

CTPR 479: Episodic TV Drama: the Pilot Fall 2014

Thursdays, 9 – 1 pm SCI 106 and Stage 4

Instructors

Class Coordinator & Directing: Helaine Head, hhead@cinema.usc.edu
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Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2-5pm, SCA 402

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Office hours by appointment

Editing: Stephen Lovejoy,
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Producing: John Roman, spinnfilmga@gmail.com
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Production Design: Mike Provar, probestwo@gmail.com
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Sound: David MacMillan, pandamac4@gmail.com
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Writing: Kevin Arkadie, karkusc@gmail.com
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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

Editorial: Paul Jones paulrjon@usc.edu (907) 299-3993

Course Description:

CTPR 479 (2 units) is an *intensive* group workshop experience in the collaborative process of writing and making the “pilot”/ First Act (12 min.) of an episodic television single-camera drama.

By the semester’s end, students will have pitched, written, cast, built the sets for, prepped, shot and begun editing the Pilot Act of an original drama.

CTPR 486, (4 units) offered in the Spring semester, completes the episode - shooting Acts 2 and 3 and completing post on the whole show for an episode running time of 36 minutes.

CTPR 486 *fulfills the advanced production requirement* for undergrad production majors who already have completed 310, and thus can be used as an alternative to 480.

CTPR 479 and 486 taken together can be used as an alternative to 546 or 547 for graduate production majors who have already completed 508.

479/486 conceptually and practically involves:

- conceiving the characters, story line & writing of 3, 12 min. acts, written by those students selected for The Writer’s Room;
- designing & creating the mise en scene (the tone, style, sound, images, sets/locations, props, lighting, wardrobe, make-up and acting approach of the story world and its characters) by the key creative teams, led by the selected Showrunner and Director;
- the scheduling, budgeting, prepping, shooting, posting and scoring of the film, for a final screening of the entire mastered show in Norris, at the end of the semester in May.

Students will be divided into the various departments for each act by the faculty, *based on the students’ expertise and interest* and the faculty’s final choices for the various Act positions.

According to industry practice, creatively, the crews will be led by a Showrunner or lead writer and a Supervising Producer, who will ideally direct the Pilot/Act One episode. Overall creative control is exercised by the Showrunner.

Both courses are team taught by seven instructors in writing, producing, directing, cinematography, production design, editorial and sound.

The class is open to undergrad cinema students who have completed CTPR 310; graduate production and screenwriting students; and non-majors who enroll in CTPR 426.

CLASS GOALS

Class objectives:

- To understand the **structure, craft and aesthetics of dramatic television episodic story-telling**;
- to learn how to **foster the dynamics of creative collaboration**, specifically between the writing, production and post production departments;
- to learn to **function in one or more crew departments**, through class & set experiences;
- to understand the **practical inter- and intra- departmental relationships** among all crew roles required in the episodic TV process.
- to acquire skills necessary for **problem-solving throughout the production**;
- to provide an **overview of the episodic TV industry**;
- and to **explore the potential for industry jobs**.

SELECTION PROCESS

1. FOR SHOW RUNNERS AND WRITERS:

Pre-requisites for the Writing Room: students enrolled in CNTV's screenwriting program or CNTV production program who have completed 310/508 will be chosen by Kevin Arkadie, writing instructor.

A team of students, under the direction of a showrunner or lead writer, will write the episode for this season's show.

Pitches and writing samples from this year's prospective writing staff will be due **Week 2**.

The story line, showrunner and writing staff will be announced in class week 3 and the showrunner, who has overall creative control of the show, will present the tentative story line during our class in Week 4.

The writing staff will be limited to 6- 8 students, (depending on 479 class enrollment) and will **begin solo classes from 10:30-1pm starting Week 3**.

2. FOR THE PILOT ACT DIRECTOR:

Pre-requisite to direct: completion of 310/ 508 and 475/532 and submission of a **resume and directing reel of 10 minutes or less, by Class Week 2**.

All prospective directors must also **schedule a meeting with Helaine Head, directing instructor, by the Tuesday before the Week 3 class**.

The director of the Pilot Act will be chosen by Week 3.

3. FOR THE PILOT ACT CINEMATOGRAPHER or EDITOR:

Pre-requisite to D.P., Edit: completion of 310/508 and submission of a resume and a cinematography reel of 10 minutes or less by class Week 2.

All prospective cinematographers must also schedule a meeting with to Gary Wagner, the cinematography instructor by the Tuesday before the Week 3 class.

All prospective editors must also schedule a meeting with Stephen Lovejoy, editing instructor, by the Tuesday before the Week 3 class.

4. For PILOT ACT PRODUCTION DESIGNERS AND SCRIPT SUPERVISORS:

Pre-requisite for Production Designers: Meeting with Mike Provart, production design instructor, scheduled between Week 2 and Week 3 classes.

Pre-requisite for Script Supervisors: Meeting with Stephen Lovejoy, the editing instructor, scheduled by the Tuesday before the Week 3 class.

5. FOR PILOT ACT LINE PRODUCERS, Assistant Directors and Sound People:

Pre-requisite for producers and A.D.s: 310/508 and meeting with John Roman, producing instructor, scheduled by the Tuesday before the Week 3 class.

Pre-requisite for sound: Meeting with David MacMillan, sound instructor, scheduled by the Tuesday before the Week 3 class.

SELECTION PROCESS FOR the following positions will also be completed by Week 3:

Art Director/Set Decorator/Props/ Wardrobe: see Mike Provart
 AC/Gaffer/Key Grip/: see Gary Wagner
 Boom/sound editor: see David MacMillan
 Script supervisor: see Stephen Lovejoy

CLASS STRUCTURE:

1. **During the first-half of each week's class**, the entire faculty, class and SAs, will meet together in SCI 106 to examine the concepts, esthetics, and craft techniques relevant to the single-camera dramatic episodic TV show PILOT process, department by department, through lectures, TV clips, and in-class discussions; and to screen and discuss the work jointly created and shot by the class.
2. **Starting weeks 3 and 4, the second part of each week's class**, will be split into departmental labs, each led by the appropriate faculty instructor who will address the skills necessary for the successful execution of each department's work in the overall process.

3. **During week 8, on Sunday, October 19, from 10-6pm,**
the class will participate in a workshop held on Stage 4 to learn a range of stage-building procedures and production- tech skills pertaining to all departments during which a DGA-trained A.D. will lecture and demonstrate Set and Rehearsal Protocol, culminating in the class setting up and running a scene from the pilot act. **ALL STUDENTS MUST ATTEND.**
4. **ALL students will contribute a minimum of 6-8 hours outside of class, during week 11, to help build the stage sets on Stage 4, culminating in a Mandatory Test Shoot day, Saturday, 11/11.**
5. **During weekends of weeks 12 & 13, all students will be required to work in their assigned set positions during the 12 hr. shoot days on 11/15 - 16 and 11/22-11/23.**

COURSE REQUIREMENTS/GRADING CRITERIA

Class Participation	10%
Stage workshop & build	20%
Departmental/Set work:	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 class discussions and exercises, on-set and post production demeanor and practices.

Your cooperation, ability to work with others, enthusiasm, problem-solving abilities and attention to detail will figure significantly. Also of importance to the faculty will be the student's 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 week 15 class meeting – all equipment, props, costumes returned on time, the complete production book for the Pilot/Act 1 turned in (with releases, permits, 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, assigned build times, the test shoot and all shoot days. You must inform your S.A. and the lead instructor of an absence BEFORE you miss a class, a build or a shoot.

Every unexcused absence will reduce your grade by 1/2 grade point – i.e. from A to A-; two late arrivals is equivalent to one absence.

At mid-term, each student may have a scheduled meeting with their department head to review their progress.

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.

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.

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 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.

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

KEY WEEKLY CLASS EVENTS for FALL CTPR 479:

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