The State Department and the USC School of Cinematic Arts are launching a partnership intended to "engage international audiences through American film."

The program, called the American Film Showcase, will send filmmakers overseas to present projects to international audiences. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has tried to bolster the State Department's "smart power diplomacy" via the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

The State Department already has been sending documentary films overseas via the American Documentary Showcase, now in its third year, with such titles as "It's Not About You" and "The Most Dangerous Man in America: Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers." The American Film Showcase will be an expansion into fictional interpretations of contemporary issues.

About 40 filmmakers and film experts will conduct lectures and classes on film making, animation, digital technology and new media. The program is in conjunction with the International Documentary Assn.

This type of exchange is not new. Even during the height of the Cold War, Hollywood screened its prestigious and controversial projects in the Soviet Union at the Moscow Film Festival, including a legendary showing of "The Defiant Ones" at the Sports Palace in 1963. Director Stanley Kramer and Sidney Poitier were swarmed by some 8,000 moviegoers after the showing, which was arranged through the United States Information Agency's motion picture service unit, run by George Stevens Jr.