

FIRST AMENDMENT TELEVISION LLC · CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

FATV Foundation Course

Professional Media Production, Journalism & Content Creation

Student Manual

Version 1.0

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FREE PRESS · FREE SPEECH · FREE TO CREATE

About This Course

The FATV Foundation Course is a professional practice curriculum in media production, journalism, documentary filmmaking, and content creation. It was developed by First Amendment Television LLC based on more than five decades of professional experience in network news, documentary production, and independent filmmaking.

This is not a software course. This is not a camera course. This is not a theory course. It is a professional practice course — built on the belief that technology changes, but the principles that support effective communication do not.

"The tools of communication have changed dramatically over the past half-century. The principles that support effective communication have not."

— ROBERT TUTMAN, FOUNDER, FATV

Who This Course Is For

- Beginning producers and production assistants
- Documentary filmmakers and journalists
- Independent filmmakers and content creators
- Communications professionals entering media
- Students pursuing careers in film, television, or digital media

No prior professional experience is required. Only curiosity, commitment, and a willingness to learn.

Course Philosophy

Many programs focus on technology. Technology changes. Principles endure. This course teaches how professionals think, prepare, make decisions, and solve problems. The equipment will change. The principles remain.

FATV Core Principles

Truth Before Convenience

Facts matter. Verification matters. Evidence matters.

Preparation Prevents Emergencies

Most production disasters are predictable. Professional preparation reduces risk.

Ownership Matters

If you do not control the rights, you do not control the project.

Documentation Matters

Professional productions document decisions, permissions, agreements, and responsibilities.

Relationships Matter

Productions are built by people. Professional relationships create opportunity.

Leadership Matters

Projects succeed or fail through decisions. Leadership influences those decisions.

Trust Matters

Trust is difficult to earn, easy to lose, and essential to every professional relationship.

Course Curriculum

The Foundation Course consists of sixteen lessons covering the complete arc of professional production — from understanding why projects fail to building a company that outlasts any single project.

01 **Why Productions Fail**

The difference between an idea and a business

02 **How Productions Get Funded**

Investors, grants, broadcasters, tax credits & reality

03 **Rights Acquisition & Ownership**

Before you make it, make sure you own it

04 **Contracts Every Producer Must Understand**

Rights mean nothing if you sign them away

05 **Budgets, Schedules & the Difference Between a Plan and a Guess**

If you can't count it, you can't control it

06 **Labor, Unions & Payroll**

People are not equipment

07 **Insurance, Permits, Releases & Risk Management**

Protecting the production before the first day of shooting

08 **Research, Fact-Checking & Due Diligence**

Knowing before you show

09 **Interviews, Sources & Ethical Decision-Making**

Getting information without losing credibility

10 **Story Structure, Narrative & Holding Attention Without Manipulating the Facts**

The story is not the enemy of the truth

11 Visual Storytelling, Sequencing & How Audiences Process Images

Pictures tell stories before words ever arrive

12 Editing, Post-Production & How Meaning Is Created in the Cut

The last rewrite happens after the camera stops rolling

13 Distribution, Platforms & Reaching an Audience

A production nobody sees changes nothing

14 Business Development, Clients, Investors & Building a Sustainable Production Company

Talent creates projects. Business skills create careers.

15 Leadership, Decision-Making & Managing Creative Teams

Productions are built by people, not equipment

16 Ethics, Credibility & the Long-Term Value of Trust

The most valuable asset you will ever own cannot be purchased

The Capstone Project

Successful completion of the course requires a Capstone Project — a complete production proposal demonstrating mastery of every principle taught in the curriculum.

Capstone Requirements

- Project concept
- Research plan
- Rights analysis

- Budget
- Production schedule
- Risk assessment
- Interview strategy
- Distribution plan
- Business considerations
- Ethical considerations

Certificate of Completion

Students who successfully complete all sixteen lessons and the Capstone Project may be awarded a Certificate of Completion from First Amendment Television LLC. The certificate acknowledges completion of the FATV Foundation Course and demonstrates commitment to professional standards in media production.

A Final Word

The media industry changes constantly. Technology changes. Platforms change. Audiences change. The principles taught in this course exist because they have survived those changes.

Professional success is rarely accidental. It is usually the result of

preparation, discipline, sound judgment, and consistent effort.

Learn the principles. Apply them consistently. Continue learning. Remain curious. Protect your credibility.

And remember: Productions are temporary. Reputations are permanent.

— **Robert Tutman**

Founder, First Amendment Television LLC

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PROFESSIONAL LESSONS

Covering the complete arc from production fundamentals through ethics and leadership.

What You Will Learn

Why productions succeed and fail

How to raise and manage financing

How to acquire and protect rights

How contracts work

How to build budgets and schedules

How to manage crews and payroll

How to conduct research and interviews

How to structure stories honestly

How distribution works

How to build a sustainable company

How to lead creative teams

Why ethics and credibility matter

Course Requirements

Complete all assigned readings

Participate in discussions

Complete exercises for each lesson

Demonstrate professional conduct

Submit the Capstone Project

Enroll or Inquire

For enrollment information, licensing, or institutional partnerships, contact First Amendment Television LLC directly.

CONTACT FATV

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