

Syllabus v1.0, Winter 2026

FILM 44.17

Media Entrepreneurship and Practice

Instructor: John Bell

Office Location: 305 Bartlett

Class Meetings: [TBD]

Course Description

Media Entrepreneurship and Practice presents a set of tools students can use to evolve their creative practice into a professional practice. There is a gap between developing and funding a single project and ensuring long-term success—for both the work and the people who make it. We will develop skills to ensure the latter. Working across media types and discussing models ranging from individual creator to social entrepreneur to business developer, students will explore how they present themselves to different audiences, how to seek out funding for projects, and how to develop plans to execute their vision. Guest speakers from industry will share their experience to help students set achievable, sustainable goals for their work and career.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will have:

- Learned to answer key questions assessing new creative enterprises, including why they are pursuing projects, when is the right (or wrong) time to launch their projects, and who they intend as an audience.
- Met key guests from industry to hear their perspective on the professionalization of their creative practice and where their industry stands today.
- Developed strategies for the responsible funding or monetization of creative art and media works.
- Understood how to distinguish between an idea they want to do and an opportunity that will draw in others to produce a sustainable practice
- Demonstrated either a personal plan or public pitch to fund and execute a creative project.
- Analyzed case studies of successful media art practices and companies.
- Published an online portfolio and personal brand site.
- Crafted compelling and reusable professional documentation such as bios, cvs, and artist statements.

- Considered the opportunities and risks of jumping into a media environment constantly disrupted by emerging technologies and cultures.
- Planned how to build a professional network of agents, clients, collaborators, and distributors who will help solve the practical problems of being a creator.
- Identified individual pathways including classes, creative opportunities, funding sources, and professional experiences to support their overarching career goals in the next five years.

Teaching Methods & Philosophy

This course can be thought of as a single-project studio class where the artwork you're developing is your own professional practice. We will use many of the same methods to develop that practice that you would in any creative course: drafting and revision, group critique, discussion, and lectures introducing new ideas to consider. At the beginning of the course you are only expected to have an idea of what you want to do – you will figure out how to actually do it throughout the term.

As a heavily discussion-based class, you are expected to attend as much as possible and be on time out of respect for your classmates' time. You are also expected to engage with the discussion as well as be open and honest in your reactions to the work of others. The goal is to hone your ideas and plans, and that goal is better accomplished with kind but honest feedback than meaningless platitudes or disinterested shrugs. Nothing is going to be perfect on the first attempt, but the only way to improve it is to know where that first attempt is failing.

Expectations & Norms

Participation

This course develops a multifaceted view of your own work that will evolve as your ideas bounce off of and are transformed by others in the class. If the only time you talk is when you're reporting out then you will have little opportunity to contribute to the shared understanding developed by the class and I will not have much information to use when evaluating your success in the class (i.e., grade). Ask questions, throw in comments, and generally add to the discussion as much as possible, particularly if you think you missed something or you have a stupid question. The odds are good that I failed to clearly state whatever you missed and other people are as confused as you are.

You will be expected to meet with collaborators outside of class. I encourage you to use the designated x hour for these meetings when we do not use it for class, but you are free to set them as needed to accommodate your schedules.

Writing Style

Whether anyone outside the course ever sees it or not, everything you produce in this course will be created as though it is targeted at audiences expecting business and technical writing. The goal is to write with style, rigor, and persuasion, but also clarity and brevity.

My biggest tip is that you remember that all writing, even a class assignment written in a technical style, is storytelling. Create a clear narrative, use concrete examples, construct an argument, add own your perspective—if you do these things, then you will be on the right path. I encourage you to ask questions about how to improve your ability to work with this style of writing and media production throughout the term.

Collaboration Policy

You are encouraged to use outside resources, including people you know from outside the course, as research sources. All such sources must be referenced in the deliverable for the assignment you discuss with them. Collaboration within the course will vary depending on the requirements of the assignment.

Notes on Logistics

- All assignments will be submitted via Canvas.
- I may occasionally ask to share a presentation or project outside the classroom or keep it for future students to reference. You are under absolutely no obligation to agree to this and, if you do not, I will not penalize you in any way.
- I'm happy to chat about any concerns with the course or the material we're discussing. To schedule an appointment for office hours, send email to john.p.bell@dartmouth.edu

Class Climate & Inclusivity

As with all classes, it is expected that you will treat others with respect. Participation in discussion should be a constructive dialog integrating your ideas with mine and those of other students; while disagreements and counterarguments that test ideas are expected and encouraged, they must always be presented in a civil fashion. If you are repeatedly abusive toward your classmates you will be asked to leave and the day will be considered an absence for purposes of the attendance policy.

Texts & Materials

Most readings will be provided in Canvas or as links throughout the term. I am only asking you to purchase one full book:

Art/Work - Revised & Updated: Everything You Need to Know (and Do) As You Pursue Your Art Career, Bhandari and Melber ISBN 1501146165

Assessment & Grading

- **Project Document and Pitch: 25%**
Your final project is to present a pitch for your entrepreneurial practice that treats a specific project as a pilot.
- **Participation and Attendance: 20%**
You are expected to show up and contribute to in-class discussions. Unexcused absences beyond the two class meetings will result in the loss of a full letter grade.
- **Case Studies: 15%**
You will be presenting an analysis of individual creative practitioners or small media startups; large corporate media is beyond the scope of this case study.
- **Industry Fit: 15%**
You will analyze a creative idea you'd like to make happen within the context of the overall media industry/landscape to find the ideal niche for your work.
- **Professional Documentation: 15%**
You will develop a personal brand including identity, bios, online presence, and personal narrative that supports your goals.
- **Critique: 10%**
You will be asked to respond to the work of other students in a thoughtful, constructive manner to help them gain new perspective on their professional image and project pitch. Each week you will be randomly assigned to critique the work of one specific student in Canvas as well as provide feedback to everyone in our group critique sessions.

Note that my policy in all of my classes is that you are allowed to resubmit work as often as you wish after receiving feedback. While live moments like classroom discussions and critique cannot be recreated after the fact, written assignments may be resubmitted for a new grade until the end of the class so long as you turn in an initial good-faith attempt by the original deadline. I am more concerned about where you end up than when you start; if you got everything right on the first try, there would be no point in taking the class!

Learning Resources

[Academic Skills Center](#) (ASC): Open to the entire Dartmouth community, the ASC assists students in achieving their academic goals through tutoring and learning skills trainings.

[Research Center for Writing, and Information Technology](#) (RWIT): RWIT is a free service dedicated to helping members of the Dartmouth community develop more effective strategies for generating and organizing their ideas, finding and evaluating research sources, and presenting and revising compositions in a variety of media.

[Dartmouth College Library](#): The Dartmouth College Library provides support through subject area specialization, course materials and reserves, reservable learning spaces, workshops & classes for students, research, scholarly publication, copyright, media, book arts, and more. The Library's [Research Guides](#) by subject area and your discipline's [subject librarian](#) are sources of specialized help for your course and students.

Dartmouth Policies

Statement on Mental Health

The academic environment is challenging, our terms are intensive, and classes are not the only demanding part of your life. There are a number of resources available to you on campus to support your wellness, including:

- The Counseling Center (which allows you to book triage appointments online)
- The Student Wellness Center (which offers wellness check-ins)
- Your undergraduate dean

The student-led Dartmouth Student Mental Health Union and their peer support program may be helpful if you would like to speak to a trained fellow student support listener. If you need immediate assistance, please contact the counselor on-call at (603) 646-9442 at any time. Please make me aware of anything that will hinder your success in this course.

Student Accessibility and Accommodations

Students requesting disability-related accommodations and services for this course are required to register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS; Apply for Services webpage; student.accessibility.services@dartmouth.edu; 1-603-646-9900) and to request that an accommodation

email be sent to me in advance of the need for an accommodation. Then, students should schedule a follow-up meeting with me to determine relevant details such as what role SAS or its Testing Center may play in accommodation implementation. This process works best for everyone when completed as early in the quarter as possible. If students have questions about whether they are eligible for accommodations or have concerns about the implementation of their accommodations, they should contact the SAS office. All inquiries and discussions will remain confidential.

Religious Observances

Dartmouth has a deep commitment to support students' religious observances and diverse faith practices. Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. If you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please meet with me as soon as possible—before the end of the second week of the term at the latest—to discuss appropriate course adjustments.

Offensive Materials

Due to the nature of contemporary media and subject matter, this course may include difficult materials and challenging content that may prove to be offensive due to their language, visual features, theme, or overall orientation. Difficult content can be difficult to one individual and not difficult for another; this is the nature of interpretation. Such content may appear in readings, lectures, in-class discussions, screenings, software and game examples, student projects, or other materials. These forms of cultural expression are used as objects of description and analysis, not as promoting any view on sensitive issues. They are meant to be examined in the context of intellectual inquiry of the sort encountered at the university level. The ideas or perspectives contained or implied in such materials do not necessarily reflect the views of the professor, the Department of Film and Media Studies, or Dartmouth College.

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Additionally, activities that give the professor an inaccurate idea of the student's skills violates the Dartmouth College honor principle. As a Dartmouth Student you are required to comply with the Academic Honor Principle: <https://students.dartmouth.edu/judicial-affairs/policy/academic-honor-principle> . See also additional information on College policies on misconduct, <https://student-affairs.dartmouth.edu/policy/academic-honor-principle>

GenAI

Generative AI is an increasingly used tool across many disciplines and applications. Its use is permitted in certain assignments for this class, and to an extent that is appropriate for that assignment. The main areas where you might choose to use GenAI are in the initial conceptualization phase (to experiment with different ideas or get past staring at a blank screen) or the shaping phase (to better understand how to speak to different audiences). Use of GenAI must be accompanied by turning in the relevant prompts you used.

Consent to Record

(1) Consent to recording of course meetings and office hours that are open to multiple students.

By enrolling in this course,

a) I affirm my understanding that the instructor may record meetings of this course and any associated meetings open to multiple students and the instructor, including but not limited to scheduled and ad hoc office hours and other consultations, within any digital platform, including those used to offer remote instruction for this course.

b) I further affirm that the instructor owns the copyright to their instructional materials, of which these recordings constitute a part, and my distribution of any of these recordings in whole or in part to any person or entity other than other members of the class without prior written consent of the instructor may be subject to discipline by Dartmouth up to and including separation from Dartmouth.

(2) Requirement of consent to one-on-one recordings

By enrolling in this course, I hereby affirm that I will not make a recording in any medium of any one-on-one meeting with the instructor or another member of the class or group of members of the class without obtaining the prior written consent of all those participating, and I understand that if I violate this prohibition, I will be subject to discipline by Dartmouth up to and including separation from Dartmouth, as well as any other civil or criminal penalties under applicable law. I understand that an exception to this consent applies to accommodations approved by SAS for a student's disability, and that one or more students in a class may record class lectures, discussions, lab sessions, and review sessions and take pictures of essential information, and/or be provided class notes for personal study use only.

If you have questions, please contact the Office of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

Course Schedule

Each week will consist of two classes: a discussion, and a critique. Other than week one, readings must be completed before the discussion, and assignments must be completed before the critique.

Note: There are not explicit readings listed below from the primary text, *Art/Work*, though I may ask you to read certain sections in response to our discussions throughout the term. I mostly expect you to use *Art/Work* as a reference text for the different types of deliverables and considerations I am asking you for each week. It is written from the perspective of a visual artist, but other than some specifics around production and galleries/studios, the ideas are applicable across many types of creative projects.

Week 1: Who are you? Are you sure? (Grading: Professional Documentation)

Reading: *Why Teach Business to Artists?* by Whitaker

<https://hyperallergic.com/312390/why-teach-business-to-artists/>

Assignment: Tell me who you are and why you are the right person to tell your story using three different types of media.

Week 2: Ideation, planning, and execution (Grading: Project Document and Pitch)

Reading: *Where Great Ideas Come From Chapter 1: The Adjacent Possible* by Johnson

PDF provided in Canvas

Assignment: Break your idea down into what is rooted and what is novel. Find comps and explain what you offer that is different and what you can pull from them to ensure your own success. Develop a timeline including all aspects of the project from ideation to post-distribution. This will be the seed of your project document, which we will develop throughout the term and I will provide a template for after you complete this assignment.

Week 3: Disruption and norms (Grading: Professional Documentation)

Reading: *Developing the Entrepreneurial Mindset* by Green

<https://press.rebus.community/media-innovation-and-entrepreneurship/chapter/developing-entrepreneurial-mindset/>

Assignment: Are you an entrepreneur or an intrapreneur? What organizational infrastructure meets the needs of your project, your personality, and your situation? Produce a five minute rough video answering these questions in an honest and forthright way, and then create two additional versions of it that are edited to max two minutes and max 30 seconds.

Week 4: Opportunity analysis and case studies (Grading: Case Studies)

Reading: Self-identified based on your project. You will need to cite at least three relevant resources in your research assignment.

Assignment: Find a comparable media project that you feel succeeded. Research how it was distributed, advertised, and received. Identify key factors in its success with a focus on externalities like timing, network effects, and how the content related to the audience needs. Propose an alternative distribution channel and game out what you think would have happened had it gone through a different process. Justify your speculation by referencing the outcomes of other works that used the alternative distribution mechanism you chose.

Week 5: Professional networks (Grading: Professional Documentation)

Reading: Provided by guest speaker from Magnuson alumni network.

Assignment: Go back to your week 1 response. Update one of the media types you used in your response based on how your concept has developed since you first made it and produce two different versions: one that is generic, and one that has an identified audience you are targeting. Develop a communication plan to launch your identity within a chosen professional network.

Week 6: Personal and business narratives (Grading: Professional Documentation)

Reading: *The Emergence of Creative Leaders Within Social Networks: The Case of Andy Warhol in the Art World of New York* by Samdanis and Lee

<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.635678/full>

Assignment: Develop a personal branding package. This should include an artist statement, cv, online portfolio, and social media plan. This is independent of the pitch you will create as the vehicle for your business narrative, but as we will discuss, the business narrative depends upon the personal one.

Week 7: Funding, marketing, and metrics (Grading: Industry Fit)

Reading: Self-identified based on your project. You will need to cite at least three relevant resources in your analysis to justify your conclusions for different models.

Reference: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SWOT_analysis

Assignment: Comparative SWOT across for your project across different funding models (kickstarter, patreon, studio, grant, angel, etc.).

Week 8: Pitch development (Grading: Project Document and Pitch)

Reading: *Pitching Ideas*, Poepsel

<https://press.rebus.community/media-innovation-and-entrepreneurship/chapter/pitching-ideas/>

Assignment: Produce a pitch deck for an enterprise that could produce and publish your project under the funding model you believe is most likely to succeed. It should identify your purpose, the problem you are solving, your market, your competition, distribution channels, and metrics for success. It may treat your creative project as an example or pilot project representing a larger body of future works produced through this enterprise.

Week 9: Logistics (Grading: Project Document and Pitch)

Reading: Self-identified based on your project. You will need to cite at least three relevant resources in your project document.

Assignment: Now that you have developed the organizational infrastructure you need, complete your project document based on the resources you expect to be available if your pitch is successful. Update the timeline you developed in week 2 and add a granular production timeline to complement the broad schedule you previously created. Develop a list of needed materials, skills, assets, equipment, and funds. Identify relevant stakeholders and their responsibilities. Integrate the comps you previously identified if they are still relevant, or find new ones if they are not. Identify legal or IP vulnerabilities to address and your chosen distribution methods. Describe credit and compensation for all contributors.

Week 10: Presentations (Grading: Project Document and Pitch)

You will present your final pitch and project document to the class in a critique session. Following the critique, you may revise both deliverables and submit them on Canvas until the end of finals.