

**SUL ROSS STATE UNIVERSITY
THEA 3319 –PRODUCING
SPRING 2023**

TUES/THURS 11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. FAB 207 Office hours: Mon/Wed/Fri 1:00 – 2:00 pm Tues/Thurs 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm All other times by appointment	Marjorie Scott Associate Prof. of Communication & Theatre Chair, Dept. of Visual and Performing Arts e-mail: msscott3@sulross.edu Ofc: 432-837-8039 Mobile: 432-294-1191 Office: FAB 106
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The producer is responsible for overseeing a project through from start to finish. Producers are shepherds and executive artists making decisions, collaborating with others, and guiding and inspiring a group of fellow artists toward a common goal of making what is hopefully a successful and quality film or series. Producing is a challenging and rewarding job that requires creativity, practicality, guts, attention to detail, excellent communication skills, and the ability to get things done.

In this course you will learn about the responsibilities of a film producer through a combination of lecture, hands-on assignments, and discussions with guest speakers.

PREREQUISITES

All students must have junior or senior standing or permission from the instructor.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES *The graduating student will demonstrate:*

1. knowledge of the eras and contributions made throughout theatre history;
2. the ability to express themselves creatively through appropriate theatrical performance;
3. the ability to analyze script;
4. the ability to work creatively with actors and technicians in mounting a laboratory theatrical production;
5. the ability to apply professional standards to technical production;

Additionally, the graduating student with a concentration in technical/design will demonstrate:

6. The ability to apply all approaches to theatrical design and rendering of the design.
7. The ability to address all technical aspects of a theatrical production.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this class, students will be able to:

1. Articulate a producer's responsibilities

2. Demonstrate beginner knowledge of the following: option agreements, script breakdown, budgeting and scheduling, funding, hiring crew, distribution and sales, and safety protocol.
3. Demonstrate proficiency with pitching project ideas
4. Develop and articulate a sense of personal aesthetic and style
5. Analyze current trends in the entertainment industry
6. Demonstrate beginner knowledge of marketing and publicity

MARKETABLE SKILLS:

1. Strong oral and written communication skills.
2. Strong analytical skills.
3. Strong teamwork and collaboration skills.

Through a combination of coursework and laboratory work, i.e., theatrical productions, our students will gain the opportunity to explore and develop all three program marketable skills. Specifically, students will learn how to analyze scripts, and communicate their findings via written assignments. They will also be encouraged to support their analysis orally through classroom discussion and their Comprehensive Oral Exam at the end of the senior year. Theatrical productions will provide the opportunity for actors and technicians to problem solve and work collaboratively developing strong teamwork skills.

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

- 1) A working Sul Ross e-mail account and mobile phone;
- 2) Access to Blackboard;
- 3) Excel software or Movie Magic Budgeting/ Scheduling Software

REQUIRED READING:

- 1) Ryan, Maureen, *Producer to Producer* (2nd Edition), 2017, Michael Wiese Productions.
- 2) Additional handouts and scripts provided by instructor.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

- 1) **Pitches** – You will be required to pitch three times this semester. Well, 4 if you count the practice pitch. Practice counts, so 4 times.
Practice pitch: Pitch a project that has already been produced (a television series, web series, or film) in 5 minutes or less. Tell us why this project is so wonderful and why it needs to be made right now.
Pitch #1: Pitch a film or television project that will be adapted from an existing property (novel, newspaper or magazine article, graphic novel, children’s book) in 5 minutes. **Choose a project that has not already been adapted into a film or series.**

- Pitch #2: Pitch an original idea for a feature or series in 5 - 7 minutes. Why is this project important (and saleable) and why does it need to be made now? You will need to create a pitch proposal.
- Pitch #3 is the final (see Final Project)
- 2) **Script Breakdown:** This is like a road map for your project. It is the first step after the script is optioned and is a precursor to the production schedule. You will create a script breakdown for a script provided to you by the instructor
 - 3) **Schedule and Budget** (first draft): Once you've completed the script breakdown, you'll need to create a budget and schedule.
 - 4) **Option Agreement:** Before a script is purchased outright, it is often optioned first. This means a producer purchases the option to buy the rights at a later time, should he/she secure funding and decide to produce the project. Optioning a script is typically cheaper than buying the rights, so it makes more financial sense and gives the producer time to decide if he/she wants to and can produce the script.
 - 5) **Final Project:** Your final project is to pitch (pitch #3) an original project (feature or series). You must create a pitch proposal, include a proposed budget, proposed marketing plan, and a list of financing sources.
Final projects are due Monday, May 15 at 10:15 am.
 - 6) Full participation in class discussions.

RULES & EXPECTATIONS:

Hand your work in on time and come to class prepared.

Plagiarizing, cheating, or any other dishonest behavior in the classroom will not be tolerated. Rules and regulations regarding plagiarism, dishonesty, and other issues concerning classroom participation can be found in University Rules and Regulations and Student Handbook. This course will abide by these established policies. A student found to be engaging in these activities, will be penalized to the full extent of Sul Ross State University policy.

Please do not use cell phones, laptops, and other electronic devices for anything other than course work during class times.

COURSE EVALUATION

Assignments are valued as follows:

1) Practice pitch	5%
2) Pitch #1	10%
3) Pitch #2	15%
4) Script Breakdown	10%
5) Budget and Schedule	20%
6) Option Agreement	10%
7) Final project	30%

Grading Criteria:

A = Exceptional. Demonstrates mastery of material beyond expectation. Professional quality of work. Highest level of scholarship.

B = Above average. Demonstrates mastery of material. Work is of better-than-expected quality, but not quite professional. High level of scholarship.

C = Average. Demonstrates proficiency with material. Work is of amateur quality. Ordinary level of scholarship.

D = Below Average. Less than proficient with material. Work shows errors, careless mistakes, or is just plain wrong. Poor scholarship

F – Failure. Material incomplete. Work grossly negligent or incomplete. No evidence of scholarship present.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance is **mandatory**. If you must miss a class for a school-related activity, the absence must be discussed (and arrangements made regarding coursework) **prior to the absence**. If you must miss a class for an emergency or illness, please contact me **by email or phone as soon as possible**. After **6 unexcused absences** you will be asked to withdraw from the course, or you'll be dropped with a grade of "F" as per Sul Ross State University policy.

Arriving to class **on time** is also essential – **arriving late two times will be counted as one absence. Leaving before class ends will result in you being marked absent. In the film industry "on time" is early.**

Alpine Disability statement:

SRSU Disability Services. Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Alpine students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Mary Schwartz Grisham, M.Ed., LPC, SRSU's Accessibility Services Coordinator at 432-837-8203, or email mschwartz@sulross.edu Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall – room 112, and our mailing address is P.O. Box C-122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 79832.

Libraries

The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library and Archives of the Big Bend in Alpine offers FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website, library.sulross.edu. Off-campus access requires logging in with your LoboID and password. Librarians are a tremendous

resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email (srsulibrary@sulross.edu), or phone (432-837-8123).

Additional information for students at Rio Grande College:

The Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) Libraries at Uvalde, Del Rio, and Eagle Pass offer additional access to library spaces and resources. Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and Uvalde students may additionally use online resources available through SWTJC website, library.swtjc.edu. The SWTJC Libraries serve as pick-up locations for InterLibrary Loan (ILL) from the Alpine campus.

Academic Integrity

Students in this class are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. A scholar is expected to be punctual, prepared, and focused; meaningful and pertinent participation is appreciated. Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to: Turning in work as original that was used in whole or part for another course and/or professor; turning in another person's work as one's own; copying from professional works or internet sites without citation; collaborating on a course assignment, examination, or quiz when collaboration is forbidden.

Classroom Climate of Respect

Importantly, this class will foster free expression, critical investigation, and the open discussion of ideas. This means that all of us must help create and sustain an atmosphere of tolerance, civility, and respect for the viewpoints of others. Similarly, we must all learn how to probe, oppose and disagree without resorting to tactics of intimidation, harassment, or personal attack. No one is entitled to harass, belittle, or discriminate against another on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, national origin, or sexual preference. Still we will not be silenced by the difficulty of fruitfully discussing politically sensitive issues.

Diversity Statement

I aim to create a learning environment for my students that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives, and experiences, and honors your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, socioeconomic class, age, nationality, etc.). I also understand that the crisis of COVID, economic disparity, and health concerns, or even unexpected life events could impact the conditions necessary for you to succeed. My commitment is to be there for you and help you meet the learning objectives of this course. I do this to demonstrate my commitment to you and to the mission of Sul Ross State University to create an inclusive environment and care for the whole student as part of the Sul Ross Familia. If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to come and talk with me. I want to be a resource for you.

COURSE CALENDAR

Dates and class topics are subject to change at the instructor's discretion

Day	Date	Topics and Assignments
Thurs	Jan 19	No class meeting – work on pitches for Tuesday, Jan 24. Acquire copy of textbook.
Tues	Jan 24	Practice Pitch – Choose a project (film or series) that has already been produced and pitch it as though it has never been produced. How would you pitch this story? What are the unique and compelling elements begging to be put on screen right now? What is a target audience?
Thurs	Jan 26	Continue discussion of pitches. Discuss the role of producer. <i>Homework due: Read Introduction and Ch. 1 of <u>Producer to Producer</u> pages 1-18</i>
Tues	Jan 31	Development Process/Rights Acquisition <i>Homework due: Read Ch. 1 pages 19-51</i>
Thurs	Feb 2	Development Process (cont'd). Pitch proposals and option agreements.
Tues	Feb 7	Script breakdown <i>Homework due: Read Ch. 2</i>
Thurs	Feb 9	Script breakdown (continued)
Tues	Feb 14	Budgeting <i>Homework due: Read Ch. 3: Budgeting</i>
Thurs	Feb 16	Budgeting (continued)
Tues	Feb 21	Pitch #1 due in class
Thurs	Feb 23	Financing
Tues	Feb 28	Financing (continued) <i>Homework due: option agreement due in class</i>
Thurs	Mar 2	Casting
Tues	Mar 7	Scheduling <i>Homework due: Chapter 11: Scheduling</i>
Thurs	Mar 9	Pre-Productions/Locations/Hiring Crew <i>Homework due: Script breakdown due in class</i>

Tues	Mar 14	SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS
Thurs	Mar 16	SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS
Tues	Mar 21	Production Safety
Thurs	Mar 23	Legal/Insurance
Tues	Mar 28	TBD
Thurs	Mar 30	TBD
Tues	Apr 4	Review pitch proposals
Thurs	Apr 6	Marketing/Publicity <i>Homework due: Schedule and budget to mscott3@sulross.edu</i>
Tues	Apr 11	Marketing/Publicity (continued)
Thurs	Apr 13	Distribution and Sales
Tues	Apr 18	Distribution and Sales (continued) <i>Homework due: script analysis paper due in class</i>
Thurs	Apr 20	Archive Material/Fair Use
Tues	Apr 25	Post-Production: Audio/Music
Thurs	Apr 27	Pitch #2 due in class with pitch proposal
Tues	May 2	TBD
Thurs	May 4	Film festivals
Tues	May 9	Defining your taste
Mon	May 15	Final Exam at 10:15 am – 12:15 pm Pitch #3. Presentation with pitch proposal, mock option agreement, estimated budget, and list of potential financing sources.