

FILM 321: Commercial Production

Fall 2025

Meeting time:	Tu 1:30 - 4:45PM
Location:	14 E Jackson Rm 209

Instructor:	Ben Zlotucha (Zlo-too-wuh)
Office Location:	14 E Jackson Rm 916
Email:	bzlotuch@depaul.edu (note: no "a" in my last name)
Office Hours in-Person:	Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11am - 1:30pm. (Make Appointment)
Office Hours via Zoom:	Flexible, email me.
Zoom Link:	https://depaul.zoom.us/j/9975035271

STANDARD DISCLAIMER

This syllabus is subject to change. I'll make changes in red and notify you should that happen.

PRE-REQUISITES:

- Film 210

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

No one wants to admit how important ads are to the national, even global economy. It's imperative that consumers buy products, and in order to buy products, consumers need to know about them. As frivolous and shippable as they can be, ads are at the vital intersection between institutional and individual interests.

In this course, **we'll learn commercial production by doing commercial production.**

We'll be the **client** that wants to make its product more relevant, or grow its product's profile, or beat its product's competitors, or just flex how great it is; we'll be the **agency** that takes its client's wishes and focuses them into a coherent campaign strategy; and we'll be the **production company** that focuses that campaign strategy into a produced piece of content that makes the agency and client happy and hopefully translates to sales and stronger brand identity.

TYPE OF INSTRUCTION:

This is a 95% workshop-style class. In the beginning, we'll break into groups. These groups will be your team for the whole quarter. Class time will be spent working together in these groups, and interfacing with the other groups in the form of Presentations and Q&As.

COURSE OUTCOMES:

At the completion of this course, the students will have a comprehensive understanding of how commercials are created, from soup to nuts; they'll be able to identify the key players involved and the roles played in the institutions that operate within the ad industry; they'll have experience working in several different types of ads, from lifestyle to comedy and everything in between.

TEXTBOOK:

There is no textbook to buy for this course, but there are several free resources for you to utilize online.

[AdWeek](#). Paywall, but lots of articles are free if you search AdWeek on Google.
[iSpot.TV](#). Paywall, but tons of free stuff. Link Provided to Super Bowl LIX coverage.
[YouTube](#). I know, duh, but search for "Best Ads of All Time" and things like that and you'll find tons.

And this is slightly unusual, but I encourage everyone to watch [Mad Men](#). It's an excellent dramatic series – maybe on my top ten of all time? – but it's also an entertaining way of understanding this industry.

SOFTWARE/HARDWARE:

- D2L
 - Word processing software
 - Spreadsheet software
 - Deck building software like PowerPoint, Keynote or online versions like Canva
 - Editing software
 - Cameras
 - Lighting/Grip equip (if necessary)
 - Sound equip (if necessary)
-

USE OF AI:

While it's extremely common to use AI in the advertising industry, it's prohibited in your assignments because we are not in the industry – we're in an **educational environment**. In this course we will **learn by doing**, not by copy/pasting.

AI as a tool will be discussed in this course because it's important to learn about industry standards, and from my perspective it's pretty standard to use things like Chat GPT and MidJourney.

But using it for coursework is simply unproductive towards the course outcomes.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:

In this class, you're not just beholden to class attendance and participation like you are in normal classes; you're also beholden to your peers. You need to attend and participate because this is project-based learning and it's collaborative.

I'll be able to tell if you're engaged or not and your grade will reflect that.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS:

Late assignments will result in team-wide grade deductions, and will just screw up the rest of your schedule because there's no time to catch up. So I wouldn't recommend lateness.

ADDITIONAL COSTS:

We're going to be producing some commercials in this class, but the problem is, our client sucks. They haven't given us any money.

I don't want anyone spending money, so I'd prefer our concepts to employ DIY filmmaking methods that don't require cash and other resources.

We will focus on **creative intent in this class, not production value**. Part of our "post mortem" after each project is completed will be "What would you change if you actually had a budget?"

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Week Two -	Brand Strategy	10%
Week Three -	Campaign Strategy	10%
Week Four -	Director's Treatment	10%
Week Five -	Finished Ad	10%

Revised 10-29-25

Week Six -	Brand Strategy #2	10%
Week Seven -	Campaign Strategy #2	10%
Week Eight -	Director's Treatment #2	10%
Week Nine -	Finished Ad #2	10%

Attendance and Participation	20%
------------------------------	-----

COURSE OVERVIEW

Week One 9/16/25

Lecture: Introductions and course overview

Lecture: Different types of ads

The Client

- Five teams.
- Name your team and figure out organization. Who is really good with PowerPoint? Who can keep everything organized and meet the deadlines?
- You're **The Client**. Choose a product that costs under 15 dollars.

Homework: Create a brand strategy in deck form.

- What's the brand identity?
- What is your target market and why?
- Where will you connect with your target market? (Ad buy)
- How do you want to appeal to your target market?
- What's the vibe of this brand and what are some campaigns you can reference?

Week Two 9/23/25

The Agency

- Present Brand Strategy to class.
- Switch gears. Your team is now an **Ad Agency**.

Homework: Create the ad campaign in deck form.

- How are you honoring the client's brand identity?
- How are you appealing to the product's target market?
- What's the vibe of the campaign and how have you expanded or further defined the client's brief?
- Scripts
- Reference Images

Revised 10-29-25

Week Three 9/30/25

The Production Company

- Present Ad Agency Deck to class.
- Switch gears. Your team is now a **Production Company**.

Homework: The Director's Treatment.

- Approach
- Tone
- Look and Feel
- Casting and Performance
- Shooting Script
- Music/Sound/FX

Week Four 10/7/25

The Shoot

- Present Director's Treatments to class
- **Shoot the commercial**

Homework: Make the commercial

- Create one :30 Broadcast Spot
- Your client has given you no money, so they're expecting no production value.
- That said, you've got access to cameras, lights, actors, and the beautiful city of Chicago. Can you wow them?
- Nail the product moment.
- Deliver on the treatment.

Week Five 10/14/25

The Broadcast (Mid-Term)

- Present your :30 commercials to the class.
- Host a Q and A and provide/receive feedback from the Client and Agency that you collaborated with.

Lecture: Service commercials

The Client

- Choose a company that provides a service. You are **the client**.

Homework: Create a brand strategy in deck form.

Revised 10-29-25

- What's the brand identity?
- What is your target market and why?
- Where will you connect with your target market? (Ad buy)
- How do you want to appeal to your target market?
- What's the vibe of this brand and what are some campaigns you can reference?

Week Six 10/21/25

Lecture: PSAs and Political Ads

The Agency

- Present Brand Strategy to class.
- Switch gears. Your team is now an **ad agency**.

Homework: Create the ad campaign in deck form.

- How are you honoring the client's brand identity?
- How are you appealing to the product's target market?
- What's the vibe of the campaign and how have you expanded or further defined the client's brief?
- Scripts
- Reference Images

Week Seven 10/28/25

Lecture: Deck Review

The Production Company

- Present Ad Agency Deck to class.
- Switch gears. Your team is now a **production company**.

Homework: The Director's Treatment.

- Approach
- Tone
- Look and Feel
- Casting and Performance
- Shooting Script
- Music/Sound/FX

Week Eight 11/4/25

The Shoot

Revised 10-29-25

- Present Director's Treatments to class
- Shoot the commercial

Homework: Make the commercial

- Create one :30 Broadcast Spot
- Your client has given you no money, so they're expecting no production value.
- That said, you've got access to cameras, lights, actors, and the beautiful city of Chicago. Can you wow them?
- Nail the product moment.
- Deliver on the treatment.

Week Nine 11/11/25

Evaluations

The Broadcast (Final)

- Present your :30 commercials to the class.
- Evaluations
- Watch each 30 second ad
- Agency give feedback to prod co
- Client give feedback to prod co

Week Ten 11/18/25

- Review: the structure of the industry
- Review: the structure of commercials
- Jeopardy!

FINE PRINT

Online Course Evaluations:

Evaluations are a way for students to provide valuable feedback regarding their instructor and the course. Detailed feedback will enable the instructor to continuously tailor teaching methods and course content to meet the learning goals of the course and the academic needs of the students. They are a requirement of the course and are key to continue to provide you with the highest quality of teaching. The evaluations are anonymous; the instructor and administration do not track who entered what responses. A program is used to check if the student completed the evaluations, but the evaluation is completely separate from the student's identity. Since 100% participation is our goal, students are sent periodic reminders over three weeks. Students do not receive reminders once they complete the evaluation. Students complete the evaluation online in [CampusConnect](#).

Revised 10-29-25

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/>. If you have any questions be sure to consult your professor.

Academic Policies:

All students are required to manage their class schedules each term in accordance with the deadlines for enrolling and withdrawing as indicated in the University Academic Calendar. Information on enrollment, withdrawal, grading and incompletes can be found at: cdm.depaul.edu/enrollment.

Students with Disabilities:

Students who feel they may need accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential.

To ensure that you receive the most appropriate accommodation based on your needs, contact the instructor as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class), and make sure that you have contacted the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at: csd@depaul.edu.

Lewis Center #1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd.

Phone number: (312)362-8002

Fax: (312)362-6544

TTY: (773)325-7296

Message
in a Bottle

BabyBottlePop.com
