Cinema-Television 520
Advanced Scene Writing
Spring 2018

Instructor: Ted Braun   **Thursday 10:00 am – 12:50 pm, SCB 101**
Email: tebraun@usc.edu   **Office Hours: by appointment, SCA 348**

The purpose of this class is to hone the scene writing skills that you initially developed in CNTV 513. The course assumes that you have a basic knowledge of what a dramatic scene is and how to create meaningful cinematic moments on the page. In order to build upon this underlying knowledge, you will be given assignments and rewriting work designed to help you gain greater control, finesse, and skill in writing the basic building block of all film and television writing – the dramatic scene.

The course also assumes that you are engaged in writing features, TV pilots, teleplays or shorts on your own or for other courses. The use of scenes from these ongoing pieces of work for this course is encouraged. In many ways this course is a laboratory in which you can explore and refine specific scenes from stories in progress in a depth and detail not possible in other courses.

The course consists of weekly writing assignments and regular rewriting to put the lessons of the weekly assignments to full use. The weekly writing assignments break down into three varieties: scene types (open conflict, hidden conflict, suspense, etc), scene writing problems (exposition, entrances, advertising, etc) and tools to make scenes memorable (props, indirection, physical action, etc.). In addition to the weekly assignments you will be asked at midterm to present a pair of revised scenes, and at the end of the course, to present either an original short script or a sequence from a feature script or television pilot.

The final short script or sequence will also facilitate classroom discussion about the relationship of scenes from different acts of the story as well as how to deal with variations in pace and intensity, transitions, and rewriting.

Examples from well-made feature films will be used to help you understand some of the potential choices involved in the scenes under discussion.

Grading will be based on classroom participation (10%), the fulfillment and quality of the weekly assignments (30%), the quality of the mid-term (20%) and final script or sequence (40%).

You cannot participate in the class if you are not in class. You are expected to be on time. Two absences will result in your grade being lowered one step (A to an A-); a third absence in another step (B+ to B). Two late arrivals equal an absence.

Assignments and rewrites are due to the instructor by email as .pdf files no later than 9 am on the day of class, unless otherwise specified. Please also bring one printed copy of the assignment for you and one for the instructor to class. You will also bring in one printed copy of each rewritten scene. All work should be professionally presented—properly formatted and free of typos, misspellings, errors in grammar and syntax. Late assignments are not accepted and receive a failing grade.

Phones off. Laptops closed.

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Schedule of Writing Assignments

January 11	Introduction: What is a scene?
January 18	Open conflict
January 25	Hidden conflict
February 1	Props, costumes, sound – gags & physical humor
February 8	Entrances
February 15	Exposition & Baggage
February 22	Irony & Suspense
March 1	MID-TERM: REVISED SCENES
March 8	Dialogue
March 15	SPRING BREAK
March 22	Indirection
March 29	Action
April 5	Advertising
April 12	Subjective
April 19	Exits: paying off & polarity
April 26	Preparation & Aftermath, Transitions
May 3	FINAL SEQUENCE/SHORT – HOLD FOR MAKEUP CLASS

Required Texts

The Tools of Screenwriting, Howard & Mabley
How To Build a Great Screenplay, Howard
Your Screenplay Sucks, Willam M. Akers (His title. Not my sentiments.)

Blogging

Class discussion should be considered private academic communications. We'll be sharing personal stories and intellectual property. If you have a blog or another form of ongoing posts, anything covered in this class - including lecture material - is considered off limits when it comes to posting.

PLEASE NOTE:
FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/.   Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:

Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255
Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/

Sexual Assault Resource Center
For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: http://sarc.usc.edu/

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086
Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. https://equity.usc.edu/

Bias Assessment Response and Support
Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/

The Office of Disability Services and Programs
Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. http://dsp.usc.edu

Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710
Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/

Diversity at USC
Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. https://diversity.usc.edu/

USC Emergency Information
Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, http://emergency.usc.edu

USC Department of Public Safety – 213-740-4321 (UPC) and 323-442-1000 (HSC) for 24-hour emergency assistance or to report a crime.
Provides overall safety to USC community. http://dps.usc.edu