- The representation business - agents, managers, lawyers–facilitators or adversaries?
- The transactional cost of putting a film together
- The difference between above-the-line and below-the-line fees

2b.		<b>Project Financing</b>
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- How to put a financial value on your project

- Preparing a proper budget, for financing purposes
- Sources of financing – Private Equity Investors, hedge funds, state tax incentives, gap financing
- Pre-sales (foreign vs. domestic?)
- The complexities of bank loans
- Completion bonds, insurance (cast, production, E+O), etc.

3a.	<b>WEEK 3</b>	<b>The Deal – Selling the film before shooting</b>
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- Creating a competitive sales environment
- Who negotiates and makes the deal?
- Who gets credit for the deal – the press release
- Pitching a project to a studio
- Production deal versus negative pick-up
- Hollywood accounting
- Risk vs. Reward

3b.		<b>Production - A comprehensive analysis of the danger zones facing the producer</b>
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- Putting together a team – delineation of producer duties
- The collaboration between producers and the director – who’s the boss
- Choosing the proper department heads
- Studio shooting versus locations
- Union versus non-union crew
- Watching the costs – hiring an accountant and payroll service
- Post Production - the unpleasanties of completion and delivery
- Music and other clearances
- Satisfying the completion bonds
- Computing deferrals and other obligations
- **Discussion Of Status And Evaluation Of Team Projects**

4a.	<b>WEEK 4</b>	<b>Positioning the Completed Project for Sales to Distributors</b>
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- How to set-up a competitive environment for a second time

- The use of Producer’s representatives, and film festivals
- The anatomy of an acquisition deal
- The dangers inherent in the terms and conditions in a film contract

4b.	<b>Marketing and Distribution</b>
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- Press agents - The power and financial benefits of free publicity
- How critics and publicists can aid or hinder marketing efforts
- Test marketing and group research
- The uncertainty of tracking
- The power of the internet and alternative outreach
- The financial risks of awards campaigns

5a.	<b>WEEK 5</b>	<b>Producing for Streaming, Broadcast, Cable, Other Platforms</b>
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- How new technologies factor into the financing of creative content
- New platforms for distribution and marketing
- Creating and selling a reality tv series
- Overall review of the role of the independent producer as entrepreneur, and look to see what the future holds.
- **TENTATIVE GUEST SPEAKER**

5b.	<b>Tying It All Together and Trying to Make Sense of the Business</b>
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- The “old boys club” vs. the “new way” of gaining entrance
- What does a Graduate film degree mean?
- What does an MBA degree mean in the film business?
- Is it possible to run a sustainable and profitable business over a long period of time as a freestanding film producer?
- The “survivors and winners”. How did they do it?

6 a / b	<b>WEEK 6</b>	<b>Evaluation of Completed Projects</b>
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- Review of team projects. 10 – 12 minute final presentations.
- Written FINAL presentations due at end of class.

**TEAM COURSE ASSIGNMENT** - Choose collaborators after first break (4 or 5 to team)

**Ultimate issue project must make artistic and commercial sense.**

▶ Week 1: Find topic for feature film

1. Acquire story rights
2. Life rights vs. Public Domain
3. Sources - newspapers, magazine, or other media
4. English language remakes of foreign films
5. Studio remakes and sequels

▶ Week 2: Development Process –

**I. Attach Writer**

1. Appropriate for topic?
2. WGA or not?
3. Established or new?
4. Pay schedule?
5. Availability?

**II. Secure development funding** – (The high risk nature of development)

▶ Week 3:

**I. Attachment of director**

1. Appropriate for topic?
2. DGA or not?
3. Established or new?
4. Pay schedule?
5. Availability?
6. Ability to collaborate with producer/writer?
7. Financiability

## **II. Attachment of Actors (Hollywood Reporter value rankings)**

1. Appropriate for role?
2. Probability of accepting? (must go one at a time)
3. Cost?
4. Financiability?
5. Availability?

▶ **Mid-course status evaluation** – Are you ready to be green-lit? If not, modifications and adjustments must be made.

### ▶ Week 4:

#### **I. Budgeting and finance plan / Selling the deal**

1. Equity versus pre-sales
2. Tax incentives
3. Crucial contractual deal points

#### **II. Production Issues**

1. Locations
2. Hiring department heads
3. Union versus non-union
4. Tax and other incentives

### ▶ Week 5:

#### **I. Selling the film**

1. Film Festivals
2. Sales agents
3. Contracts
4. Delivery items

#### **II. Positioning the film for theatrical release (or straight to streaming?)**

### ▶ Week 6:

Final Projects Due

## **INTRODUCTION AND DESCRIPTION OF TEAM WORK ASSIGNMENTS**

70% of your grade in this course will be determined by your group assignments; the assignment is an ongoing, cumulative process that culminates with a pitch that covers all aspects of production of a full-length motion picture.

Groups will comprise between six and seven self-selected members. Each week, each group 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 procedure & deadline:**

**ONE** member of each group should submit an electronic version of the assignment to Professor Newman and the TA by **NOON** on Monday.

\*late assignments will not be accepted\*

### **I. Assignments WILL BE judged on:**

1. Integrating information discussed in lectures.
2. Choosing material and attaching elements to create an attractive package.
3. 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)
4. Employing a sensible approach to a business that doesn't often make sense.
5. Ability to collaborate organizationally and identify the strengths and weaknesses of team members.
6. Ability to adjust to curveballs. Responding to problems [from professor] with sound judgment and quick action.
7. Making a good film – one that was worth the grief and you could be proud of.

### **II. Assignments WILL NOT be graded and judged on:**

1. Things that would be impossible for anyone who is not deeply experienced and has been in the industry.
2. Obvious failings by member(s) of your team.

### **Week 3**

At the end of week 3, the work that each team has submitted will be evaluated for “green-lighting”. If you don’t have a green-light after week 3, you’re going to have to go back and reconstitute the project.

### **Week 6**

Week 6 will be fully devoted to 10 – 12 minute oral presentations of finished projects (Questions from professor)

**Each team’s final 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. There will also be a “peer evaluation” component to the grading process.**

### **PETER NEWMAN, Producer**

PETER NEWMAN has established himself as one of the motion picture industry’s leading producers of quality entertainment. New York-based Peter Newman Productions has worked with some of the world’s most important filmmakers, including Robert Altman, Wes Anderson, Paul Auster, Noah Baumbach, Jonathan Demme, Nancy Savoca, John Sayles, and Wayne Wang among its 30 films.

Along with fellow Producer Wes Anderson’s American Empirical Pictures, Newman produced Noah Baumbach’s THE SQUID AND THE WHALE, which won the Best Writing and Directing Awards at the 2005 Sundance Film Festival and stars Jeff Daniels and Laura Linney. It was nominated for six Spirit Awards, including Best Picture; three Golden Globes, including Best Film - Musical or Comedy; and received an Academy Award nomination for Best Original Screenplay.

A former sportscaster, Newman began his road toward producing when he served as executive producer and host of the PBS special, MUHAMMED ALI: ONE MORE MIRACLE. He

went on to produce documentary profiles of ballet dancers Gelsey Kirkland and Natalia Makarova before turning to feature filmmaking in 1982 with Robert Altman's BACK TO THE FIVE AND DIME, JIMMY DEAN, JIMMY DEAN. The film, which starred Cher, Sandy Dennis, Karen Black and Kathy Bates, was the grand prize winner of the Chicago International Film Festival.

Newman then moved into features full-time, serving either as producer or executive producer on numerous films including two-time Academy Award-winner Horton Foot's "1918" and ON VALENTINE'S DAY, Jonathan Demme's film of Spalding Gray's SWIMMING TO CAMBODIA, Harry Hook's re-make of LORD OF THE FLIES, Altman's O.C & STIGGS, Jay Russell's END OF THE LINE, Anthony Drazin's ZEBRAHEAD, the Sundance Filmmakers Trophy winner which he co-executive produced with Oliver Stone, and John Sayle's THE SECRET OF ROAN INISH.

In 1989, Newman produced Nancy Savoca's DOGFIGHT, a Warner Brothers release starring River Phoenix and Lili Taylor. He then went on to produce Savoca's HOUSEHOLD SAINTS for Fine Line Features, starring Lili Taylor and Tracy Ullman, before collaborating with her again on THE 24 HOUR WOMAN.

With future partner Greg Johnson, Newman produced Wayne Wang's film of Paul Auster's SMOKE, starring Harvey Keitel and William Hurt. SMOKE was the winner of three major awards at the 1995 Berlin Film Festival and was voted best film at the 1995 Locarno International Film Festival. Newman and Johnson also collaborated on Wang and Auster's BLUE IN THE FACE, the extemporaneously created companion piece to SMOKE, as well as the independent sci-fi comedy SPACE TRUCKERS, which premiered at the 1997 Sundance Film Festival.

Among Newman's other producing credits are Sara Kernochan's ALL I WANNA DO, starring Kirsten Dunst and Rachel Leigh Cook (Miramax), and Paul Auster's directorial debut LULU ON THE BRIDGE, which premiered at the 1998 Cannes Film Festival. Newman also produced on Wayne Wang's digital video theatrical feature, THE CENTER OF THE WORLD for Artisan, as well as Bob Gale's (BACK TO THE FUTURE) INTERSTATE 60, featuring James Marsden, Gary Oldman and Michael J. Fox for 7 Arts. He was executive producer of Alfredo deVilla's WASHINGTON HEIGHTS, which won the audience prize at the 2002 Los Angeles Film Festival. In conjunction with Crusader Entertainment, he produced THE GAME OF THEIR LIVES directed by David Anspaugh (HOOSIERS), which opened theatrically national-wide in April 2005.

Mr. Newman has been a featured speaker at the Sundance Institute's Producers Conference in 1991 and 2005; as well as appearing on numerous film festival panels, including Cannes and New York. Additionally, he has lectured on the movie business at Yale, Columbia, and

New York University. He is presently an adjunct professor at NYU in the Graduate Film program at Tisch, and the Graduate MBA program at Stern.

Peter Newman Productions, Inc. presently has over twelve feature film projects in active development. He is currently preparing films based on the lives of Janis Joplin and Floyd Patterson.

Mr. Newman is a member of the ACADEMY OF MOTION PICTURE ARTS AND SCIENCES and the PRODUCER'S GUILD OF AMERICA.

Newman lives in New York City with his wife, Antonia and their three children. He is a graduate of Northwestern University.