



Master of Entertainment Industry Management

Course Information	INDEPENDENT FILM AND ACQUISITIONS – CLASS 93.854 (SPRING 2021) Saturday, Feb 6 th (2:30pm – 5:45pm) Saturday, Feb 13 th (2:30pm – 5:45pm) Saturday, Feb 20 th (2:30pm – 5:45pm) Instructor: Lakshmi Iyengar lakshmiyengar@gmail.com															
Description	<p>Independent film is a term loosely used to mean many things. While the term is often times used to label a genre, it is also a financing method. An independent film can cost \$300 and be constructed on a personal phone or it could cost \$200 million with a studio paying a surplus on top of the budget to distribute it. We will dive into both the genre and its financing methods, and discover how this is part of a business model that consumers may never know about. It however, is one of the most important sectors that discovers almost every piece of acting and filmmaking talent; and promotes to the next level.</p> <p>The glamorous and not so glamorous world of film festivals was the only place where studios and distributors scour for up-and-coming talent, where actors go to gain credibility and where has-beens turn to resurrect careers. But now the marketplace is year-round. We will look at how an independent movie gets financed, packaged, produced and sold to domestic and foreign distributors. This class will explore the various sources of the film product and follow it through its life span.</p>															
Learning/Course Objectives*	<p>By the end of the course, students should be able to:</p> <table><tr><th>Learning Objective</th><th>How Assessed</th></tr><tr><td>Analyze the difference between an “independent” film versus a “studio” film.</td><td>Class discussion</td></tr><tr><td>How to assess a film project from an acquisition’s perspective</td><td>Class discussion. Written Final Exam.</td></tr><tr><td>Look at the various distribution windows where the revenue is generated</td><td>Class discussion.</td></tr><tr><td>Examine the roles of producers and foreign sales agents in to packaging films.</td><td>Class discussion</td></tr><tr><td>Analyze and break down the role of various film festivals and markets.</td><td>Class discussion</td></tr><tr><td>Understand how to locate and acquire potential properties</td><td>Written Final Exam</td></tr></table>		Learning Objective	How Assessed	Analyze the difference between an “independent” film versus a “studio” film.	Class discussion	How to assess a film project from an acquisition’s perspective	Class discussion. Written Final Exam.	Look at the various distribution windows where the revenue is generated	Class discussion.	Examine the roles of producers and foreign sales agents in to packaging films.	Class discussion	Analyze and break down the role of various film festivals and markets.	Class discussion	Understand how to locate and acquire potential properties	Written Final Exam
Learning Objective	How Assessed															
Analyze the difference between an “independent” film versus a “studio” film.	Class discussion															
How to assess a film project from an acquisition’s perspective	Class discussion. Written Final Exam.															
Look at the various distribution windows where the revenue is generated	Class discussion.															
Examine the roles of producers and foreign sales agents in to packaging films.	Class discussion															
Analyze and break down the role of various film festivals and markets.	Class discussion															
Understand how to locate and acquire potential properties	Written Final Exam															
Absences/Tardy:	Attendance is mandatory and will be reflected in the class participation portion of your grade. If you know you are going to be late or absent, please contact me prior to class via email (above). Each unexcused absence, unexcused lateness or unexcused early exit from class will result in a one-third step down in grade (e.g., A- to B+).															
Course Materials (Required Text)	I will email you the relevant articles a few days before class, along with the bios of the guests. Please have a look at these and bring in at least two questions related to the guests’ position, films, or companies they’ve worked for. <u>The questions should be typed with your name on it.</u>															

	I'll be grading on general class participation, and I will be using the questions as part of that participation. are representative engagement, and it will also help focus our discussion with the guest. I'll explain this in detail in our first class.																																	
Course Materials (Required Viewings)	TBD																																	
Suggested Reading:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Down and Dirty Pictures by Peter Biskind (Simon + Schuster, December 2004)• Daily Variety/www.variety.com• The Hollywood Reporter/www.hollywoodreporter.com• Screen International/www.screendaily.com• Deadline Hollywood/www.deadline.com• Indiewire/www.indiwire.com																																	
Course Policies	<p>Don't be late.</p> <p>We will have guests. The guests will only be as good as the questions asked. I will steer discussion in an interview style, but please ask a lot of questions. Do not pitch projects or scripts to our guests. Daily trades and state of the business will be discussed as relevant. Try to keep up with the suggested trade papers and blogs.</p> <p>All information and assignments should be kept confidential. No screen-grabs from the presentations will be allowed.</p>																																	
Evaluation* Method	<table><tr><td>Class Participation</td><td>20 %</td></tr><tr><td>Class Assignment</td><td>30 %</td></tr><tr><td>Final Written Exam</td><td>50 %</td></tr></table>				Class Participation	20 %	Class Assignment	30 %	Final Written Exam	50 %																								
Class Participation	20 %																																	
Class Assignment	30 %																																	
Final Written Exam	50 %																																	
Class Participation Rubric	<p>Grading for Class Participation</p> <p>As participation is a factor in the grading of this class, I'm including a rubric for how I will be grading. Again, if you read the assigned articles and contribute in class you should be fine.</p> <table><tr><td></td><td>A Grade</td><td>B Grade</td><td>C Grade</td><td>D/R Grade</td></tr><tr><td>Frequency and Quality</td><td>Attends class regularly and <i>always contributes</i> to the discussion by raising thoughtful questions, analyzing relevant issues, building on others' ideas, synthesizing across readings and discussions, expanding the class' perspective, and appropriately challenging assumptions and perspectives</td><td>Attends class regularly and <i>sometimes contributes</i> to the discussion in the aforementioned ways.</td><td>Attends class regularly but <i>rarely contributes</i> to the discussion in the aforementioned ways.</td><td>Attends class regularly but <i>never contributes</i> to the discussion in the aforementioned ways.</td></tr></table>					A Grade	B Grade	C Grade	D/R Grade	Frequency and Quality	Attends class regularly and <i>always contributes</i> to the discussion by raising thoughtful questions, analyzing relevant issues, building on others' ideas, synthesizing across readings and discussions, expanding the class' perspective, and appropriately challenging assumptions and perspectives	Attends class regularly and <i>sometimes contributes</i> to the discussion in the aforementioned ways.	Attends class regularly but <i>rarely contributes</i> to the discussion in the aforementioned ways.	Attends class regularly but <i>never contributes</i> to the discussion in the aforementioned ways.																				
	A Grade	B Grade	C Grade	D/R Grade																														
Frequency and Quality	Attends class regularly and <i>always contributes</i> to the discussion by raising thoughtful questions, analyzing relevant issues, building on others' ideas, synthesizing across readings and discussions, expanding the class' perspective, and appropriately challenging assumptions and perspectives	Attends class regularly and <i>sometimes contributes</i> to the discussion in the aforementioned ways.	Attends class regularly but <i>rarely contributes</i> to the discussion in the aforementioned ways.	Attends class regularly but <i>never contributes</i> to the discussion in the aforementioned ways.																														
Grading Scale*	<table><tr><td>A+</td><td>99.0-100%</td><td>Exceptional</td></tr><tr><td>A</td><td>94.0-98.9%</td><td>Excellent</td></tr><tr><td>A-</td><td>91.0-93.9%</td><td>Very Good</td></tr><tr><td>B+</td><td>88.0-90.9%</td><td>Good</td></tr><tr><td>B</td><td>84.0-87.9%</td><td>Acceptable</td></tr><tr><td>B-</td><td>81.0-83.9%</td><td>Fair</td></tr><tr><td>C+</td><td>78.0-80.9%</td><td>Poor</td></tr><tr><td>C</td><td>74.0-77.9%</td><td>Very Poor</td></tr><tr><td>C-</td><td>71.0-73.9%</td><td>Minimum Passing</td></tr><tr><td>R</td><td>below 71 pts (< 71%)</td><td>Failing</td></tr></table>				A+	99.0-100%	Exceptional	A	94.0-98.9%	Excellent	A-	91.0-93.9%	Very Good	B+	88.0-90.9%	Good	B	84.0-87.9%	Acceptable	B-	81.0-83.9%	Fair	C+	78.0-80.9%	Poor	C	74.0-77.9%	Very Poor	C-	71.0-73.9%	Minimum Passing	R	below 71 pts (< 71%)	Failing
A+	99.0-100%	Exceptional																																
A	94.0-98.9%	Excellent																																
A-	91.0-93.9%	Very Good																																
B+	88.0-90.9%	Good																																
B	84.0-87.9%	Acceptable																																
B-	81.0-83.9%	Fair																																
C+	78.0-80.9%	Poor																																
C	74.0-77.9%	Very Poor																																
C-	71.0-73.9%	Minimum Passing																																
R	below 71 pts (< 71%)	Failing																																

Course/Topical Outline	Class 1 – Saturday, Feb. 6 th 2021 (2:30pm – 5:45pm)
Topic	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction and course objectives 2. Film Distribution <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Who are the distributors and what are they responsible for? b. Independent vs. Studio Distribution c. Studio Specialty divisions – what is independent? d. The new crop of smaller distributors e. The digital revolution – streaming f. Managing the brand 3. Current state of independent film distribution and acquisitions 4. Film Festivals and Markets <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Role of a festival or market in the life of a film. How do distributors approach and use festivals and markets? b. Profiles of the various festivals and markets around the world. c. Who else uses festivals and why? d. Sundance 2020 Recap. Discussion and questions about Sundance and Sundance observations. e. GUEST: SUDEEP SHARMA (Programmer, Sundance Film Festival, Palm Springs Festival) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. How films are chosen ii. Differences in festivals iii. Career to date. Possible career paths
Deliverable	<p>Please come prepared with at least 2 questions for Guest Speaker, Sudeep Sharma and Jasmine Jaisinghani. Please email questions to me by 8:00pm Thurs. Feb. 4th.</p> <p><u>Sudeep Sharma. (Programmer, Sundance Film Festival, Palm Springs Festival).</u> Having started at Sundance in 2008 as a screener of international documentary features for the festival and a reader for the labs, he has previously been an Associate Programmer, Documentaries and Shorts Programmer. He has also worked in programming at many festivals including the Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles, Palm Springs International ShortFest, Aspen ShortFest, LA Film Festival, AFI Fest, Tribeca, Indian Kaleidoscope Film Festival and was Director of Public Programming for the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Science. A native of New Jersey, Sudeep has a BA in English from George Washington University, MA and Ph.D. in Cinema and Media Studies from UCLA and has taught film and television courses at universities throughout Southern California.</p> <p><u>Jasmine Jaisinghani (Producer/Founder of Global Cinematheque)</u> Jasmine Jaisinghani is a native Los Angeleno with cultural roots from India and Mexico. Jaisinghani’s professional background in theatre, filmmaking and the music industry shaping the lens of diversity she brings to each project.</p> <p>Jasmine’s professional background began at Capitol Records, segueing her to the estate of George Harrison. Her credits include the music documentary Concert For George; The Dark Horse Years box set and Harrison’s posthumous Grammy winning album Brainwashed.</p> <p>As a producer, Jasmine has developed diversity driven feature film content for studios and international producers and she continues to consult in world cinema from development to campaign strategy. She has produced two films for ITVS including Beholder directed by Nisha Ganatra (Late Night) and Tent City for Aldo Velasco (The Infiltrators).</p>

	<p>Jasmine served as the first Artistic Director for the Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles at ArcLight Hollywood, one of the longest running US festivals focused on Indian cinema.</p> <p>Jasmine worked extensively with AFI FEST, a program of the American Film Institute where she oversaw Cultural Relations and promoted international talent and collaborated with cultural agencies. Additionally at AFI FEST she aided the revival of their Screen Education program for nearly 2,000 students predominantly from Title 1 schools.</p> <p>Jasmine inspired to work with youth produced an Intensive Media Training Program at USC Annenberg School for Communications and Journalism for GlobalGirl Media which trained young women ages 15-22 from underrepresented communities to use digital journalism and storytelling to effect social change.</p> <p>Jasmine is an alumna of Carnegie Mellon University's Drama Program in Directing and talent and leadership development programs at the Tribeca Film Institute, Film Independent and Arts for LA.</p> <p>Jasmine programmed The New Wave for Film Independent with Artistic Director, Jacqueline Lyanga in partnership with KCRW at MOCA. Jasmine consults for the Sundance Institute Latinx Fellowship to identify singular Latinx screenwriters for their Feature Film Program.</p> <p>In 2020, she launched Global CINEMATHEQUE a new organization dedicated to celebrating international cinema and the inaugural edition of the World Cinema Awards.</p> <p>Jasmine independently mentors youth and supports programs for intersectional skateboarders.</p>
--	--

Class 2 – Saturday, Feb 13th 2021 (2:30pm – 5:45pm)

Topic	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acquisitions Process <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Tracking projects <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Pre-sale before production, acquisition of completed film, and everything in-between b. When to buy? c. The Deal <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Who negotiates them, how deals are structured. 2. Foreign Markets (AFM, EFM, Marche du Film) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Why so important? b. Where do these sales take place? 3. GUEST: ZACH GLUECK, Endeavor Content <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Deal Structure <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Comparable titles, forecasting performance ii. The Offer. What is an MG? iii. Dating iv. Distribution windows – the changing landscape v. Profit and Loss. How to approach the waterfall from a distributor's point of view vi. Where revenue is generated – case study: TBD b. Packaging c. Financing, pre-selling, equity partners, banks, etc. d. Foreign sales; selling films to foreign territories. Pre-sales to raise financing. e. Tools for sales: promos vs. trailers vs. completed film screening f. Career to date. Possible career paths. 4. Discuss Class 3 Simulation: Weekend Read
Required viewing	TBD
Deliverable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Required Viewing: TBD - Please come prepared with at least 2 questions for Guest Speaker, Zach Glueck. Please email questions to me by 8:00pm Thurs., Feb 11th.

Class 3 – Saturday, Feb 20th 2021 (2:30pm – 5:45pm)

Topic	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Class Simulation: "Weekend Read Meeting" 2. Final Thoughts 3. Explanation and assignment of final exam 4. Producing. Putting it all together and seeing it through. Independent producers and production companies. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Relationship with distributors, agencies, foreign sales agents, film festivals and markets b. GUESTS: Producers NATALIE QASABIAN & SEV OHANIAN <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Role of a producer. From development through financing, production, sales, marketing, distribution ii. Experiences in both studio and independent filmmaking iii. Career to date. Possible career paths.
-------	--

	Required viewing	SEARCHING (2018) - Google Play \$3.99 rental https://play.google.com/store/movies/details?id=HjUCFo6eUHA&gl=US RUN (2020) - is only available on Hulu. Students can do a free trial subscription to view: https://www.hulu.com/movie/run-72eec9c8-0164-4e0c-868a-b433960d7f93?entity_id=72eec9c8-0164-4e0c-868a-b433960d7f93
	Deliverable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Please come prepared with at least 2 questions for Guest Speaker, Jeb Brody. Please email questions to me by 8:00pm Thurs. Feb 18th. - Weekend Read Assignment: Read and analyze scripts to be circulated at the end of Class 2 for our in-class Weekend Read Meeting. <p>FINAL EXAM: Script Analysis and Evaluation. <u>Due Monday February 22, 2021 at Noon.</u></p>
Plagiarism and cheating notice*	<p>Plagiarism and other forms of academic misrepresentation are viewed as extremely serious matters. Misrepresentation of another's work as one's own is widely recognized as among the most serious violations. The violation is clearly flagrant when it occurs as plagiarism on a required paper or as cheating on an examination, including take-home as well as in-class examinations. The punishment for such offenses can involve expulsion from the MEIM Program and Heinz School.</p> <p>Cheating includes, but is not limited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plagiarism (explained below); 2. Submission of work that is not the student's own; 3. Submission or use of falsified data; 4. Unauthorized access to an exam or assignment; 5. Use of a stand-in for an exam; 6. Use of unauthorized material in the preparation of an assignment or during an examination; 7. Supplying or communicating unauthorized information to another student for use in an assignment or exam; 8. Unauthorized collaboration on an assignment. Collaboration must be explicitly permitted by an instructor for it to be considered authorized. 9. Submission of the same work for credit in more than one course. <p>Plagiarism is the failure to indicate the source of work either with quotation marks or footnotes. The source can be a phrase, a graphic element, a proof, specific language, or an idea derived from the work of another person. Note that material on the web is another person's work and is therefore equally subject to the rules on plagiarism and cheating as any other source material.</p> <p>Cheating and/or plagiarism on an essay assignment will result in a failing grade (0 points) for that assignment. The essay in which the cheating occurs will <i>not</i> be excluded from the offending student's assignments included in grade calculations; the points for that essay zero (0) will be factored into the grade.</p> <p>Furthermore, the cheating student's final grade will be reduced one full letter grade. A cheating student's final grade will be impacted significantly. In addition, cases of cheating and plagiarism will be submitted to and reviewed by the Dean's Office; more severe penalties may be imposed, <i>up to and including expulsion from the Heinz School.</i></p> <p><i>Academic Dishonesty:</i> Students are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards inside and outside the classroom. Cheating on exams and term papers (i.e. plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration) is obviously discouraged and will be treated appropriately. The usual penalty for violations is a failing grade for the particular assignment in question; however, in some instances, such actions may result in a failing grade for the course.</p>	