

MODULE 1: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW
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PULLING BACK THE CURTAIN ON THE INTERNATIONAL MOVIE BIZ



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EYE FINDERS

Connect Your Film to Its Audience

**An 8 Part Guide to the International
Independent Film Business**

**See the video as
Sydney Levine and Peter Belsito
introduce the course.**



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***Please note - the password for this and
ALL!!! following videos is "Peter"***

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Course Outline – Eight Module Breakdown

1. Introduction and Overview
2. Goals and the Pitch
3. Markets and Festivals
4. International Sales and Coproductions
5. Domestic Distribution
6. Short Films
7. Documentaries
8. Dramatic Features

Who are we (at SydneysBuzz) and why are we teaching this course?

Sydney Levine and Peter Belsito have been in the business for over 40 years. Our former company, FilmFinders, was recognized for over 20 years as THE first and only international film tracking database designed for the world film business to know what was happening in the film markets regarding the buying and selling of films worldwide. We worked with and traveled to many international markets and festivals - and still do although we sold our company to IMDb and left it in 2009 but not before setting up the blog SydneysBuzz which still runs on IMDb, IMDbPro and at Blogs.SydneysBuzz.com. Click on - <https://Blogs.SydneysBuzz.com/>

Before founding FilmFinders in 1988, [Sydney Levine](#) was a high level film acquisitions executive in L.A., New York and internationally. Currently an educator and consultant, she has taught courses on international distribution and marketing at Chapman University, UCLA Extension Film School Certificate Program, New School of Social Research, Deutsche Welle Akademie, Cannes Producer Workshop, Berlin Talents, Wharton School of Business, University of Shavli in Lithuania and elsewhere.

Co-founder [Peter Belsito](#) was an indie cinematographer and producer and personally founded the anti-war independent film group L.A. Newsreel and the indie film organizations IFP (Independent Feature Project) in NYC and Los Angeles (now called Film Independent or FIND). Sydney and he often collaborate in training and educational programs like this one.

You can find our CVs on the last pages of the course.

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We designed and are teaching this course to present an overview of the international independent film business aimed primarily at filmmakers - or interested parties - who may also (or not!) be producers, directors, distributors, international sales agents, scriptwriters, actors, civilians - and anyone else who is already in the business of film, or entering it, working their way up or aspiring to a career in the international independent film business.

For those who may want to deepen their understanding, who may be contemplating attending a film festival or film market or joining an independent film organization, our purpose is to open this international and relatively small business world to you in a clear, thorough and comfortable way.

The course gives you the basic tools to understand and operate in this international film world with more details for those of you working your way up. It also discusses how to work smart and efficiently.

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Module 1. Introduction - Overview

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the worldwide business of independent filmmaking and distribution.

The international independent film business: one world, one business.

To set out to make any film is a daunting exercise and it takes passion and a special vision to carry the idea of a film through its phases toward completion and release. It takes a strong shared vision and a communal passion because the costs are high and the number of people involved in the making of a film is great.



The business of film is marked by volatile shifts, which is why it is sometimes called a risky business. Entering the market today, in the midst of quickly changing technologies and their impact on distribution models and even on the content of film, you can take advantage of these changes especially as newcomers to the business. You need not be hampered by the old models, but you need to understand their nature and the reasons they exist in order to create new models.

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Cinema is an inherently international form. The international independent film business is a worldwide structure of companies, events, film festivals and markets where all films are invested in, developed, produced and sold with the final goal of viewers paying to see the final film product so that filmmakers or rights holders of films can be recompensed for their work.

The largest obstacle facing all filmmakers in all countries is getting their film and mindset out of their own territory, to get it “into the world”. For any film today an international audience is not only possible but also necessary in order to recoup investments, to make a profit and to give the filmmaker an ever-increasing importance in the world. The audiences for independent and international movies are mostly educated and they want to see “exotic” locales and the point of view of international artists.

However, chances are that as distribution models change, and with grassroots social networking, the number of films will expand to reach new audiences, perhaps less erudite but still eager to consume new forms of moving pictures entertainment.

With the advent of digitization, the possibility exists to create new audiences among people with common interests throughout the world in even the most underdeveloped countries. There are 7.5 billion people on earth in 2017. There are 2 billion people actively using Facebook every month with steady growth at around 18%, and video is the number one most viewed type of post. The number of mobile phone users in the world is expected to pass the 5 billion mark by 2019. In 2014, nearly 60 % of the population worldwide already owned a mobile phone and the number is growing. Everybody likes moving pictures and almost everybody has video on mobile phones. Moving pictures may even be the next launching pad for universal literacy and critical thinking.

Filmmakers who cannot command an international audience are limiting themselves. If they show their film to a small local population, their budgets must

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be very low in order to recoup enough of their investors' (or government agency's or company's, etc.) money within their own territory to pay off the debt the film has incurred being made, not to mention to profit. Also their own reputation has small chance of spreading to command the attention of supporters outside the one territory where the film shows. Therefore filmmakers need to keep an eye on their potential for reaching an international audience.

To go outside of one's own territory takes more than just marketing and distribution, but even these basic building blocks of the business are currently neglected by most filmmakers at their peril. This neglect is evident at every stage of filmmaking, from script development onward. The filmmaker's most decisive job both before the film is made and after the film is complete -- aside from having a top notch script, raising funds, packaging talent and shooting the movie -- is "finding the eyes, or in other words, finding the film's audience".

"Finding the audience" means distribution. Since most films are sold after they are complete, the main question is, "What is to be done 'after', when the film is complete?"

That is the decisive question in any film's life cycle.

Each area also has legal and monetary implications as well. Filmmakers, unfortunately, also sometimes neglect the legal and the monetary implications of filmmaking. Filmmakers possess a separate, diverse set of skills and immense creativity in their own right. How are they going to connect with this "right brain", linear business-oriented activity?

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Peter Belsito illustrates distribution.

To view click [here...](#)



Distribution, as Peter describes it in the above video illustration, gets a bit more complex as it goes beyond festivals and markets to theaters, Video on Demand, streaming, downloading, DVDs, TV, etc. That will all be discussed in detail in the following course modules.

Film to Audience

All films -- dramatic features, documentaries, shorts – are made to be seen; the more they are seen the better it is for the filmmaker... AND the better it is for audiences, assuming the film has an original worthwhile message or meaning. Getting seen (what we call getting the eyes or getting distribution) is often a difficult process because from the onset, the art of the filmmaker must fit the businessman's strategy.

Windows



The theatrical window

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Films are seen through various media outlets which are called “windows”. The viewing windows include theatrical, TV, DVD, online and all the current and newly developed (and developing!) technical means by which films are often viewed. The “windows” are also called “platforms”. “Finding the audience” is now called “getting the eyes” because an audience no longer only sits in a theater or in front of a television to watch shows. Today individuals download and stream and watch programs whenever and however suits them – on their phones, computers, watches, etc. When windowing was simpler, with only theatrical, TV and DVDs, this used to be called “getting bums on seats”, meaning, attracting an audience. Today it’s called “getting the eyes”. All of these platforms are complex businesses in themselves run by (usually men) “number crunchers” with an eye on the bottom line and an insatiable need for content.

The content creators, that is, the filmmakers, must know enough about the business basics to be able to work with the business entities to find their audiences using these windows to their own advantage, that is, to their own profit.

Creative people with their particular traits are combining with business people to create a public work of art or entertainment or cultural meaning and this mix is often very volatile.

If the mix is not stable, it will result in films never reaching their intended audience or in a formulaic lackluster “film by numbers” reaching but failing to ignite the intended audience. This is the dilemma today which is negatively affecting the major U.S. studios’ domestic market though they are pushing hard to keep attracting the foreign markets who are less habituated to formulaic fare.

While major L.A. based studios dominate the movie scene, they do not own it completely. Independent films have some space and leeway to reach more discerning audiences in more specialized ways and that is what this course will seek to elucidate.

As they say in the film business: “Time is money!” You cannot afford to waste it.

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Films, unlike wine, do not get better with age. Buyers are always chasing the next new film. After your film is a year old, if it has not secured distribution, your game plan must change.

Depending on your own stage of development and the film's stage of development or production (any film), you must define business goals, your plans for markets and festivals as part of the overall strategy for the film's distribution. You must also define the general audience and the various ways you intend to have the film shown, that is, the “windows” or “platforms” to use to reach your audience.

You must define your business goals clearly to be able to finish the film effectively and get it out to the eyes you made it for. And you must be compensated for the viewers (all of them!) who see your film.

Filmmakers must put the film world in perspective. Young filmmakers have the advantage of being skilled with social networking and other digital forms of communications. This can create a very important participatory model of distribution in moving forward. New films need to be made for this new social networking audience as well as for theater goers. Filmmakers must cultivate the idea that they are a part of a larger world where films are accessible to diverse groups of people who can bring in additional revenues and they themselves must create the opportunities to connect with them.

This is called distribution.

Films take a long time to make. If they are made well and then distributed properly, they will also live a long time.

Building relationships at all stages of your career is as important as making the film. The “friends” you make, both individuals and companies, are also moving up in their careers and over time they may be in a better position to help you (if they like you and your work!). This is all part of the process.

So the question then arises: Where are you? in the world? location? By this we mean not only your physical location, but at what stage is your film and what stage are you in your own career?

Markets (and Festivals) A Market is NOT a Festival

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The five great film markets held throughout the year -- Cannes Berlin Toronto Sundance AFM -- and the adjacent simultaneous four festivals (AFM is only a market, no festival attached to it then) are a good place to begin no matter where you are.

Each of the great markets above lasts only about one week throughout the year and is held simultaneously and adjacent to its respective festival.

During the year for most periods you can also travel to the main film centers such as Paris, Berlin, London, Toronto, New York, L.A., etc. to meet companies and players to push your project forward to achieve your business goals. Obviously the time must be chosen carefully to ensure that the executives you wish to interact with are in their offices and not traveling to the film markets, top festivals or to a TV market or other industry event.

Festivals

The locations of film festivals also matter because the location affects the audience, professional attendees, press attendance and marketing. For instance, press and film trade generally attend only a few film festivals and often stick to the areas where they work and live. In France, for example, it is Paris, in Japan it is Tokyo, in the U.S. it is the areas are mainly around New York City and Los Angeles, but also includes Sundance, Austin or Telluride and so on...or they attend the festivals specializing in the sort of film they need for their business.

International (or US vs. The World)

Film is an international business which includes funding, execution and, of course, distribution.

Where you work and where a film is made and funded are also relevant.

Your business overview must consider that 70% of the world market lies outside of North America and 30% of the market is U.S. and English and French speaking Canada. When a film appeals to U.S. tastes it can also play well internationally. Aside from China (which to date is not yet a market indies can count on), the U.S. is the largest market in the world. Most of the companies are based in L.A., but some are also in Paris, Berlin, Munich, New York, Toronto, Miami, etc.

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Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa comprise the remaining 70 % of dollars made from theatrical distribution.

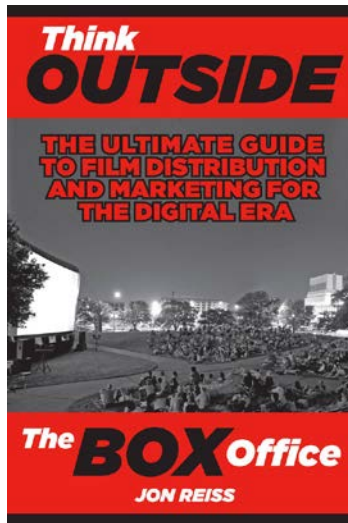
How you plan your film distribution model is in part based upon this economic model. Of course it is also influenced by the film's language, subject matter and origin.

The producer is the central character in the life of a film and its disposition – distribution and compensation - especially! The producer turns on the lights and turns them off, hires everyone, including the director, and oversees the budget, etc. Everyone is hired on the basis of the producer's creative vision of the film and the producer's role in this process. Everyone's job is to raise the level of the film's creative vision.

On the smaller independent scale, the producer can also be the filmmaker in the sense that he or she may be the same person as the writer, director, editor and sometimes composer as well. However, ideally, the producer is the one who gathers the production team together to make the film (this is always Part 1) and then gathers the sales and distribution and festival team together to get the film out to its intended audience (this is Part 2).

Jon Reiss, whose book [Think Outside the Box Office](#) has gained adherents in the internet distribution space, suggests there should even be [a Producer of Marketing and Distribution \(or PMD\)](#). He came up with the idea when trying to think of a solution to the enormous amount of work that distribution and marketing can be for filmmakers without a traditional distributor. And today, when 20,000 completed feature films are on the market in one year (and number of films produced is always going up), most films will be without the traditional distributor. The concept boils down to: "You didn't make your film on your own – why should you release it on your own? "

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Film is inherently a collaborative medium, therefore team building can be conducted in stages, that is, in pre-production, production, post-production and then, most importantly marketing, distribution, sales and festivals.

It bears repeating that it takes great passion and vision for such an expensive and extensive endeavor involving so many diverse people to option a story and develop it into the creation of a work of art, a socially important or culturally notable film or a diverting piece of entertainment.

These basic facts cannot be ignored – in the beginning and in the end, it is the producer who produces the money and that is the key to getting a film made and seen. The producer not only arranges the financing and assembles the package (talent and production personnel) but he or she also, in a business sense, disposes of the completed film – i.e., the producer must assemble the team to design the festival, marketing, distribution and international sales strategies.

There are five areas of filmmaking NOT including television movies, series, etc.:

1. Short films
2. Independent feature dramatic narratives
3. Independent documentaries

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4. Animated projects
5. Studio films

We will discuss independent feature narratives, shorts and documentaries. Animation and studio films require the producer to lead but the special context of making these films is not the focus of this course. The same passion is required, the same financial models -- except in the case of the studios -- are required. Television series today offer filmmakers important new opportunities as well but are also not the focus of this course.

Studios

Studios are not the subject of this course because by definition, studios are not independents. However, knowing what they are helps define the independent film business that is quite a different business model quickly changing and sometimes being co-opted by the majors.



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The definition of a studio

- It owns real estate, that is, the land on which much of the film or TV shows are shot, including executives' offices, sound stages, etc. That is, it owns a studio. (For example, in the past, a stock prospectus for 20th Century Fox stated on the cover that Fox was a real estate company with interests in the entertainment industry).
- It owns the means of production. Even if it hires independent producers to make the film, it is the owner of the film's copyright.
- It owns the means of distribution throughout the world. With offices of its own in all the major territories in the world, the studio's own staff handles international distribution to local theaters, TV stations, DVD and other home entertainment entities.
- It capitalizes enormously with other merchandise related to the film like amusement parks, games, toys, clothing, etc.

Because of the above, the studios stand apart by definition from the indie / independent world which is based on making the film first and then usually bringing in an independent ISA (international sales agent) to license territorial distribution in the marketplace at the five annual cinema markets.

Studios' power in film is decreasing over the years for many reasons, one of which is the rising importance of local independent cinema around the world taking a larger and larger portion of the box office that used to go to the large major studio blockbusters.

Studios today are losing ground and have lost certain prerogatives from the past as well:

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- Studios also used to own the theaters in which they were guaranteed exhibition of their films and all costs and profits were theirs. U.S. legislation stopped that in 1948.
- Studios also used to own the talent agencies and were able to lock in contracts with talent that precluded their finding better opportunities elsewhere. Unions and anti-trust legislation eliminated these as illegal monopolies.
- With the advent of television, the U.S. government quickly made it illegal for studios to own television stations or networks.
- Studios are losing the digital forms of distribution as the tech companies take over distribution through streaming and downloading. Amazon, Netflix, and iTunes all operate outside the studio system and are increasingly gaining more eyes and reaping greater profits than the theatrical and television and DVD/ Blue ray platforms. This modern dilemma was recently explained in the [Los Angeles Times, January 7, 2017](#).

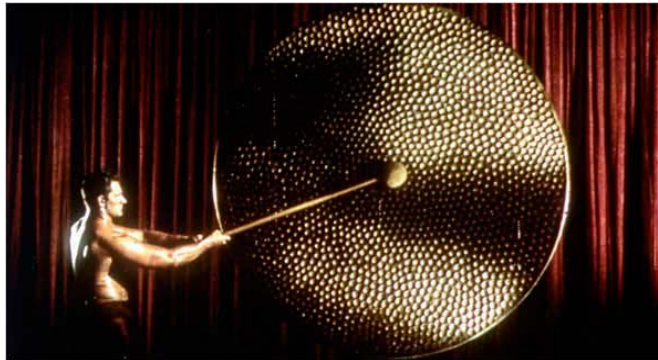
What further differentiates majors from indies is that the majors are totally market driven, with the largest markets in mind as they choose the films to make – often to the detriment of the film itself as an original work. In other words, market criterion determine content, style, etc. as opposed to the film's being mainly an artistic vision. Not to say that the indies are not often made with their markets and/ or commercial prospects in mind. On the other hand, too often they are not market driven at all. An indie film is often made as a film for its own sake and often no thought at all is expended upon who might be the target audience.

Cultivating an innate knowledge of the market is key to the success of film distribution. At a film's conception, even before the script is drafted, market and sales strategies should begin to be considered. The story and script should not be shaped by the market; rather the writer's and filmmaker's active knowledge of the market should be cultivated so that subconsciously, as they shape the film, elements of appeal to the market will be incorporated. Having a relationship with

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people in distribution and international sales who are willing to discuss your ideas and/ or read the script can provide feedback as well.

While the studio system is largely identified as an American phenomenon, film production companies in other countries do at times achieve and maintain full integration in a manner similar to Hollywood's Big Six.



J. Arthur Rank Presents

As historian James Chapman states, “In Britain, only two companies ever achieved full vertical integration (the [Rank Organization](#) and the [Associated British Picture Corporation](#)).” Other countries where some level of vertical integration occurred were Japan with [Nikkatsu](#), [Shochiku](#) and [Toho](#), Germany during the 1920s with [Universum Film Aktiengesellschaft, or UFA](#)) and France during the 1930s with [Gaumont-Franco-Film-Aubert](#) and [Pathé-Natan](#), which deserves a bit more elucidation. As quoted from [The Guardian here](#): “In the 1920s, Bernard Natan was the owner of Rapid, which had exclusive rights to film the 1924 Paris Olympics, and ran studios where silent-era luminaries such as Marcel l’Herbier made groundbreaking films. At the end of that decade, he took over the exhibition and production sectors of Pathé and turned that company around. Without him, the French cinema industry was at risk of foundering, having failed to recover from the dry period of the first world war, and unready to embrace the disruption of the 1930s. Without Natan, Pathé would most likely not have embraced sound film-making, revived its famous newsreels nor moved into diverse areas from radio and television to home projection and anamorphic photography. Sadly he was defamed and deported and died in 1942 at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Death Camp of the Nazis.”

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Today internationally some newer vertically integrated companies produce and distribute, own the theaters and do their own international sales, such as MK2 in France and [CJ Entertainment](#) in South Korea. India, which represents perhaps the only serious rival to the U.S. film industry due to its dominance of both its own and the Asian diaspora markets, has, in contrast, never achieved any degree of vertical integration.”¹ (This is because the Indian industry was presided over by wealthy individuals and not by corporations until recent years.)

But this is NOT the subject of this course!

Before leaving this week’s session, we want to leave behind something for your future.

After you have finished this course, as part of your ongoing professional development, in the U.S., Europe (and perhaps students in other territories will share theirs with us), several organizations exist for the purpose of networking for filmmakers struggling with just their own resources. These groups were created with the intention of connecting filmmakers to money, colleagues and support for the always difficult work of filmmaking and then for the equally formidable task of distribution, of finding the audience. Here are some obvious ones that carry on year round programs, events, to help filmmakers struggling to develop, make, complete, distribute their work.

In Europe networking events rather than year-round organizations link filmmakers with each other and with potential financiers, distributors and international sales

¹ Chapman, James (2003). *Cinemas of the World: Film and Society from 1895 to the Present* (London: Reaktion Books). [ISBN 1-86189-162-8](#)

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agents. These networking, training and coproduction events can be found at Creative Europe Media:



Creative
Europe
MEDIA

[Training programs](#)

[Markets and networks](#)



In MENA (Middle East and North Africa) training programs operate through the [Doha Film Institute's Training Programs](#) and [Qumra](#) and more formalized networking through the Dubai Film Festival's CoProduction Market called [Dubai Film Connection](#).



Asia hosts training, markets and networking at the Busan Film Festival in South Korea with its [Asian Film Market](#), [Asian Project Market](#), [Asian Cinema Fund](#) and [Asian Film Academy](#) (AFA), an educational program cohosted by Dongseo University and Busan Film Commission to foster young Asian talents and build their networks throughout Asia. Over the past 12 years, AFA produced 289 alumni from 31 Asian countries. The [Hong Kong International Film Festival](#) also hosts events for coproduction, cofinancing and upcoming filmmakers.

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Latin America has support from Europe and a sophisticated market, [Ventana Sur](#), held yearly in Buenos Aires that is progressively more supportive to upcoming as well as to veteran film talents. The earliest supporters of Latin American film was [Toulouse with its Rencontres](#), a coproduction market and [San Sebastian Film Festival](#) which also includes a section for film students' short films. The coproduction market idea has proliferated worldwide and most Latin American Film Festivals, starting with [Guadalajara](#) and its film market, now have coproduction markets as well. The International Film School in Los Baños (EICTV), Cuba and the Havana Film Festival host several events for upcoming filmmakers, particularly [Nuevas Miradas](#).



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Africa, being such huge continent, its nations are far from unified but [The Pan African Federation of Filmmakers \(Fédération Panafricaine des Cinéastes, or FEPACI\)](#) was inaugurated in 1970, as "the continental voice of filmmakers from various regions of Africa and the Diaspora" focusing attention on the promotion of African film industries in terms of production, distribution and exhibition. In 2013 the 9th Congress of FEPACI took a very critical introspective look at the state of the organization vis-a-vis the state of the industry throughout the continent, hence the theme "Film Making in the 21st century, a contribution to a sustainable economy".



Outside of the [Fespaco, bi-annual film Festival](#) in which in 2017 featured training in cinema and audiovisual trades, other unified and unifying activities take place during the Berlinale at the newly founded African Hub, an initiative of the European Film Market (EFM) in cooperation with the [World Cinema Fund](#) (and the special program it created in 2016, WCF Africa, which promotes films from Sub-Saharan Africa with the support of the German Federal Foreign Office, with Berlinale Talents (and its sister program [Talents Durban](#) held at the Durban Film Festival), which supports talented African filmmakers throughout the year), and with the Berlinale Co-Production Market.

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In Cannes there is sometimes a pan-African Pavilion for the Francophone sub-Saharan African nations and a separate pavilion for South Africa which serve as spaces for institutional appointments (announcements of new projects, signings of agreements and contracts) as well as a place for public relations (press conferences, professional meetings, home producers etc).



Cannes Film Festival's International Pavilions

Nigeria has its film industry called "Nollywood". South Africa produces and coproduces and has an industry infrastructure that includes a commission for

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bringing in foreign production, Ethiopia has active filmmaking as do other countries we see represented in the international film festivals.



[Africalia](#), based in Brussels is a European Union and Belgian Development Cooperation organization which works with African cultural operators whose activities encompass a wide range of disciplines including the audiovisual sector and literature to the performing arts and the visual arts and works with Burkina Faso, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

In the U.S., these are the networking membership organizations hosting many year round events. Anyone may join. Here is a listing of them.

independent filmmaker project

The [Independent Filmmaker Project \(IFP\)](#), New York City, guides storytellers through the process of making and distributing their work. A year round organization has programs to help filmmakers navigate the industry, develop new audiences, and encourage close interaction between all participants. The IFP connects artists with essential resources at all stages of development and distribution. IFP fosters a vibrant and sustainable independent storytelling community, represents a growing network of 10,000 storytellers around the world, and plays a key role in developing 350 new feature and documentary works each year. During its 35-year history, IFP has supported over 8,000 projects and offered resources to more than 20,000 filmmakers.

It offers creative, technological and business support through year-round programming, which includes Filmmaker Magazine, Independent Film Week, Envision, The Gotham Independent Film Awards, and the Independent Filmmaker Labs. IFP's latest initiative, the Made in NY Media Center by IFP, is an incubator space developed with the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment, where storytellers from multiple disciplines, industries, and platforms can create, collaborate and connect. Through its programming—which also includes seminars, conferences, and mentorships—IFP creates exciting opportunities for promising new voices from a diverse range of racial, ethnic, religious, ideological and sexual perspectives.

Founded in 1979, IFP is the largest and oldest not-for-profit dedicated to independent film. More info at <http://www.ifp.org>.

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FILM INDEPENDENT

Established in Los Angeles by IFP 35 years ago, the motto for the past year was “Diversity Speaks!” The mission at [Film Independent](#) is to help filmmakers make their movies, build audiences for their projects and work to diversify the film industry.

In 2016 the Film Independent Spirit Awards broke new ground in recognizing the achievements of underrepresented filmmakers, as did the LA Film Festival (which relocated to its new home in Culver City) and they continued commitment to innovative and diverse programming through Film Independent at LACMA and the Film Independent Forum.

Start with diversity—beginning from within. In 2016, 71 % of Film Independent’s full-time staff was comprised of women, with 44 % people of color and 16 % identifying as LGBTQ. Their programs work to shine a light on underrepresented filmmakers, including women, people of color and LGBTQ filmmakers. In 2016:

- 50 % of Fellows were women.
- 61 % of Fellows were people of color.
- 13 % of Fellows identified as LGBT.
- 28 % of Education panelists were women.
- 51 % of Education panelists were people of color.
- 30 % of Film Independent at LACMA panelists were women.
- 36 % of Film Independent at LACMA panelists were people of color.

Now set in Culver City, the L.A. Film Festival is one of the United States’ most consistently diverse mainstream film festivals. Of the features premiering at the 2016 Festival, 38 % were made by women and 41 % by people of color. The Festival also included Diversity Speaks—a full day of panels featuring conversations about race, cultural representation and the state of inclusive storytelling in the film industry.

Lastly, 31 % of 2016’s Film Independent Spirit Awards nominees were women, and 24 % were people of color. The awards also saw Black performers claim three of the four acting categories—including Mya Taylor, who also became the first

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transgender actor to win a major film award for Best Supporting Female in Sean Baker's *Tangerine*.

SAN FRANCISCO FILM SOCIETY™

The [San Francisco Film Society's](#) programs are anchored in the San Francisco Bay Area. Building on a legacy of nearly 60 years of bringing world cinema to the Bay Area, the San Francisco Film Society is a national leader in exhibition, education and filmmaker services.

The crown jewel of the Film Society's exhibition program is the San Francisco International Film Festival (April 2017), the longest-running film festival in the Americas and a showcase of cinematic discovery. An essential stop on the international film festival circuit, SFIFF is well regarded as a significant celebration of world cinema in one of the country's most beautiful cities. Last year's Festival featured 252 screenings of 183 films from 47 countries, which were attended by over 315 filmmakers and industry guests from around the globe. The Film Society's additional year-round initiatives in film exhibition include a robust Fall Season of specialized film series and countless individual public and member screenings and events with special guests in person.

Filmmaker360, the Film Society's filmmaker support program, offers assistance and opportunities designed to foster creativity and further the careers of independent filmmakers nationwide and oversees one of the largest film grant programs in the country, which disperses nearly \$1 million annually to incubate and support innovative and exceptional films, especially documentaries.



[The Film Collaborative](#) is a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to protect filmmakers from the minefield of independent film distribution.

They offer a full range of affordable distribution, educational and marketing advice and advocacy to independent filmmakers looking to reach out to traditionally underserved audiences.

The Film Collaborative achieves these goals without ever needing to own or exploit a filmmaker's intellectual property rights, opening up a new landscape of distribution opportunities free of extraneous middlemen and unfair contract terms, and drawing heavily upon the promise of new media/digital distribution and the power of viral and social networking.

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In today's marketplace, the traditional avenues of distribution for independent and arthouse distribution have dramatically contracted, leaving thousands of filmmakers without a way to bring their films to market.

As a result, there is a dire need for a service-oriented agency to step in to educate and empower filmmakers to reach out to audiences directly, to network with each other and trade vital experiences and marketing assets, and to master the tools of emerging DIY and new media opportunities.

By providing advice, advocacy and assistance for all aspects of film distribution, The Film Collaborative re-establishes a crumbling link between independent filmmakers and underserved audiences.

Become knowledgeable about these many film organizations and foundation events that may help in networking or funding or distribution. Also note that the bigger fests have many sidebar events. Out in the regions (or cities) many smaller fests also have funding, distribution, business oriented events which are great for networking.

Passion Projects are films that you are devoted to message-wise and which you feel will have a passionate reception in the world. In other words are more meaningful than just entertainment films. Films that can change the world. Especially with these film projects, you must try and partner or affiliate with organizations that share yours or your films' "World View". Sometimes, if they see it as a way to further their message, these organizations can help fund and promote the film. They can also organize events, screenings, fundraisers and exhibitions, and depending on how big they are, such events could be country wide, and now International, via digital distribution.



[NALIP](#) is an ever-expanding network that creates opportunities for Latinas/os working in film, television, documentaries and new media. NALIP builds relationships for Latino/a writers, producers, directors and performers with professionals and executives at all levels of the industry. NALIP members work on commercial and grass-roots projects in new media, television, film, documentary and experimental video, creating the Latino communications agenda. NALIP and membership are a potent voice for change in the media landscape, committed to

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seeing more images made by and about Latinos. We are an organization of producers, writers, directors and visionaries who recognize that progress made together benefits each individual, and that media diversity further democratizes our culture.



The [International Documentary Association \(IDA\)](#) is dedicated to building and serving the needs of a thriving documentary culture. Through its programs, the IDA provides resources, creates community, and defends rights and freedoms for documentary artists, activists, and journalists. The IDA offers a wide range of opportunities for documentarians of all experience levels to grow professionally by enhancing their knowledge of the craft and business of nonfiction filmmaking.

In summation, in this course we want to emphasize

1. You must have a vision of the business your film will do after its completion, i.e., “distribution”.
2. You must define your business goals clearly for festivals, film markets, for U.S. and international sales and for distribution to all final distribution outlets. At each and every stage of your “film business” work you must examine and understand what you want to do, what you are doing and why. How does each step relate to the main strategic goal of reaching the “eyeballs” out in the world for whom you made this film. And how, once they are reached, will you be compensated for your film and your work.
3. Once you have your film, or your script and partial or complete financing, the five great world film markets are a good place to begin, to attend and to work at on behalf of your film(s). The markets are known as CannesBerlinTorontoSundanceAFM. Except for AFM these all have great film festivals running concurrently adjacent and alongside, but the markets are a very different environment and type of event from a film festival and it is at the markets that business takes place. Here you will do the necessary networking, develop relationships to fulfill your films' business goals. We should also mention that access or admission to these simultaneous adjacent events usually requires separate badges or tickets for access to events.

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Toronto Producer Lab

4. U.S. (or North America) vs. The World.

This course will explain all this plus:

- Where do you go and how do you begin?
- Where is the money? (Always the question in business)

The business field is filled with rich players, funds, government agencies and companies with the right connections. The trick is always locating and getting (!) the “right” money for your project. You want to find the best, nicest and most honest people, the right conditions and the right amount. Tracking the money – the best way to raise it, the best way to spend it and use it for the correct goals -- this is a lifetime’s work.

How to use the large amounts of money required to make a film in order to realize your dreams, inspire others and, of course, to change the world: that is what this course will impart as it takes you through the business side of movie making, helping you define your goals and hopefully to assist you in realizing your strategic vision.

TAKEAWAYS:

1. [Los Angeles Times, January 7, 2017:](#)

Home video sales shrank again in 2016 as Americans switched to streaming

2. [MPEAA 2017 Report](#) for 2017: Theatrical Market Statistics U.S. and Abroad

3. [European Audiovisual Observatory: Transparency through information](#)

Module 1 Questions

1. Film is an international business. Explain why what this means, briefly.
2. If a film has an international audience, how can you reach them?
3. What is the relationship between “finding an audience” and “distribution”?
4. What are the film markets? What is done there?
5. What is a producer's role in a film's production and in the business of film?

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6. If you plan to continue this course, please post a bio that includes where you live, your education, and experience in film, information about your position today, organizations you are with. Where are you from originally? Are you making a film? a short? a feature? a documentary? Have you ever made one or do you plan to make one? What are your goals as they relate to this class? Please include something about your family and personal interests. Post a photo so we can envision you as we work together. Posting a video bio would be great too.

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