CTPR 438 – PRACTICUM IN PRODUCING
SYLLABUS
2 UNITS

USC SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS
Fall 2017

Pre-requisite: CTPR 310 - Intermediate Production *or*
CTPR 425 - Production Planning

MEETING TIMES: Thursday 6:00 – 8:50pm

CLASSROOM: SCI 209

INSTRUCTOR: Michael Peyser
mpeyser@cinema.usc.edu
Office Hours: SCA 436 (by appointment)
Office: +1 (323) 462-4690

STUDENT ASSISTANT: Valentino N. Misino
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NOTE: THIS CLASS MAY NOT BE AUDITED.
Guests must be pre-approved by Prof. Peyser before attending the class.

CLASS OVERVIEW:

This course will provide a comprehensive overview of the world of producing. It is designed to provide the skills for producing a CTPR 480 project and projects produced outside of USC.

We will look at how projects are conceived, developed, packaged, financed and marketed.
We will cover practices of project creative development, and navigating the short film and long form marketplaces.
We will address all aspects of production practice and protocol of both short and long form projects.
By the end of the semester each student should have the practical skills to pitch a project, schedule and budget a screenplay, and manage a production from inception through delivery.
This course will consist of lectures, discussions, audiovisual presentations, and guest speakers from within the Industry.
Students will pitch their own projects to the class and in a final presentation to the professor.

PROJECTS:

1. The New York Times Project—finding a story, pitching a good tale

2. Individual Project Pitch:

   • Each student will select and present one pitch on a project of their choice.

3. Sample Screenplay: Full Production Analysis

   • Students will analyze an assigned script, and review a full production plan for the project, including script breakdown, shooting schedule and budget.
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4. Final Exam: "Production Slate" Pitch

   • Each student will create a slate of three creative projects. They may be narrative, dramatic or comedic, or documentary material. Each project should define whether it is for film, television, web, game or interactive formats.
   • The final exam will be a fully developed pitch of one of the above creative projects.

GRADING:

Class Participation	15%
Project Pitches an NYT	15%
Exercise Schedule	20%
Exercise Budget	20%
Final Pitch	30%

Students are expected to be on time and prepared for each class.

Two unexcused absences will result in your grade being lowered by one full point (ex: A >B).
A third unexcused absence will result in your grade being lowered another full point (ex: B >C).
Your grade will be lowered by a point for every subsequent absence.
Two late arrivals equals one full absence.

In order for an absence to be excused, the student must have approval from the professor and provide documentation at the next attended class session.

If you have an emergency and must miss class, please contact your professor prior to class (also please contact, and copy, the class Student Assistant).

Required Reading:

Producer to Producer by Maureen A. Ryan - Second edition (2017)
Available at USC Bookstore

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Note: This schedule is approximate. It may be adjusted as required.

Week 1 - Thursday, August 24: COURSE OVERVIEW

NOTE: The first "Article of the Week" assignment is due today (see below).

Class Lecture :
Introductions—Who am I? Who are you?
Course overview
Review the purpose of the class and upcoming assignments

What is a producer?
Producer titles and definitions—various types of producers.
What is the work, the craft?
Ethics of being a producer. Enterprise and leadership.

Class Discussion: "Article of the Week"

Assignments:

1. "Article of the Week":
For this class and subsequent classes.
Each student should bring in a story (from any media source) which they believe is of importance and relevance to the producing profession. These articles will be posted for sharing among the class.
Each week one or two students will be called upon to present an article, and lead a discussion on its content.

2. Reading: Producer to Producer, "Development" pp. 1-17.

Week 2 - Thursday, August 31: DEVELOPING AND PRESENTING YOUR IDEA

Class Lecture :
Developing and presenting your idea
Audiences and marketplaces:

Short films, the web media, documentaries, television drama, television, comedy, independent features, studio features

The producer's role in the development phase:
Story
Pitch
Creative packaging
Budget

Class Discussion: "Article of the Week"

Class Discussion: Producer to Producer reading, "Development" pp. 1-17.

Assignments:

1. The New York Times Project:
Read the assigned newspaper.
Find 5 stories to develop.
Prepare 2 of these stories to pitch in class on Week 3, Thursday, January 26.

Due Wednesday, January 25 (before 10:00am):
A list of your 5 chosen stories, citing section and page of the articles.
For the 2 stories you will be pitching in class:
Submit a brief (2 paragraph) synopsis of the film the story inspired.
Be sure to define the genre (film, doc, TV, short, etc.) and the audience.
One article/story may be pitched for multiple genres.

2. "Article of the Week"

Week 3 - Thursday, September 7: WRITING AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

In-class presentations: New York Times Project pitches

Class Lecture:
Source material
How do you source and choose material?
Elements of your project selection: story, talent, audience, value
Creative collaboration—forging alliances
The art and craft of pitching

A "TEST CASE" SCREENPLAY TO BE ASSIGNED FOR SCHEDULING AND BUDGET DISCUSSION

Class Discussion: "Article of the Week"

Assignments:

1. Read the "Test Case" Screenplay.

2. "Individual Project Pitch": Select and create a story pitch.
   Due Thursday, February 2.
(A schedule of 3 - 4 pitch presentations in class per week will be determined).

3. Reading: Producer to Producer, "Script Breakdown" pp. 57-79.

NOTE: No "Article of the Week" assignment this week.

Week 4 - Thursday, September 14: SCHEDULING

(Continued: In-class presentations: New York Times Project pitches)

In-class presentation: Individual Project Pitches (Session 1).

Class Lecture: Scheduling
How to schedule
Lining a script
Breakdown pages
Cast and elements management
Cost and creative factors

Class Discussion: Producer to Producer reading, "Script Breakdown" pp. 57 - 79.

Class Discussion: "Article of the Week"

Assignments:

1. Reading: Producer to Producer, "Budgeting" pp. 82 -126.

2. "Test Case" Screenplay Breakdown/Scheduling Exercise.
   Breakdown the script and create a schedule for the assigned 10 pages of the script..
   Due Thursday, February 9..

NOTE: No "Article of the Week" assignment this week.

Week 5 - Thursday, September 21: BUDGETING AND FINANCING

Due today: "Test Case" Screenplay Breakdown and Schedule (for the 10 assigned pages)
There will be a class discussion of this assignment.

In-class presentation: Individual Project Pitches (Session 2).

Class Lecture:
Budgeting a project
Elements of a budget
Film financing

Class Discussion: "Article of the Week"

Class Discussion: Producer to Producer reading, "Budgeting" pp. 82 -136.

Industry guest: Producer or Industry Agent (TBA)

Assignments:
1. Review existing budget of the entire assigned screenplay.

2. Reading Producer to Producer, "Funding" pp. 127-136 and
 "Legal" pp. 214 - 224.

No "Article of the Week" assignment this week.

Week 6 - Thursday, September 28: CONTRACTS AND ACCOUNTS

.Class Lecture:
Contracts and accounting procedures
The paperwork of producing
Legal issues and contracts

In-class presentation: Individual Project Pitches (Session 3).

Class Discussion: Producer to Producer reading, "Funding" pp. 127 -136
and "Legal" pp. 214 - 224.

Class Discussion: "Article of the Week"

Industry guest: Legal, Business Affairs Executive (TBA)

Assignment:

   1. "Article of the Week"

Week 7 - Thursday, October 5: FILMMAKING IN THE AGE OF NEW MEDIA

Class Lecture:
Realizing the story: Visualization and digital workflow from concept to the screen, and beyond.

In-class presentation: Individual Project Pitches (Session 4).

Class Discussion: "Article of the Week"

Industry guest: New media or digital post producer

Assignments:

1. "Article of the Week"

Week 8 - Thursday, October 12: WORKING WITH THE WRITER

Class Lecture: Working with a writer
Outlines and Treatments
Look books
Sizzle reels
Mock trailers
Creating and dealing with script notes
Coverage: what is it, how to read it, how to do it

A SAMPLE SCRIPT TO BE ASSIGNED FOR COVERAGE EXERCISE.

Class Discussion:

1. How best to pitch 480 projects

2. "Article of the Week"

Assignments:

   1. Create coverage for the Sample Script. Due Thursday, March 9.

   2. "Article of the Week"

Week 9 - Thursday, October 19: MANAGING THE CRAFTS

Due today: Sample script coverage.

Class Lecture:
Orchestrating elements of post-production from the get-go:
Editing
Sound
Visual Effects
Color timing
Music (score and source, rights)

Class Discussion: "Article of the Week"

Industry Guest: TBA

Assignments:

1. Reading: Producer to Producer, "Archive Materials" pp. 344 - 349.

2. "Article of the Week"

Week 10, Thursday, October 26: FILM CASE STUDY

Film screening: Discussion with the film's producer(s).

Class Discussion: Producer to Producer reading, "Archive Materials" pp. 344 - 349.

Class Discussion: "Article of the Week"

Assignments:

1. Special "Article of the Week" assignment: Research and assemble lists of sites and links for film marketing, publicity and distribution resources.
   Due Thursday, March 30..

Week 11 - Thursday, November 2: MARKETING, PUBLICITY AND DISTRIBUTION

Industry Guest: Marketing, Publicity and/or Distribution executive

Class Discussion: Due Today: Special "Article of the Week" Assignment.
(Lists of sites/links for film marketing, publicity and distribution resources)

Assignments:

1. "Article of the Week"

2. Begin prep for the Final Exam: Create a slate of three creative projects. They may be narrative, dramatic or comedic, or documentary material. Each project should define whether it is for film, television, web, game or interactive formats. Prepare to pitch one of these projects in full.

Week 12 - Thursday, November 9: FESTIVALS, WEB PROMOTION, SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT

Class Lecture:
The new marketplace and the producer's relationship to audience
Overview of festivals
Opportunities on web platforms, and interactive and gaming
Monetization
Building your brand

Class Discussion:

1. 480 Pitch prep

2. "Article of the Week"

Assignments:

1. Continue prep for the Final Exam: Create a slate of three creative projects. They may be narrative, dramatic or comedic, or documentary material. Each project should define whether it is for film, television, web, game or interactive formats. Prepare to pitch one of these projects in full.

2. Organize your preferred links and websites, for inclusion in an ongoing class "Producing Digital Resource."

3. "Article of the Week"

Week 13 - Thursday, November 16: THE INDUSTRY AND CAREERS

Class Lecture:
Creative producing and career opportunities
Managing expectations
The role of agents, managers, lawyers, studio and network executives
The value of your SCA cohort

Class Discussion:

1. 480 Pitch prep (cont'd)

2. The ongoing "producing digital resource" assembled by the class.

3. "Article of the Week"

Assignments:

1. Continue prep for the Final Exam: Create a slate of three creative projects. They may be narrative, dramatic or comedic, or documentary material. Each project should define whether it is for film, television, web, game or interactive formats. Prepare to pitch one of these projects in full.

THANKSGIVING November 22 – 26, 2017.

Week 14 – Thursday, November 30 FINAL CLASS

Final Exam pitch presentations:
During class each student will present their Final Exam "Production Slate". They will present their three creative projects, and pitch one in a full presentation.

EXAM - December 7
Pitches continued if necessary.

Please limit your entire presentation to no longer than 15 minutes.

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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 (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website and contact information for DSP:
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

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 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.

Please activate your course in Blackboard with access to the course syllabus. Whether or not you use Blackboard regularly, these preparations will be crucial in an emergency. USC's Blackboard learning management system and support information is available at blackboard.usc.edu.

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.