

# Content Creation Entrepreneurship

SOC 381W

Spring 2022

Department of Sociology & Data Analytics  
City University of New York, Queens College

## Course Overview

This course teaches skills and knowledge related to developing and operating a digital content creation enterprise. *Digital content creation entrepreneurship* is the task of creating organizations or projects that create and distribute text, images, audio, and video for the Internet. Operating these types of enterprises – YouTube channels, Instagram accounts, blogs, podcasts, eBooks, etc. – requires a blend of artistic, production, and business management skills. Students will learn the basics of these skills through practical instruction and experiential learning activities, tied together in an integrated framework built on the sociologies of culture, media, organization, and markets. By the course's end, students will have had firsthand exposure to a range of skills valued in communications markets (e.g., entertainment, media, marketing, public relations, education), and the beginnings of a creative portfolio that demonstrate their command of both their creative and enterprise management skills.

Students with a passion for content creation may also wish to join us at the Queens Podcast Lab ([QueensPodcastLab.org](http://QueensPodcastLab.org)), which offers extracurricular activities and supplemental programming for student-creators.

## Instructor

Joseph Nathan Cohen  
Associate Professor of Sociology  
City University of New York, Queens College  
[joseph.cohen@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:joseph.cohen@qc.cuny.edu)  
[josephnathancohen.info](mailto:josephnathancohen.info)

## Meeting Times

Wednesdays, 1:40 – 3:25PM  
KY 317

## Office Hours

Wednesdays, 4:00PM – 6:00PM  
PH 252H

## Prerequisites

ENGL 110  
SOC 101

*Professor may waive sociology prerequisite for non-sociology students where they demonstrate a preexisting passion for content creation or creative entrepreneurship.*

# Required Materials

## Required Textbook

New York Foundation for the Arts (2018) *The Profitable Artist: A Handbook for All Artists in the Performing, Literary, and Visual Arts*. New York Foundation for the Arts.

## Connect with Required Campus Services

- Blackboard
- Microsoft Teams & our class group
- [Adobe Creative Cloud \(instructions\)](#)

# Agenda

This class has 14 meetings. The sequence is described in the table below, and further details on individual weeks follow the table:

Table 1: Study Plan for Content Creation Entrepreneurship, Spring 2022

Date	Topic	Notes
Feb 2	Course Introduction	
Feb 9	Fame and Celebrity	<i>My Media Diet</i> assignment due
Feb 16	Creating Content	<i>Three Creators</i> assignment due
Feb 23	Blogging / Text	<i>Thirty Second Pitch</i> assignment due
Mar 2	Doing Research	
Mar 9	Podcasting / Audio	<i>Blog Post</i> assignment due
Mar 16	Connecting with Audiences	
Mar 23	Enterprise Management	
Mar 30	Images, Social Media, and Virality	<i>Podcast</i> assignment due
Apr 6	Money and Economics	<i>Business Plan</i> due
Apr 13	Law and Politics	<i>Social Media Campaign</i> assignment due
Apr 27	Video	
May 4	Final Presentations	<i>Final Project</i> must be uploaded to Blackboard by May 18
May 11		

## February 2: Course Introduction

Getting acquainted. What is content creation entrepreneurship? Course overview. Campus resources.

## Required Content

- Course Syllabus
- Queens Podcast Lab (2021) “Learning Content Creation at the Queens Podcast Lab” YouTube Video. August 11. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2MWX-H\\_rays](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2MWX-H_rays)

## **February 9: Fame and Celebrity**

*Obsessing over celebrity culture. What is fame? Celebrity life cycles. The Fame Game. Mass communications enterprise management.*

### **Required Content**

- Kerry O. Ferris (2007) “The Sociology of Celebrity” *Sociological Compass* (BB).
- Queens Podcast Lab (2021) “Fame: What Is It? How Do You Get It? How Do You Keep It?” YouTube Video. November 2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XE6jqfaJN34>

### **Recommended Additional Content**

*A discussion between me and Kerry Ferris about celebrity.*

- Cohen, Joseph Nathan (2021) “Celebrity (Kerry O. Ferris)” *Annex Sociology Podcast*. Podcast. October 25. <https://queenspodcastlab.org/podcast/5688/>

### **Homework Due**

- *My Media Diet*
- *Content for Creators* (selected students)

## **February 16: Creating Content**

*Creating experiential products. Being creative. Defining one’s space. Finding material. The content generation process. Note-taking with Evernote.*

### **Required Content**

- Deborah Lupton (2013) “Introducing Digital Sociology” in In John Germov and Marilyn Poole (eds), *Public Sociology: An Introduction to Australian Society*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin.(BB)
- British Vogue (2021) “Patricia Bright on Becoming a Content Creator” YouTube Video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ebdGMGXhMso&t>
- Cohen, Joseph Nathan (2021) “I Couldn’t Finish My Book, So I Enlisted a Sports Psychologist” *Joseph Nathan Cohen*. Blog Post. <https://josephnathancohen.info/blog/2021/02/23/i-couldnt-finish-my-book-so-i-enlisted-a-sports-psychologist/>
- Queens Podcast Lab (2021) “Creativity (Hannah Wohl).” YouTube video. November 5. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SIO-ZRFT4IQ>

### **Assignment Due**

- *Three Creators*
- *Content for Creators* (selected students)

## **February 23: Blogging / Text**

*The power of the printed word. Basic communications model. Writing basics. Blogging and the Web 2.0 Revolution. Microblogging. An introduction to WordPress.*

### **Required Content**

- Tim O'Reilly (2005) "What is Web 2.0?" O'Reilly. Blog Post. September 30.  
<https://www.oreilly.com/pub/a/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html>
- Keith Roberts (1993) "Towards a Sociology of Writing" *Teaching Sociology*, 21 (4): 317 – 324 (BB)
- Masterclass (2021) "8 Tips for Improving Your Writing Style" Blog. November 12 .  
<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/tips-for-improving-your-writing-style>
- Queens Podcast Lab (2021) "The Art of Storytelling (Jason Tougaw)" YouTube Video. November 9.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bfrtpnd9A8Q>

### **Assignment Due**

- *Thirty-Second Pitch*
- *Content for Creators* (selected students)

## **March 2: Doing Research**

*Truth and Material. Information Search. Verification. Interview Methods. A Brief Introduction to Wikipedia.*

### **Required Content**

- Michael Galnberg (2021), "Truth", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2021/entries/truth/>
- Florida International University Libraries (n.d.) "The Research Process: Step by Step" Web Site.  
<https://library.fiu.edu/c.php?g=159967&p=1048633>
- Andrea Fontana and James H. Frey (2000) "The Interview: From Structured Questions to Negotiated Text" in IN. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 645-672). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (BB)
- Virginia Tech University Library (n.d.) "Editing and Contributing to Wikipedia: Getting Started" Web Page.  
<https://guides.lib.vt.edu/wikipedia>

### **Assignment Due**

- *Content for Creators* (selected students)

## **March 9: Podcasting / Audio**

*Aural Media. An Introduction to Podcasting. Creating Podcasts. Sound Editing Basics. Hosting Conversation Podcasts. Podcast Distribution.*

### **Required Content**

- Lauren Migaki and Andee Tagle (2021) "How to Start a Podcast, According to the Pros at NPR" *NPR*. Blog post and podcast. <https://www.npr.org/2021/06/22/1009098800/how-to-start-a-podcast-npr-advice>
- John Sullivan (2019) "The Platforms of Podcasting: Past and Present" *Social Media and Society*. (BB)
- Joseph N. Cohen (2021) "Editing Discussion Podcasts with Audacity" Manuscript.  
<https://queenspodcastlab.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Podcast-Post-Production.pdf>
- Queens Podcast Lab (2021) "An Introduction to Podcast Editing" YouTube video. September 13.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f70cdhK48nw>

## Recommended Deeper Reading

*The definitive applied guide for aspiring podcasters:*

- Glen Weldon (2020) *NPR's Podcast Start Up Guide: Create, Launch, and Grow Podcast on any Budget*. Ten Speed Press

## Assignment Due

- *Blog Post*
- *Content for Creators* (selected students)

## **March 16: Connecting with Audiences**

*Communications and Culture. How Audiences Connect. The Audience Engagement Process. Engaging Content. Marketing. Building Universes.*

## Required Content

- Paul DiMaggio (1997) "Culture and Cognition" *Annual Review of Sociology* (BB)
- Tim Hill, Robin Canniford, and Giana M. Eckhardt (2021) "The Roar of the Crowd: How Interaction Ritual Chains Create Social Atmospheres" *Journal of Marketing*: 1 – 19 (BB)
- Randall Collins (2014) "Interaction Ritual Chains and Collective Effervescence" in Christian von Scheve and Mikko Samela (eds.) *Collective Emotions: Perspectives from Psychology, Philosophy, and Sociology*. Oxford University Press. pp. 299 - 311 (BB)

## Assignment Due

- *Content for Creators* (selected students)

## **March 23: Enterprise Management**

*Art Worlds. The Sociology of Organizations. An Introduction to Management Studies. Strategic Planning.*

## Required Content

- Howard Becker (1982) *Art Worlds*. University of California Press. Chapter 1 (BB)
- New York Foundation for the Arts (2018) *The Profitable Artist: A Handbook for All Artists in the Performing, Literary, and Visual Arts*. New York Foundation for the Arts. Chapters 1 - 2

## Recommended Additional Readings for Class

- Reed Kennedy (2020) *Strategic Management*. Virginia Tech Publishing.  
<https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/bitstream/handle/10919/99282/Strategic-Management.pdf?sequence=22&isAllowed=y>

## Recommended Deeper Reading

*Two great books that do a good job of synthesizing the past century's major frameworks for understanding organizations.*

- Gaereth Morgan (2006) *Images of Organization*. Sage.
- Charles Perrow (2014) *Complex Organizations: A Critical Essay*. Echo Point Media.

## Assignment Due

- *Content for Creators* (selected students)

## **March 30: Images, Social Media, and Virality**

*Visual Media. Social Media. Useful Concepts and Theories from Social Networks Analysis. Going Viral.*

### **Required Content**

- Sartwell, Crispin, "Beauty", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/beauty/>
- Ron Burt (2004). "Structural Holes and Good Ideas" *American Journal of Sociology*. **110**: 349–399 (BB)
- Everitt Rogers (2003) *Diffusion of Ideas*. Free Press. Chapter 1 (BB)

### **Recommended Additional Reading**

- Everitt Rogers (2003) *Diffusion of Ideas*. Free Press.

### **Assignment Due**

- *Content for Creators* (selected students)
- *Podcast*

## **April 6. Money and the Economics of Content Creation**

*The falling cost of mass communications. Monetization. Financial accounting for creation enterprises. A brief introduction to Microsoft Excel.*

### **Required Content**

- Kyle Chayka (2021) "What the "Creator Economy" Promises – and What It Actually Does" *New Yorker*. July 17. <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/infinite-scroll/what-the-creator-economy-promises-and-what-it-actually-does>
- New York Foundation for the Arts (2018) *The Profitable Artist: A Handbook for All Artists in the Performing, Literary, and Visual Arts*. New York Foundation for the Arts. Chapters 6 - 8

### **Assignment Due**

- *Business Plan* due
- *Content for Creators* (selected students)

## **April 13: Law, Politics, and Content Creation**

*Law and Politics Set Conditions of Cultural Production. Intellectual Property Law. Defamation Law. Politics and Media.*

### **Required Content**

- New York Foundation for the Arts (2018) *The Profitable Artist: A Handbook for All Artists in the Performing, Literary, and Visual Arts*. New York Foundation for the Arts. Chapters 3 - 5

### **Assignment Due**

- *Social Media Campaign* due
- *Content for Creators* (selected students)

## **April 27. Video**

YouTube. TikTok. Basic Principles of Film Production.

### **Required Content**

- PewDiePie (2017) “How To Get Started On YouTube” YouTube Video.  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVu8OWN90eY&ab\\_channel=PewDiePie](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVu8OWN90eY&ab_channel=PewDiePie)
- Alfie Vaughn (2017) “Film Making Basics: Everything You Need to Know in 8 Minutes!” YouTube Video.  
Feb 1. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BFwMRVwrKcA&t=18s&ab\\_channel=AlfieVaughan](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BFwMRVwrKcA&t=18s&ab_channel=AlfieVaughan)

### **Assignment Due**

- *Content for Creators* (selected students)

## **May 4: Final Presentations (Week 1)**

Students view each other’s PowerPoints and trailers for the *Series Pitch* final project. Peers will evaluate and offer feedback.

### **Assignment Due**

- *Final Project Presentation* (selected students)

## **May 11: Final Presentations (Week 2)**

Students view each other’s PowerPoints and trailers for the *Series Pitch* final project. Peers will evaluate and offer feedback.

### **Assignment Due**

- *Final Project Presentation* (selected students)

## **May 18: Final Project Uploaded**

Your final project materials should be uploaded to Blackboard by the end of this day.

## **Assignments**

The purpose of assignments are to give you hands-on experience with creation. It forces you to try different facets of content creation. I believe that firsthand experience with a practical skill is the only way to really understand it.

## **Assignment Information**

### **Content for Creators (2 x 2.5%)**

**250 Word Memo + 2 Minute Oral Presentation. Students will receive individual due dates.**

This assignment is designed to encourage students to seek and share information about creation in order to inform their own practice. Students will be assigned three weeks for which they are responsible for bringing in one piece of content (text, video, or audio) that conveys a relevant insight to aspiring creators or creative entrepreneurs. Both the memo and the presentation should convey: (1) a plain-language rendering of what the article says and (2) the insights about content creation or creative entrepreneurship that we can derive from the article. A good submission demonstrates clarity, polish, insightfulness, and identifiable qualities to which audiences can attach.

## My Media Diet (5%)

**300 Word Memo. Due February 9.**

Students will produce a memo that describes their favorite media, outlets, creators, and items. Describe up to three creations or creators who operate in text, video, or audio. For each creator, describe: (1) What is their name and what kind of content do they produce? (2) The audience to which this creator or creation caters? What are their followers like? (3) What you think makes this creator or creation appealing or engaging to their followers? What is their X-factor? A good submission demonstrates good writing and a clear understanding of creator's niche and audience.

## Three Creators (5%)

**300 Word Memo. Due February 16.**

Students will pitch a content series (any genre, format, media) that blends the unique qualities of three creators that they like or admire. These qualities can be skills, personal qualities, interests, performative style, or any other characteristic that the student likes about the creator or their creations. The point is to practice creating new content or enterprise ideas by borrowing. The submission should describe each creator and their distinguishing qualities, and synthesize these qualities into a credible creative idea with promise. A good submission demonstrates good writing, has identified interesting or compelling source material or inspirations, and successfully ties these inspirations together into a credible and excitement-generating content proposal.

## Thirty Second Pitch (5%)

**Thirty-Second Verbal Presentation with Word Script, Plus Q&A. Due February 23.**

Students will write the script for a thirty-second pitch for a blog post, podcast episode, or YouTube video that would appeal to some audience in the Queens College community. Your submission should describe the post or episode, the types of students to which this post or episode is supposed to appeal, and why you think that they will find it appealing. The goal of this exercise is to practice constructing a very brief but high-impact pitch for your ideas. A good submission should exhibit a well-defined product and audience, and a compelling rationale why the audience would attach to the product.

## Blog Post (10%)

**400 Word Blog Post + 250 Word Explanatory Memo. Due March 9.**

Students submit a 400-word blog post and associated 250-page memo detailing the logic underpinning their creative choices. Excellent posts will be encouraged to submit their article to our school's newspaper, the *Knight News*.

## Podcast (15%)

**Ten-minute interview podcast with 250-word show description. Due March 30.**

Student will create a discussion podcast episode for the *QC Pod*, and an associated 250-word summary of the episode, its goal, and its intended audience. Quality submissions may have the opportunity to be published as episodes of the *QC Pod*.

## Business Plan (5%)

**Up to 1000-word report. Due April 13.**

This report should be delivered in bullet points. You will describe your plan for a creative enterprise. Your plan should include: (1) the enterprise name, (2) a presentation of the organization's mission and objectives, (3) a description of its target audience, (4) a SWOT analysis, and (5) a description of the content it will produce and its value propositions. Longer is not necessarily better. I'm looking for a well-conceived plan that seems likely to succeed.

## Social Media Campaign (5%)

Up to 500-word memo. Due April 27.

You will be assigned a content series or enterprise. It will be your job to conceive of a one-week social media campaign designed to attract organic traffic on one of the following networks: Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, or TikTok. You should give examples of the content that you plan to post. A good submission will propose suitable content likely to generate earned traffic for their client.

## Final Project (35%)

Up to 2000 words, a five-minute oral presentation, and an example of produced content

For the capstone project of this course, the student will produce a business plan for a creative enterprise, plus a completed pilot of its content. The business plan should include: (1) an executive summary, (2) an overview of your enterprise's mission and objectives, (3) an internal and environmental analysis, (4) an explanation of the intended audience, (5) a description of the product, (6) a description of your strategy to gain an audience, and (7) a budget. Good submissions will articulate a clear, well-presented and credible plan that generates excitement.

## Assessment

### Grade Scale

Letter Grade	Raw Percentages to Letters	Number Equiv. of Letter	Degree of Implied Proficiency in / Grasp of Subject Matter
A+	97% - 100%	100%	Masterful, Special
A	93% - 96.9%	95%	Excellent, Highly Professional
A-	90% - 92.9%	92%	Quality Early Career Submission
B+	87% - 89.9%	88%	Good Student Submission
B	83% - 86.9%	85%	Average Student Submission
B-	80% - 82.9%	82%	Acceptable Student Submission
C	70% - 79.9%	75%	Basic with Nontrivial Gaps
D	60% - 69.9%	60%	Serious Deficiencies
D-	50% - 59.9%	50%	Poor Submission
F	<60%	0%	Did Not Submit / Unacceptable

## Class Policies

### Academic Honesty

The university defines the administrative processes and sanctions for violating its code of academic integrity in *The City University Policy on Academic Integrity*. You are advised to read and understand this policy immediately. Should you have any difficulty accessing or interpreting this policy, contact the instructor.

### Students with Disabilities

Students who require accommodation based on special needs must contact the Office of Special Services for Students with Disabilities at 171 Kiely Hall, (718) 997-5870. The instructor cannot make accommodations for students with special needs unless this office works out arrangements with him.

### Public Health or Safety Emergencies

This course may move online in the event of a public health or safety emergency. In the event that we move online, we will communicate via [Zoom](#) and exchange documents through [Dropbox \(instructions\)](#).

## **Access to Computer and Internet at Home**

Many students do not have reliable access to a computer or Internet connection from home. This is far more common than students realize. Under normal circumstances, students without quality computer access can use the campus computer system. In the event of an emergency that cuts off access to campus computing resources, please notify the professor *before* you miss class or deadlines.

## **Late Grades**

Students are encouraged to submit their assignments well in advance of the due date, so as to prevent them from falling victim to unanticipated technical or personal emergencies. Blackboard automatically designates assignments as having been submitted on-time or late.

For all assignments except *Content for Creators* and *Final Project*:

- If an assignment is uploaded late, but is successfully uploaded to Blackboard within seven days of the due date, it will receive a half-alpha penalty. With this penalty, an “A” submission would be scored “A-“, an “A-“ submission scored a “B+” and so on.
- If an assignment is uploaded late, but is successfully uploaded to Blackboard within 21 days of the due date, it will receive a full alpha penalty, such that an “A” submission will be scored a “B”, an “A-“ scored as “B-“, and so forth.
- If an assignment is uploaded beyond 21 days late, but before the due date of the final exam, then the professor may elect to assign it a grade of “C” if he judges its quality to be of at least a “B-“ or better quality.

Students are excused from presenting one *Content for Creators* due date. No other late submissions will be considered. The purpose of this assignment is to stir class discussion. If it is not done on time, the submission serves no purpose for the class.

**Final Project.** The professor will not consider late submissions of the final project. Students are encouraged to submit well in advance of the due date.

**Emergency?** The professor reserves the right to *prospectively* extend due dates if a student runs into an unanticipated personal emergency. In other words, if something disrupts your studies, please arrange a meeting with me to set up changes to due dates and/or assignments in advance. Extensions are at the sole discretion of the professor, and will not be considered on assignment due dates itself. It is important that you submit your materials in advance, here and in life in general. The whole purpose of this policy is to try to push last-minute people to learn to submit things in advance.

## **Classroom Conduct**

Any student who takes this class agrees to act professionally in class. Any student who disrupts lectures, classes or tests will be asked to leave, and referred to the Dean’s Office.

## **Communicating with the Instructor**

Communicate with the instructor via e-mail. Under normal circumstances, you can expect a response within three business days. If your response is urgent and requires immediate attention, write “URGENT” in the subject line of your e-mail. The telephone is for use in case of emergencies – for example, if you are about to miss an exam. Do not leave messages on the instructors’ voice mail – write an e-mail instead.

## **Grades**

Grades will be available on Blackboard. Grades reflect careful consideration of student performance and will not be changed unless a recording or calculation error is revealed. It is your responsibility to monitor your grades in

Blackboard and provide immediate feedback in the case of any discrepancy. Students must notify the instructor via e-mail of any problems with their grades within two weeks of their grades' posting on Blackboard. After two weeks from the grades posting on Blackboard, all grades are final and not subject to further discussion.

## **Office Hours**

If you cannot attend any of the instructor's office hours due to conflict with your class schedule, you must notify the instructor and provide a copy of your class schedule within the second week of class.

## **Compliance with Public Health Instructions**

Any student who does not comply with government or college public health directives represents a health threat to me and the class. If met with a situation in which a student refuses to comply with public health directives while in class, then I cannot responsibly expose you to other students or the College community at large. Should you wish to challenge this policy, I invite you to do so immediately so as not to disrupt other students with COVID-related conflict mid-semester.