# Fundamentals of Film Production

*Course Preview*

Lisa Montoya Consulting

# Course Introduction

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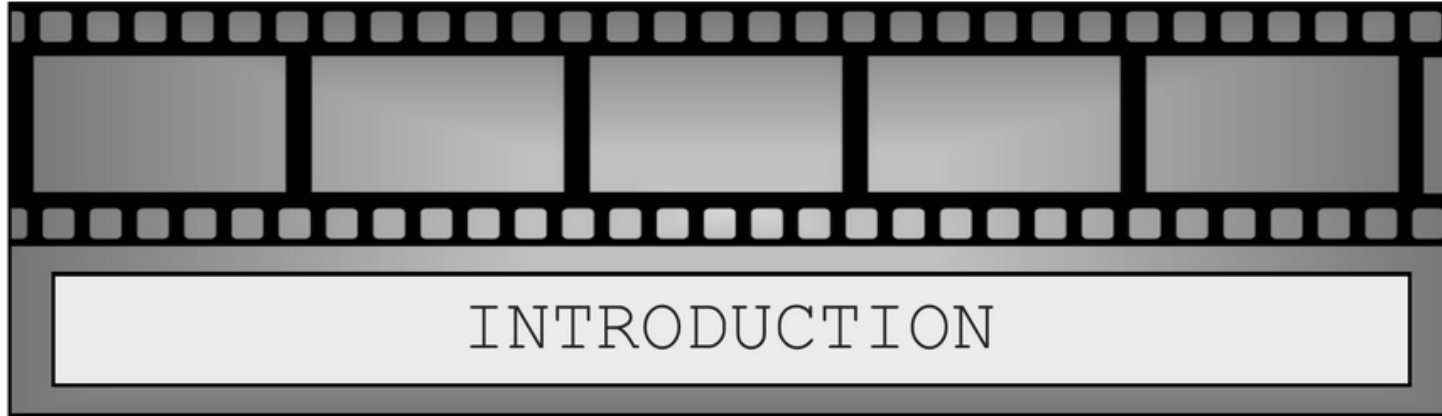


INTRODUCTION

## Course Description:

The course is designed to introduce students to film production principles and practices. Over a period of ten weeks, we will follow the mock-production of a narrative feature film, going through each stage: development, pre-production, principal photography, post-production, and distribution. We will establish the foundations of the entire process by understanding its parts; we will familiarize with the essential roles of key talent and crew, and review how their individual tasks are entwined; finally, we will have the opportunity to meet with and interview film industry veterans, in New Mexico and beyond.

The course is of introductory level with its main objective being to familiarize students with the essential tenets of film production and management, and expose them to the variety of professional siloes that exist and cohabit within. We will cover the managerial, financial, technical, organizational, and creative aspects of film production and explain how they all work in concert to achieve the desired goal—a film. We will examine in detail the workflow and tasks of specific crew members: from the production manager and the assistant director, to the script supervisor and the cinematographer, to the mixer and the editor. We will create a shooting schedule and a budget, and a distribution plan for the finished film, all based on an existing screenplay. A student should come out of it with a solid understanding of the overall process of film-making and be able to choose specific area of interest with clarity and knowledge, should they wish to continue on that path.

## Course Overview:

The course will consist of five modules, loosely following the workflow and main stages of film-making. Each stage is fundamental, obeying its own essential rules and best practices, yet building upon the others with each stage passing the baton to the next.

### Module A: Development and Pre-Production

After a brief introduction, the first three chapters will cover the processes leading to the first day of filming. Development is perhaps the most 'mysterious' and uncertain part of film-making (How do we develop a project? How do we find funding? etc.), because it is the least understood and the most open to possible variations. Yet, it is the foundation of the film to be

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*Course Introduction Page includes a course description, course overview, course objectives, course outline, and badging requirements for the micro-credential. All pages are branded and designed for cohesiveness.*

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# COURSE NAVIGATION

## Course Navigation

Modules in this course contain a variety of engagement content (readings, videos, activities, assignments, quizzes, etc.) Many materials will be available for download throughout the course. Students will be prompted to complete each module in order and will complete a final activity at the end of the course to receive credit. Participants may navigate to individual pages for review throughout the course via the "Modules" button in the left-hand menu.

**Look for the following engagement icons throughout the course:**

✅ **Check Your Understanding!** (Knowledge Check)

**Engagement Activity**

👁 **Watch This!** (Video Content)

🔍 **Explore Resources** (Links to External Content)

📝 **Discussion Post**

📝 **Take Note!** (Important Note for Your Records)

*Course Navigation includes cues and symbols for students to look for various activities as they navigate content.*

Home

Modules

Collapse All ⋮

▾ Start Here: Course Orientation

  📄 Welcome

  📄 Course Introduction

  📄 Meet Your Instructor

  📄 Course Navigation, Class Meetings, & Resources

▸ Module A: Development & Pre-Production

▸ Module B: Principal Photography (Production)

▸ Module C: Post-Production

*Preview of Modules based on Course Outline. Participants access all content through the Modules Page.*

▾ Module A: Development & Pre-Production

📄 Module A Introduction

Chapter 1: From an Idea to Shooting Script

📄 Developing an Idea: Intellectual Property, Original Ideas, and Adaptation

📄 The Writing Process

💬 Discussion Post: Mad-Lib Logline Activity

📄 Copyright, Options & Acquisition

📄 The Writers Guild of America

📄 Placeholder: Working Project?

Chapter 2: Talent Hunting, Funding, & Packaging

📄 Casting

📄 Actor Production Companies

📄 Casting, Continued

📄 Funding

📄 Funding, Continued

📄 Case Study Part 1: New Mexico, A Star State

📄 Case Study Part 2: North Carolina, Victim of Politics

📄 Packaging the Project

📄 The Pitch-Deck

📎 Sample Pitch Deck - Stranger Things.pdf

📄 The Look-Book/Mood-Board

📄 The Storyboard

📄 Placeholder: A2 Assignment

Preview of Content Pages, Resources, and Activities in a Module.

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THE WRITING PROCESS

### The Writing Process

The writing and development process consists of getting the initial project idea—whether original or adapted from preexisting material—to the point where it can be successfully presented to potential partners: financiers, actors, agents, directors, talent, etc. Whether the screenplay is original or based on preexisting work, the writing elements are roughly the same: logline, synopsis, treatment, scene-by-scene, and final a finished screenplay. Writing and development is the period of time dedicated to preparing these elements in their best possible form.

The producer can be the initiator of this process or get attached along the way, when some of this work has already been done by the writers. In many cases the producer decides to jump on board based on the writing elements and works towards perfecting them until they are ready to be presented to financiers, co-producers, and talent.

### The Writing Elements

 **Engagement Activity**

*Click on the image below to launch the Writing Elements Flash Card Activity in a new tab. Navigate back to this page once you are finished.*
[Note: A pop-up may notify you that an LMS error has occurred - click "OK" and press click the "PLAY" button!]

The Writing Elements
Click on the icons below to reveal the definition of each writing element.

| Logline | Synopsis | Treatment | Scene-by-Scene |
| Screenplay | Drafts | Shooting Script | Final Draft |

*Sample Content Page. Content is broken down in to "bite-size" chunks and organized via Headings, allowing students to move through content in a meaningful and effective manner.*

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### Discussion Post: Mad-Lib Logline Activity
Lisa Montoya
All Sections

In this Mad-Lib Logline Activity, you will develop a Logline for an upcoming film based on the elements outlined in this chapter. You may develop this for a genre of your choosing. Post your original Logline to the discussion board using the Mad-Lib-style prompt below.

**Review:**
The main elements of a Logline are: SETTING, PROTAGONIST, PROBLEM, ANTAGONIST, CONFLICT/ACTION, and GOAL.

**Prompt: Let's Play Mad-Libs!**
Imagine you are a screenwriter. Your next task in the writing process is to present a Logline. Develop your original Logline using the following Mad-Lib prompt:

"In (a setting), (your protagonist) has a (problem), and must (take action/enter conflict) against (an antagonist) to (achieve a goal)."

Take some time to review and refine your logline. Your post does not need to remain in this format, but must include all six elements as outlined above.

**Feedback:**
This is an opportunity to put your new knowledge into practice. You are encouraged to read through various posts and enjoy each others' creativity! Students are welcome to like, ask questions, make comments, and constructively critique others' Loglines throughout the discussion thread. You will not be receiving direct feedback from your instructor on this discussion post.

**Note:**
Students are expected to use respectful and professional language when crafting class discussion posts. If you identify a concerning post, please contact the instructor via email.

| Search entries or author | Unread | ⬆ ⬇ | ✓ Subscribe |

‹ Previous

Next ›

*Sample Discussion Post.*

## Working with Agents

Talent agents are master deal-makers on behalf of their clients and themselves. They represent actors and other talent, and take care of every aspect of the negotiation, contracting, and conducting of business on behalf of the actors. In recent years, they have become increasingly powerful players in Hollywood and have begun to take a bigger role in the project creation. They now regularly take part in the packaging, funding, and project initiation. Backend deals (box-office and streaming) have become a regular part of agents' services. Most major talent agencies now have production and funding divisions that help put financiers and producers together in the same room to strike deals and fund projects, in exchange for a percentage of the proceeds.

As agencies represent a variety of talent—from actors to directors and writers, to cite the most obvious—they have vested interest in working to package projects entirely within their own walls and help fill all positions from their own talent pool. Agency-packaged projects tend to appeal to major studios, eager to streamline and corporatize the proceedings, to make it easier, more efficient, to consolidate and minimize the number of counterparts they have to deal and negotiate with.

The tension between business and art so typical for the film industry tends to crystalize with talent agents. What is good for the agents and the studios, what seems efficient and quick, is not always what is best for the film and most productive in the end. The best films on the screen aren't necessarily those best packaged by the agents. But their networking ability, connections, and vested interest in the success of a project can be very helpful to any producer trying to find funding for a project, have it greenlit by a studio, or simply put it firm on the ground.

### Engagement Activity

*Click on the icons below to explore the major Hollywood talent agencies, known as the "Big 6".*

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Creative Artists Agency | International Creative Management | William Morris Endeavor | United Talent Agents | Agency Performing Artists |

| |
|---|
| Paradigm Talent Agency |

*Click the "Next" button to learn about Funding.*

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*Sample Content Page and Engagement Activity. This format allows students to learn key information and apply that knowledge in their exploration of resources.*

## Spotlight: Hello Sunshine Productions

A great example of that trend is Reese Witherspoon's Hello Sunshine Production Company, which she created about a decade ago with an overtly stated mission to push forward female stories and interesting female characters, women-directors and women-writers. The company put a bet on the idea that there is an untapped creative territory and an audience starved for this content, and won big. Since its inception, Hello Sunshine has produced a number of feature films and TV shows, most notably 'Little Big Lies', 'Little Fires Everywhere', and 'Gone Girl.'

### 👁 Watch This!

*Watch the video below to learn more about Reese Witherspoon's Hello Sunshine Productions.*
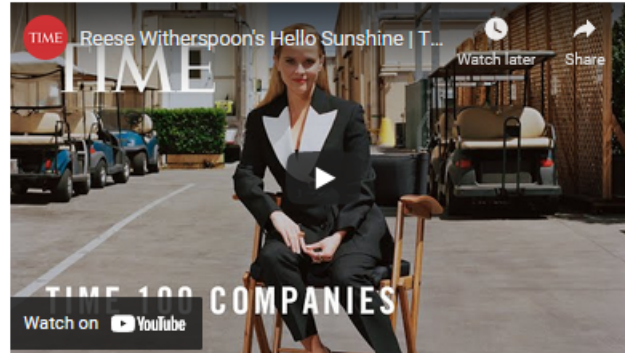


### 🔍 Explore Resources

*Click on the link below to learn more!*

Hello Sunshine Productions

## Spotlight: Monkeypaw Productions

Another example is Monkeypaw Productions, a company created by writer/director/actor Jordan Peele and a team of like-minded production professionals with the mission of creating content from diverse and underrepresented voices. The company produces projects by Jordan Peele himself ('Get Out', 'Us') but also by other directors ('Blackkklansman' by Spike Lee and 'Candyman' by Nia Da Costa.)

### 🔍 Explore Resources

*Click on the link below to learn more!*

Monkeypaw Productions

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*Sample Content Page. All external supporting content is cited within the course. This allows participants to see and experience real-world examples.*