JCM 270: The LA Experience

Winter Term 2006

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McEwen 207

Course Description

This is a course focused on the funding, production, and distribution of film entertainment products and the impact that industry has on other communication industries in the Los Angeles area.

PREREQUISITE: Communications Fellow and an academic rank of Sophomore, Junior, or Senior.

Course Goal

To allow students the opportunity to study and interact with those involved with conceptualizing, organizing, funding, producing, and distributing entertainment products, and to become aware of the impact of the Los Angeles entertainment industry on other media.

Course Objectives

- Introduce the various processes used in production, post-production and distribution of film and video through film theatres, broadcast television, DVDs and the Internet.
- Create an awareness of the various roles of producers, directors, studio personnel and the studio itself and the history behind that system as it impacts decisions made about which films are made or emphasized.
- Examine and apply theories in presenting images and information to the production of information and entertainment content in the Los Angeles environment.
- Utilize and enhance knowledge from previous courses in writing, shooting and editing video and digital photographs for inclusion in individual research papers and presentations.

Assignments and Grading

Glossary of Famous Los Angeles People/Events 5%
Backgrounders 5%
Research Paper on Assigned Topic 20%
Journal/Response to Prompts/Evaluations 20%
Book Questions/Discussion 10%
Attendance and Participation at ALL Scheduled Events 20%
Presentation 20%
All grading, including the final grade in the course, is on a 10-point scale.

You will be assigned to a number of items on a glossary list during the first class. You will perform Internet and/or traditional library research to identify your items and be prepared to discuss them with your classmates.

A backgrounder is a 1-2 page overview and history of a person, organization, corporation, publication or program. This backgrounder supplies enough basic information to ensure that everyone knows who we are visiting and why. Each of you will be assigned a small number of backgrounders to do (including printing out enough copies for everyone as well as dropping in the Bb dropbox) and will serve as our point person, asking the most probing questions during our visit.

Your research paper will fall into one of four topic areas:
1. The impact of the consolidation of ownership on film production.
3. The price of life in LA: what happened to the real news?
4. Where are the people of color in the industry?

Only three people per topic will be permitted. This paper is due in both hard copy and electronic (drop box) no later than 1:00 p.m. on our exam day, January 24.

Journal while in LA. I’m not a huge fan of journals but in this particular case I believe they will provide valuable feedback that will help shape future versions of this course. Where appropriate, I will give you a prompt and ask you to respond; at other times you will simply react to what you’ve seen and experienced that day.

Book Questions/Discussions. The books have been selected to provide perspective for your LA experience. You will split into groups and be asked to lead the discussion surrounding that day’s assigned reading(s).

Attendance/Participation at LA events. While in LA, we represent Elon University, the School of Communications, and the Fellows Program. Your behavior, your level of interaction with our guests, and your willingness to carry more into the conversation than a “normal” visitor will determine—in a significant way—whether or not we continue this program. Thus, you are rewarded for your active participation.

Presentation. On our scheduled exam day, rather than have a written exam you will present a theme found in movies about LA (lists will be provided), developed with your observations and interviews while in LA. This will be a multimedia presentation.
School of Communications, Elon University, and Course Policies

School of Communications
Professional Standards Policies

The School of Communications has adopted the following minimum policies to provide students with a clear understanding and consistent application of course expectations, since journalism and communications are disciplines with rigorous professional standards. Teachers may designate more stringent policies on their course syllabi.

Attendance Policy

Students in the School of Communications are expected to attend all classes. Just as professionals go to work each day, we expect students in a professional school to come to class on time and be prepared to work.

A student who misses more than 20% of scheduled classes in a term (more than eight absences for classes meeting three times a week, more than five absences for classes meeting twice a week, and more than three absences in winter term) automatically receives an F because the student has missed too much content and participation to pass a course in a professional school.

Teachers will lower the final grade in a class for each absence beyond the equivalent of one week of class (three absences for classes meeting three times a week, two absences for classes meeting twice a week, and one absence during winter term or a summer session) as indicated in the course syllabus. An exception may exist for a student who misses more than a week of classes for a sanctioned university activity, such as presenting research at a national forum, class travel or university athletic travel. Students participating in such events must submit a written request in advance to the professor.

Coursework

If students miss a class because of illness, participation in a university-sponsored activity, job interview or other causes, they have missed valuable content and engaged learning. In this sense, excused and unexcused absences are no different. To ensure that students avoid gaps in the progression of a course, professors may assign additional work. For example, a professor may require a student to write a 400-word summary of material covered in a missed class session or complete an additional lab assignment that demonstrates comprehension of material covered.

In this course, a student missing a class will be required to:

- Write a 1000-word research paper on a topic assigned by the instructors;
In the case where a student is in attendance for a presentation but is non-participatory due to lack of sleep or other impairment, additional work will be assigned by the instructors at their discretion.

Tests and Examinations

If students miss a quiz, test or examination they must submit a written request for a makeup to the professor. Students who miss a final examination must secure permission for a makeup from the department chair. As indicated in the Elon University Faculty Handbook, “students are not guaranteed permission to make up examinations and have no guarantees about the impact of the absence on their final grade for the course.”

Grading

Faculty members determine their own grading scale. Ordinarily a 10- or seven-point scale is used in courses. Teachers also establish the numerical standards for plus and minus grades. The university defines grades as follows:

A indicates distinguished performance,
B indicates above-average performance,
C indicates an average performance in which a basic understanding of the subject has been demonstrated,
D indicates a passing performance despite some deficiencies, and
F indicates failure.

Assignments

Professionals meet deadlines. All assignments should be submitted on time, and they are due on the assigned date even if the student is absent from class. A teacher may choose not to accept late work, or to lower a grade by one letter for each weekday it is late.

Honor Code

All students are expected to abide by the Elon Academic Honor Code.

Students are expected to NOT:

* Lie
* Cheat
* Violate Other’s Property
* Facilitate Others’ Dishonesty
* Plagiarize
* Steal
Definitions and examples of each of the Honor Code violations above may be found at http://www.elon.edu/e-web/students/handbook/acahoncode.xhtml

Textbooks and Materials

Bart, Peter and Guber, Peter (2002). Surviving Fame and (Mis)Fortune in Hollywood.

Other Information

Instructors:

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Office Hours by Appointment Only.

Peter Kiwitt
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We will join Prof. Kiwitt in LA.
No Office Hours.