

USC ANNEBERG

ENTER

The Entertainment Initiative

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WHAT

IS ENTERTAINMENT?





The *Oxford English Dictionary* locates the appearance of its modern meaning — “the action of occupying attention agreeably; that which affords interest or amusement; esp. a public performance of a varied character” — in 1612, citing Shakespeare.

But entertainment is at least as old as the singers of the *Iliad* and *Gilgamesh*, and arguably older than the cave paintings of Lascaux and the children’s games of the Ice Age. Our species is *Homo ludens*, the creatures who play. Evolutionary biologists say we have a “meme” for it, a kind of cultural gene for enjoying time.

Entertaining means *not boring*. It is the ability to hang on to our attention; *tenir* in its etymology means “to hold.” The politician, the publisher, the teacher, the curator, the artist, the advertiser: what they want is our attention, and to maintain it — often at any cost.





WHY
DOES



ENTERTAINMENT
MATTER?



By Plato's century, the trouble with entertainment is apparent. When people listen to the bards, he warns in the *Republic*, it's as though they're enchanted. They forget themselves; they're manipulable, irrational; they're everything a good citizen isn't. The danger of the arts, he says, is their power to instill values hostile to the community. So he banishes the poet from the ideal state to protect us from what can happen when we're spell-bound.

Aristotle, of course, takes the other side. The screams of horror from the thousands in the Theatre of Dionysus are necessary for *catharsis*. But Aristotle was as worried about the harm of "spectacle" as Plato was about oral epics. "Bread and circuses" was the notorious Roman formula. What happens when amusing people is more important than informing, educating, or enlightening them? What happens when there's no values but show business values?





is

EVERYTHING
ENTERTAINMENT?





Is Greek tragedy entertaining? Yes. So is *Hamlet*. Sophocles always wanted the audience to vote his play the best in the festival. Shakespeare wrote for the box office, and competed with bear-baiting for groundlings' shillings.

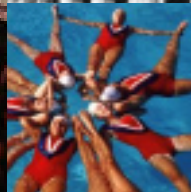
The idea of entertainment belongs as much to high culture as to popular culture. What Dickens did to hold his audience is different from what MTV does, but both have the same intent. The arts and non-profit institutions are part of the same ecology as Hollywood. The museum and the amusement park are both looking for audiences. A night at the opera requires leisure time and disposable income no less than a night at the ball game. Branding and graphic design are as important to a ballet company as a software company.

To examine symphony, dance, and theatre in the same context as politics, gambling, and wrestling is to reveal new facets of both and to invite fresh insights about creativity, consumption, and culture.





LIGHTS, CAMERA, WAR



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WHAT

is the
entertainment
initiative?



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A university-wide collaboration to analyze the entertainment dimension of all contemporary culture. An attempt at fresh thinking about entertainment's appeal, its content, and its consequences. A point of view, a lens, a perspective for better understanding culture and society and just about everything human in the world's industrial economies. Much the same could have been said 250 years ago about the then nascent science of economics.

Our approach saturates the study of entertainment with questions of value. In that sense, we argue for an integration of cultural studies with professional education. We teach *whether* and *why* along with *what* and *how*. The entertainment industry could profit from more leaders who grasp its impact on society. The society could benefit from more conscience, and more critical self-consciousness, in the creative process.

The entertainment initiative offers a dramatic opportunity to be ahead of the curve. A decade from now, it will be commonplace to use entertainment as an intellectual framework; that result is guaranteed by technology, globalization, and the triumph of the marketing paradigm. What academic institution will be recognized as the leader in this field? That is the opportunity we have seized.





AN ENTERTAINMENT INITIATIVE?

WHY





We do not assume that the university's task is simply to grease the wheels of students seeking employment in a rapidly growing economic sector. But we do not ignore the demand for those careers or belittle the legitimacy of those professional aspirations. We do not presume that we are (in Neil Postman's formulation) entertaining ourselves to death. But neither do we uncritically celebrate the culture of box office, commodity fetishism, and instant gratification.

Our intent is to produce neither jeremiads about cultural despoliation, nor apologies for pop culture, but rather some good questions — and, one hopes, some good answers. How does marketing determine content? How does vertical integration affect news? How does the blurring of the line between truth and fiction in entertainment affect civil discourse? Should there be safeguards on the awesome power to simulate reality? Is American culture America's real foreign policy? Future entertainment executives need to wrestle with questions like these no less than they need specific skills.

Our intention is to make practitioners who are aware of the power of what they do, of how their work makes the psyche of others, and how they might take that into consideration in what they do with their talent.





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The Norman Lear
CENTERTAINMENT
Exploring Implications of the Convergence of Entertainment, Commerce, and Society

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WHY

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA?

Its **location in Los Angeles** puts it at ground zero for much of the world's entertainment. Its location in arguably the most vibrant multi-cultural metropolis on earth situates it at the epicenter of globalization. Its location on the Pacific Rim links it to immigrants from Silicon Valley to Tokyo. *City of Angels* (the great world-cities, from New York and Paris to Rio and Jerusalem, are vital centers of dance, publishing, art, sports, culture. But if one place on the planet could be imagined as the intersection of all that pulsing energy, it would have to be Los Angeles.

USC understands its natural advantages. Its strategic plan puts location at the top of its list of assets. That plan also puts **leadership of the communication revolution** at the top of its priorities for excellence.

USC's professional schools in entertainment-related fields are top-ranked nationally and enjoy superb international reputations. But USC's aim is higher than **first-class professional education**. Its purpose is also to infuse practical knowledge with **civic values**. In the words of the Trustees' statement on USC's mission, "The integration of liberal and professional learning at USC is designed to provide knowledge to our students, while at the same time helping them to acquire wisdom and insight, love of truth and beauty, **moral discernment**, understanding of self, and respect and appreciation for others."

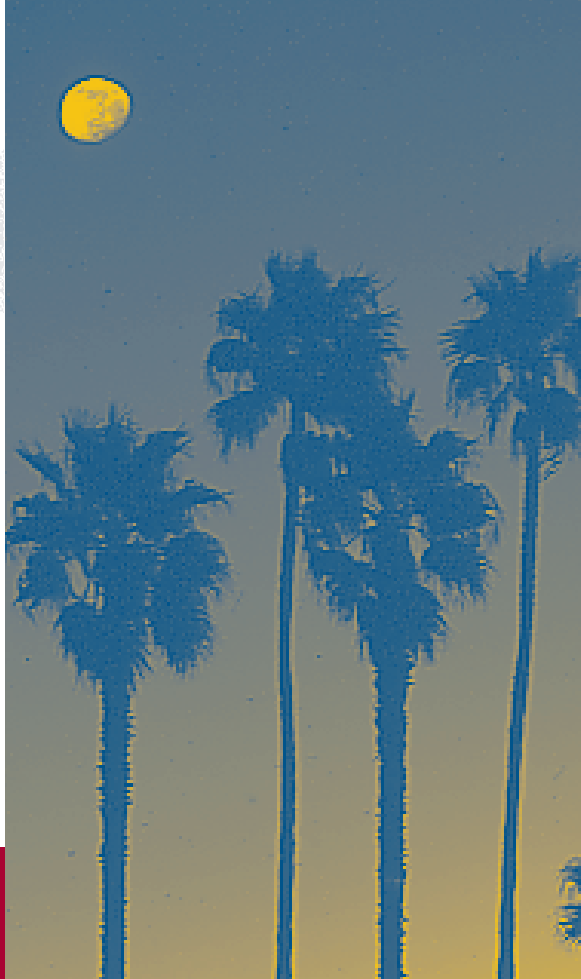
WHY

THE USC ANNEBERG SCHOOL?

The Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California is among the world's leading academic institutions devoted to research and education in **communication and journalism**.

The faculty are extremely well published, and their many research and writing awards range from academic honors to Pulitzer Prizes. The school is a model of **inter- and multidisciplinary collaboration**; faculty fields include communication, journalism, technology, economics, sociology, engineering, information science, religion, cultural studies, political science, psychology, and law.

Its scholarly study and teach the relation of **media and politics**, the **globalization** of communication, the interpretation of **popular culture**, the rise of **new technology**, the communication revolution and the **arts**, the **management** of communication in the entertainment industry, the **voices of audiences**. It offers both undergraduate and graduate degrees with emphases in entertainment. And it has made the field of **entertainment, media, and culture** a priority for international pre-eminence in the next century.



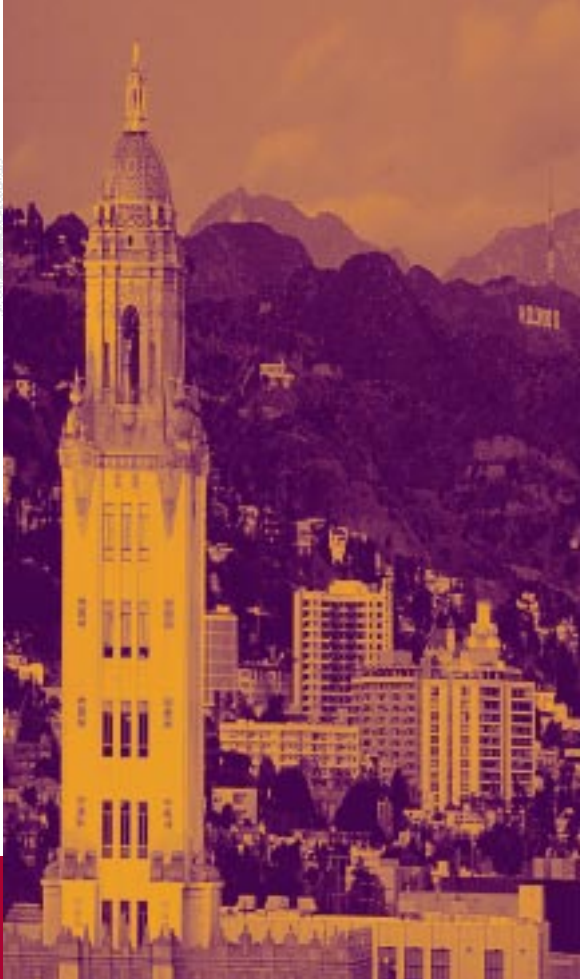
The Norman Lear
CENTER FOR ENTERTAINMENT
Exploring Implications of the Convergence of Entertainment, Commerce, and Society

WHO
IS IN THE ENTERTAINMENT

A panel of scholars, teachers, and administrators from across USC provides intellectual direction. It involves faculty from twenty-one disciplines, drawn from eleven different schools, including six deans. Affiliated with this initiative are many more USC faculty from throughout the university, all energized by the opportunity to use entertainment as a clarifying lens through which to look at their work, at leading issues in their field, and at our world.

Entertainment panel members include

- Jonathan Aronson**
Director, School of International Relations
- Warren Berens**
Full-time Professor
Distinguished Professor of Business Administration
- Leo Braudy**
University Professor
Leo S. Bing Professor of English
- Eralin Chameritsky**
Sudney M. Linn Professor of Public Interest Law,
Legal Ethics, and Political Science
- Geoffrey Cowan**
Dean, Annenberg School for Communication
- Loren Chigliano**
Director, School of Journalism
- Barry Glassner**
Professor of Sociology
- Thomas A. Holihan**
Associate Dean, Annenberg School for Communication
- Silvia Holo**
Director, Fisher Gallery; Director, Museum Studies Program
- Darrell M. Hunt**
Associate Professor of Sociology
- Martin Kaplan**
Associate Dean, Annenberg School for Communication
Director, The Norman Lear Center
- Larry J. Livingston**
Dean, Thornton School of Music
- Don Mayer**
Mary Packard Professor of Film and Video Production
- Jan A. Mittoff**
Harold Quinton Distinguished Professor of Business Policy
Associate Dean, School of Engineering
- C.L. (Max) Nikias**
Director, Integrated Media Systems Center
Associate Dean, School of Engineering
- Dana Polans**
Professor of Critical Studies, Cinema-Television
- Michael Renov**
Professor of Critical Studies, Cinema-Television
- Patricia Riley**
Director, School of Communication
- Steven J. Ross**
Professor of History
- George J. Sanchez**
Director, Program in American Studies and Ethnicity
- Robert R. Scoble**
Dean, School of Theatre
- Merton O. Shapiro**
Dean, College of Letters, Arts and Sciences
University Vice President of Planning
- Kevin Starr**
University Professor, School of Policy, Planning and Development
State Librarian of California
- Robert H. Timme**
Dean, School of Architecture
- Nancy Troy**
Chair, Art History Department
- Rieth Weisberg**
Dean, School of Fine Arts



WHAT

IS THE NORMAN LEAR CENTER?

A multidisciplinary research and public policy center exploring implications of the convergence of entertainment, commerce, and society. The entertainment initiative is a project of the Lear Center.

On campus, the Lear Center builds bridges between eleven schools whose faculty study aspects of entertainment, media, and culture. Beyond campus, it bridges the gap between the entertainment industry and academia, and between them and the public. The Lear Center is a unique convener of entertainment industry professionals, scholars from all disciplines, public figures and political leaders, and critics and social commentators.

Through scholarship and research; through its programs of visiting fellows, conferences, public events, and publications; and in its attempts to illuminate and repair the world, the Lear Center works to be at the forefront of discussion and praxis in the field.

The Lear Center is named for television writer, producer, and director **Norman Lear**, a pioneer of a more candid, socially realistic genre of television programming and a champion of democratic values. The founding of the Center celebrates the artistic innovation of such Lear shows as *All in the Family*, *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman*, and *The Jeffersons*; his willingness to take extraordinary creative and commercial risks in the name of quality; his passion for wrestling with issues of conscience while building a remarkable entertainment career; and his leadership in founding People for the American Way to defend core First Amendment freedoms, and the Business Enterprise Trust to celebrate businesses that advance the public good while achieving financial success.

The Director of the Lear Center is **Martin Kaplan**, Associate Dean, USC Annenberg School. A *summa cum laude* graduate of Harvard, a Marshall Scholar at Cambridge University, and a Stanford Ph.D., he has been an Aspen Institute program officer, a federal education official, a Vice President's chief speechwriter, a Washington journalist in print, television, and radio; a deputy Presidential campaign manager; a Disney Studios vice president of motion picture production; and a film and television writer and producer.

Themes of interest to the Lear Center include:

boundaries: the shifting borders between what is entertainment and what is not;

creativity: imagination, illusion, and the art of attention-getting;

the political economy of entertainment: its history, ownership, production, marketing, distribution, and globalization;

audiences: how entertainment gets consumed—what it does to us, and what we do with it;

technology: what it makes possible, and what it makes different;

ethics: the rights and responsibilities of creators, producers, consumers, investors, and citizens; and

praxis: implications for pedagogy, public policy, advocacy, entrepreneurship, and social change.

HOLLYWOOD

The Norman Lear
CENTER ENTERTAINMENT
 Exploring Implications of the Convergence of Entertainment, Commerce, and Society

Research

The Lear Center sponsors scholarship, seminars, conferences, and colloquia, often in partnership with other institutions. Illustrative projects include **Entertainment Goes Global**, a two-year transnational co-sponsored with the Pacific Council on International Policy; **Celebrity, Politics, and the Public Sphere**, a two-year multidisciplinary seminar series; **The Ownership of Creative Property in a Digital Age**, a program co-sponsored with the School of Fine Arts, the Law School, and the Artime Rights Foundation; **Understanding Entertainment**, a look at the promise and risks of using entertainment tools, case, in partnership with the School of Engineering's Integrated Media Systems Center and faculty from the Schools of Education and Theater; and a conference jointly planned by the Annenberg School and the School of Cinema-Television on **Children, Media, and Politics**.

Events

The Lear Center sponsors events that bring together leaders from industry, academia, and public life. These events—lectures, panel discussions, workshops, brown bag lunches, seminars, roundtables, works-in-progress—are often open to students and the general public and live-streamed on the World Wide Web.

Publications

A vigorous outreach effort is designed to project the work of the Lear Center into the world. Its activities may be followed on its Website, entertainment.usc.edu. Materials generated by its research projects—including case studies, primary materials, and analytic pieces—will be published and made available for academic use and broader audiences.

Fellows

The Lear Center sponsors visitors to the university, sometimes in collaboration with other USC schools. Visiting practitioners from the entertainment industry contribute their experience and insight. Visiting scholars, journalists, social critics, public intellectuals, and writers-in-residence stimulate discussion and debate. Postdoctoral research fellowships will also be awarded by the Lear Center.

Praxis

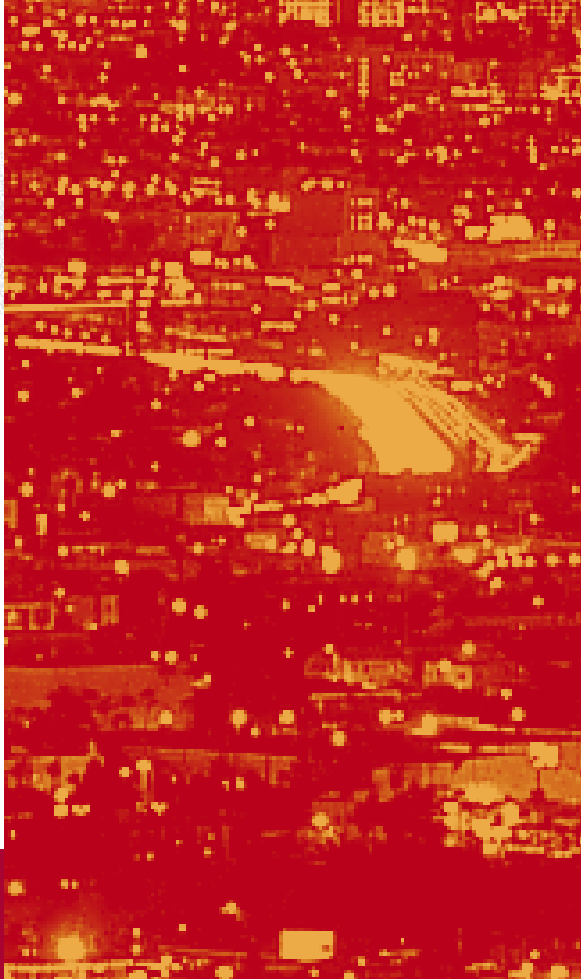
The Lear Center's work may translate into congressional testimony, journalism, and other attempts to improve public dialogue and media debate. It may sponsor experiments, interventions, entrepreneurial ventures, and public-private partnerships. It may build strategic alliances with other universities, non-profit institutions, and advocacy groups.

The Lear Center also encourages innovation in curriculum and pedagogy. It acts as a catalyst for the creation of new interdisciplinary courses, new minors, tracks, and options; new faculty hires, perhaps shared between different schools; and perhaps new degree programs as well.

Many entertainment-related courses are currently offered by the individual schools and departments affiliated with the entertainment initiative.

At the Annenberg School, there is a new undergraduate track in Entertainment, Communication and Society; a Communication & the Entertainment Industry minor (offered jointly with Cinema, TV, Music, and Theater); and an Entertainment Management option in the Communication Management Master's degree program.

HOW DOES THE NORMAN LEAR CENTER WORK?



TAINMENT

USC

UNIVERSITY
OF SOUTHERN
CALIFORNIA

*Anenberg School
for Communication*

A project of

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CENTER