CTPR 426: EPISODIC TV DRAMA PRODUCTION
Fall 2014

Thursdays, 9 – 1 pm SCI 106 and Stage 4

Instructors

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Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2-5pm, SCA 402

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SAs

Producing & Writing: Samantha “Mal” Smith malsamsmith@gmail.com 916-367-9939

Cinematography/Directing: Aaron Bush aaronbus@usc.edu (808) 389-8494

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Course Description:

CTPR 426 Spring is an introductory level, hands-on course for non-majors in the making of an EPISODIC TV DRAMATIC PILOT. 426 is designed to run in tandem with CTPR 479 Fall and CTPR 486 Spring (a production course for cinema majors in the completion of the same episodic drama). 426 will train students to work in various beginning level on-set production capacities, in the departments of producing, cinematography, art direction, sound and editorial, during the shooting of an original student-produced pilot episode of a dramatic TV show.

The course will be team taught by instructors in writing, producing, directing, cinematography, production design, editorial and sound. Students will work in supporting positions in these various departments and will be assigned by the faculty, based on the students’ expertise and collaborative abilities.

Prerequisite

The class is open to any students from USC’s undergraduate and graduate programs.

Class Overview

Students will learn the skills and participate in the making of one 12 minute pilot act of an original television series, created by students from CTPR 479.

426 carries two units, and meets as a group with CTPR 479 for the first two hours of class time, to learn about the process of episodic tv drama, from writing through post-production, via lectures, screenings, set-building and guest speakers from the industry.

The second two hours of class time will be devoted to hands-on labs, in which students will be trained in their assigned crew positions necessary to shoot the pilot episode.

Students will also be required to participate in the weekend shooting days of the show, a test shoot and the painting/set decoration of the set (or dismantling in the Spring).

Over the course of the shooting days, students will work in various capacities in either the producing, camera, sound, art, editorial or post production departments for the show.

Class Goals

1) to introduce students to the production and post production process by which single-camera television drama is made.

2) to teach students supporting roles in at least one of the various production and post production departments involved in making a tv single-drama.

3) to offer students the opportunity to learn and experience one or more of the interlocking esthetic and craft processes of building a unified drama, from the multiple perspectives of the production and post departments, from writing to shooting the script.

4) to engage in the on-going dynamics of creative collaboration, specifically between the on-set activities of the writing, production and post production departments;
5) to provide an intensive exposure to the making of the episodic tv drama in all its aspects.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS/GRADING CRITERIA

Class Participation 10%
Stage workshop and build 20%
On-set Skills 50%
Collaboration 20%

Satisfactory progress in this course will be based on each student’s effort, attitude and quality of work in fulfilling the course agenda of discussions and class labs, work diaries, and on-set production & post production skills.

Students’ attendance, commitment, participation, and ability to work with others will also figure significantly in their grades. The faculty will further note students’ ability to meet deadlines, act professionally, respect people and property, and arrive in class on time and ready to work.

You will receive an incomplete if all the work of your department is not completed by the last class meeting – all equipment, props, costumes returned on time, the complete production book for the Pilot/Act 1 turned in (with releases, permits, script, call sheets, DPRs and all required paperwork), etc. - and if all of your receipts have not been turned in to the accounting department and reconciled.

Attendance is required during all classes and assigned shoot days. You must inform your SA and the lead instructor of an absence BEFORE you miss a class or a shoot.

The only acceptable excuses for taking an incomplete in the course are personal illness or a family emergency. Students must inform their instructors and present verifiable evidence in order to take an incomplete before final grades are due.

Every unexcused absence will reduce your grade by 1/2 grade point – i.e. from A to A-; two tardy arrivals is equivalent to one absence. Attendance will be taken by one of the SAs at 9:00 am every week.

SPECIAL NOTE

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 the Class Coordinator as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301, and is open 8:30am – 5pm, Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is 213-740-0776.

“Collaboration may be the very thing, if properly encouraged, that allows the work to speak in the most developed way to the largest number of people. Every person who works on a film brings a particular perspective to bear on the subject, and if these perspectives are properly orchestrated by the director, the result will be a multifaceted and yet integrated complexity that will have the greatest chance of catching and sustaining the interest of an audience.”

--- Walter Murch
NOTE on classrooms
Each week, the class will meet in SCA 110/112; Starting week 3, from 11-1pm, the writers will go to SCA 406. Starting week 4, from 11-1pm, the directors will go to 402; Editors to B149; Sound to The Sound Production Suite - Room B115 in the basement of the Animation Building; Cinematographers to Stage 4; Producers to 445 and Production Design will remain in SCI 106.

Additional Expenses
All students contribute $100.00 per person into the slush fund to facilitate additional production expenses such as location expenses, additional equipment etc.

Petitions
It's possible that issues will arise which are not covered by these guidelines or for which you may need a valid exception. In such cases, it is possible for the producers to submit a formal petition to the faculty requesting approval of your plans. The petition must be signed by the crew heads (acknowledging agreement by all departments) and a copy submitted to EACH 426/479 instructor at the Thursday morning session before the shoot in question. The faculty will review the petition at lunch and make a decision by 2pm.

KEY WEEKLY CLASS EVENTS for FALL CTPR 426:

**WEEK 1:** OVERVIEW. Introduction of students, faculty, and SAs; screening of BOOTS. Discussion of the syllabus and how roles are assigned for the semester.

**WEEK 2:** Pitches. Discuss creating the style of the series.

**WEEK 3:** Kevin Arkadie on writing. Show and all crew positions announced. Screen and discuss Homicide documentary.

**Week 4:** Discuss the Industry and setting up the world of the show. Directing Discussion. Solo production labs begin.

**Week 5:** Prep, Producing and Production Design Discussion. Solo classes.

**WEEK 6:** Director and cinematographer present vision for show. Beat breakdown. Cinematography discussion. Solo classes.
**WEEK 7:** Sound and Editing Discussion. First draft of script. Casting breakdowns. Solo classes.

**WEEK 8:** Tone meeting. Some solo classes.

10/19 - Sunday – A.D. and Scene Prep Workshop 10:00 to 6:00 ( Entire Class)

**WEEK 9:** Director/DP/Production Designer present stylistic plans and model. Solo groups.

10/25 – 10/26 - Saturday and Sunday - Casting

**WEEK 10:** 10/30 - Screen casting tapes. Concept Meeting. Location Scout.

11/1 & 11/2 - Saturday and Sunday Casting

11/2 - Sunday – Cinematography Workshop for Camera Department

**WEEK 11:** Screen Casting Tapes , Test Shoot Production Meeting. Tech walk through on stage.

11/9 - Sunday – Test Shoot on stage. ( Entire Class)

**WEEK 12:** Screen test shoot dailies. Production Meeting Act 1 Part 1. Final Tech walkthrough.

11/15 – 11/16 – Act 1 SHOOT

**WEEK 13:** Screen pilot dailies. Production Meeting Act 1 Part 2. Tech Walk Through.

11/22 – 11/23 – Act 1 SHOOT

**WEEK 14:** 11/27 ________ THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY !

**WEEK 15:** 12/4 EDITORS CUT / Revised ACT 2 & 3 drafts due.

Screen Editor's cut and dailies. Solo groups with draft Act 2

**WEEK 16:** 12/11 ________ Last CLASS! ________________

Director’s Cut Due. Act 1 Color Correction