

**CTPR 425**

Section: 18538 2 Units

**PRODUCTION PLANNING****FALL 2014**

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Day/Time: Wednesdays 7 PM–9 PM Room: SCA 356

Office Hours: By Appointment

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION****OVERVIEW**

How do you turn a script into a film? This course will attempt to answer that question by examining the process of production planning for film. By the end of the semester, each student should not only have a conceptual grasp of how to line, breakdown, schedule, and budget a screenplay, but also have the practical skill to actually do it. Our goal, however, is not to make you into professional production managers, but rather to introduce you to the basic principles of production planning with an emphasis on scheduling and budgeting.

Although, there are differences in scale and detail, the processes involved are essentially the same whether one is making a major studio feature, a low-budget feature, a movie-of-the-week, an episodic television show, an educational film, an industrial film, or a student film.

Using a script from a one-hour episodic television show, each class member will line a script, develop a shooting schedule and create a day-out-of-days. The class will also create a film budget for a low budget independent in order to reach an understanding of the various elements that go into the making of a film.

**COURSE GOALS**

- ◆ Develop an understanding of the shooting sequence and how it is used in constructing a shooting schedule.
- ◆ Develop an understanding of the principles of scheduling a film in a way that is efficient yet preserves a director's freedom as much as possible and fosters a comfortable and creative atmosphere to help the actors reach their best performances.
- ◆ Develop an understanding of film budgets such that each student will know how to read and construct a budget with confidence.

**ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES**

Grades will be awarded based on five projects which will be due at various specific times during the term and a final exam. The due dates of the projects are specified in the Course Outline. I will grade them based on clear criteria you will be provide, and return them to you with written comments explaining why I graded them the way I did. The weight of each assignment is listed in parentheses.

- ◆ **The Lined Script (20%).** Each student will line a one-hour episodic television script indicating shooting sequences, their length, and essential elements.
- ◆ **Breakdown Sheets (10%).** Each student will create a set of breakdown sheets from the lined script using Movie Magic Scheduling.

- ♦ **The Scheduled Production Board (20%).** Each student will create a production schedule for the script showing the order in which the sequences will be shot, using Movie Magic Scheduling and good scheduling practices.
- ♦ **The Day-Out-Of-Days (10%).** Using the DOOD generated by Movie Magic Scheduling and an Excel spreadsheet which will be provided, each student will devise a plan to meet SAG's Diversity in Casting requirements.
- ♦ **Final Budget (20%).** The class will be divided into six groups. Each group will be assigned certain major accounts in the budget and will be required to create a plausible, defensible budget for each of those accounts. Each group will present its work and defend it in front of the rest of the class.
- ♦ **Final Exam (20%).** The exam will be drawn from both the assigned reading and the lectures.

#### REQUIRED TEXT AND SOFTWARE

There is both required and optional reading listed below. The required reading will be closely tied to the course content and will cover in great detail the subjects we address in class. The optional reading listed comes with my highest recommendation and will prove useful for anyone wanting to deepen his or her understanding of production and production planning.

Required reading:

*Planning the Low-Budget Film, 2nd edition* by Robert Latham Brown

Optional reading:

*The Producer's Business Handbook* by John J. Lee, Jr. and Anne Marie Gillen

*The Complete Film Production Handbook* by Eve Light Honthaner

Required Software:

*Movie Magic Scheduling* published by Entertainment Partners. Students will be given a coupon to purchase this software at a discounted rate of \$99. The software normally retails for \$489 as a downloaded version. This software is the industry standard and is used by all the major studios and production companies.

You will *not* be required to purchase *Movie Magic Budgeting* although you may use the coupon for this program too, if you wish. For our budgeting work, we will be using the software installed on the computers in the production lab (SCA 356).

#### STATEMENT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Website and contact information for DSP: [http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html), (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) [ability@usc.edu](mailto:ability@usc.edu).

#### STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. SCampus, the Student Guidebook, ([www.usc.edu/scampus](http://www.usc.edu/scampus) or

<http://scampus.usc.edu>) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>. Information on intellectual property at USC is available at: <http://usc.edu/academe/acsen/issues/ipr/index.html>.

#### EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS/COURSE CONTINUITY IN A CRISIS

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.

#### DISRUPTIVE STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.

### COURSE OUTLINE

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#### Week 1 Wednesday, August 27

- ◆ Introduction to Production Planning: Syllabus, Grade Criteria, Text, and Required materials.
- ◆ The Projects: Script Lining, Breakdown Sheets, Scheduled Board, Day out of Days, and Budget
- ◆ The *shooting sequence*: 1 Shooting sequence = 1 breakdown sheet = 1 strip.
- ◆ Shooting Sequence Unities: Location, time, action, cast.
- ◆ In-class exercises.
- ◆ Distribute script: Parts of a shooting script.

#### ASSIGNMENTS:

- ☐ Read and visualize the script. *Due Wednesday, September 3.*
- ☐ Read Brown, Chapter 3, "The Shooting Sequence. *Due Wednesday, September 3.*
- ☐ Read Brown, Chapter 5, "Lining the Script." *Due Wednesday, September 3.*
- ☐ Bring 2 differently colored highlighters, a pencil, and a ruler to next class.

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#### Week 2 Wednesday, September 3

- ◆ Discuss script and possible production problems.
- ◆ The process of *lining a script*, concept of *page count*, broken lines and *overlapping sequences*.
- ◆ In-class lining of first 5 pages of script.
- ◆ Things to look for: shooting sequence *elements*, how will the sequence be shot?
- ◆ Problematic situations: Int./Ext., Int. Vehicles, telephone conversations, movie within the movie.
- ◆ Creative geography: Hotel across the street from a café.
- ◆ Guiding principle: Where is the camera?
- ◆ Using Final Draft Tagger or Movie Magic Screenwriter.

#### ASSIGNMENTS:

- ☐ Line the script for *A Material Difference*. *Due Wednesday, September 10.*
- ☐ Read Brown, Chapter 4, "The Production Board." *Due Wednesday, September 10.*

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### **Week 3 Wednesday, September 10**

*Lined scripts due.*

- ◆ What problems did you encounter in lining the script?
- ◆ Scene numbering.
- ◆ Terms not mentioned in the script:
  - ▷ Extras.
  - ▷ Stand-ins.
  - ▷ Vehicles (Who are in the vehicles?)
  - ▷ Special Equipment.
- ◆ From Script to film: video examples.
- ◆ Who does this stuff? The Production Staff:
  - ▷ The Unit Production Manager
  - ▷ The First Assistant Director
  - ▷ The Second Assistant Director.
- ◆ The process of filming a scene.
- ◆ The Production Meeting.

#### **ASSIGNMENTS:**

- ☐ Read Brown, Chapter 6, "The Script Breakdown." *Due Wednesday, September 17.*
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### **Week 4 Wednesday, September 17**

*Graded lined scripts returned to students.*

- ◆ Introduce MM Scheduling.
- ◆ Set up schedule file.
  - ▷ Show Info.
  - ▷ Categories
  - ▷ Calendar
  - ▷ Strip Colors.
- ◆ Naming conventions for sets (general to specific).
- ◆ The Breakdown Sheet.
  - ▷ INT. vehicles - naming conventions.
  - ▷ Cast, Stunts, Extras
- ◆ In-class work on breakdown sheets.
- ◆ Sorting the Cast by Occurrence and then by ID.

#### **ASSIGNMENTS:**

- ☐ Complete breakdown sheets. *Due Wednesday, September 24.*
  - ☐ Read Brown, Chapter 7, "Scheduling the Board." *Due Wednesday, September 24.*
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### **Week 5 Wednesday, September 24**

*MMS file with completed Breakdown Sheets due by midnight.*

- ◆ Review production board strips.
- ◆ Sorting and arranging the board.
- ◆ Scheduling considerations.
- ◆ Scheduling Criteria.
- ◆ First steps.
- ◆ List of Assumptions.

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

- ☐ Read Brown, Chapter 8, "Locations." *Due Wednesday, October 1.*

**Week 6 Wednesday, October 1**

*Breakdown Sheets grades returned.*

- ♦ Locations:
  - Why location? Why stage?
  - Locations vs. Stage in *A Material Difference*
  - Code of Conduct.
  - How to scout a location.
  - What to look for.
  - Beware the question you didn't ask.
  - Location releases.
  - Permits.
  - Insurance.
  - Police and traffic control.
  - Fire Safety Officer.
  - Dealing with the public.

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

- ☐ Read Brown, Chapter 9, "The Day-Out-of-Days." *Due Wednesday, October 8.*
- ☐ Read Brown, Chapter 10, "The Published Schedule." *Due Wednesday, October 8.*
- ☐ Read Brown Chapter 11, "Unions." *Due Wednesday, October 8.*
- ☐ Schedule *A Material Difference* in MMS. *Due Wednesday, October 15.*

**Week 7 Wednesday, October 8**

- ♦ Management and Work Ethics:
  - Responsibility and safety.
  - Working with Minors.
  - Unions.
- ♦ Review scheduling -
  - Sorting
  - Location vs. stage.
  - Actor carry.
  - Day-out-of-days.
- ♦ Shooting Schedules -
  - One-Line Shooting Schedule.
  - Full Shooting Schedule.
- ♦ Discuss Class Production Board Problems.

**ASSIGNMENT -**

- ☐ Read Brown, Chapters 12, 13, 14, & 15. *Due Wednesday, October 15.*

**Week 8 Wednesday, October 15**

*Scheduled Production Boards due at midnight.*

- ♦ Begin discussion of Budgeting:
  - Top Sheet.
  - Chart of accounts.
  - Production levels.

- Contractual charges.
- ♦ Introduce EP Budgeting:
- ♦ Methods of entry.
- ♦ Setting up a new budget.
  - Budget Info.
  - Globals.
  - Groups.
  - Fringe Benefits.
- ♦ Form budgeting groups and assign accounts to each group.

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

- ☐ Read Brown, Chapter 16, “The Shooting Period.” *Due Wednesday, October 29.*

**Week 9 Wednesday, October 22**

*Scheduled Production Board grades returned.*

- ♦ View *A Material Difference*.
- ♦ SAG Diversity in Casting DOOD.
- ♦ Movie Magic Budgeting in depth (continued).

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

- ☐ Completed DIC DOOD. *Due Wednesday, October 29.*
- ☐ Read Brown, Chapter 17, “Post Production.” *Due Wednesday, October 29.*

**Week 10 Wednesday, October 29**

*DIC DOOD due at midnight.*

- ♦ Post Production
- ♦ In-class group budget work.
  - Determine who will research what.

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

- ☐ Call vendors, unions, etc. to get answers to budget questions. *Due Wednesday, November 5.*
- ☐ Read Brown, Chapter 18, “Other Expense.” *Due Wednesday, November 5.*

**Week 11 Wednesday, November 5**

*Diversity in Casting DOOD grades returned.*

- ♦ Continue in-class group budget work.

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

- ☐ Group budget files. *Due Friday, November 7.*

**Week 12 Wednesday, November 12**

- ♦ FrankenBudget Defense, Part I.

**Week 13 Wednesday, November 19**

- ♦ FrankenBudget Defense, Part II.

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

- ☐ Read Brown, Chapter 19, “Tracking the Film’s Progress.” *Due Wednesday, December 3.*

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**Week 14 Wednesday, November 26**

- ◆ Thanksgiving Holiday—No Class.
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**Week 15 Wednesday, December 3**

- ◆ Production paperwork as tools of control
    - ▷ Call Sheets
    - ▷ Production Reports
    - ▷ Cost Reports
  - ◆ How do you know if you're ahead or behind?
    - ▷ Tracking a film's progress.
  - ◆ Tax Incentives
  - ◆ Final Exam Review
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**Final Exam Wednesday, December 10**

- ◆ The exam will be at 7 pm in SCA 356.

