

*USC School of Cinematic Arts*  
*Production Planning*  
*CTPR 425*



# **SYLLABUS**

*Fall 2007*

*Instructor: Robert Brown*



# CTPR 425 Production Planning Syllabus

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.

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, make a production board, a day-out-of-days, and develop a shooting schedule. The class will also examine actual film budgets for both a large studio release and a low budget independent, account by account, in order to reach an understanding of the various elements that go into the making of a film.

## Grading Criteria

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In an effort to make the grading process as fair and objective as possible, I will use the following method.

### Assignments (Total Possible Points - 100)

The five projects will be due at various times during the term. I will grade them and return them to you with a list of comments explaining why I graded them the way I did.

- The Lined Script – if it is on time, neatly done and you understand the concepts, you get 15 points.
- The Breakdown Pages – if they are on time, neatly done, and accurate, you get 15 points.
- The Production Board – if it is on time, neatly done, organized and well thought out per the concepts we will be discussing in class, you get 50 points.
- The Day-Out-Of-Days – if it is on time, neatly done, and the actors' work days are consolidated in a logical manner, you get 10 points
- The One-Line Schedule – if it is on time, done per the given format, readable and you understand the concepts, you get 10 points.

The total possible points are 100. I will use a curve to achieve an initial ranking of the class, but the final grade awarded will be based on your score and my personal assessment of your understanding of the concepts.

If you fail to turn in the assignments it will obviously seriously affect your grade. Late assignments *will* be marked down.

### Attendance and Class Participation

I will use attendance and class participation to help me decide borderline cases. They can push your grade up to the next highest level or down to the next lowest level.

**Attendance.** Most of the material is composed of my lectures. If you aren't here for them you can't possibly know the material—even if you get notes from someone else. In past terms, I have seen a definite correlation between attendance and understanding of the concepts, and, therefore, the final grade.

**Class Participation.** This is a subjective evaluation based on your interest and participation in class. There is a great deal more material in this subject than can be covered adequately in 15 class meetings. In order for the class to address areas in which you have specific interests, it is important that you express those interests. Also, by volunteering information and asking questions, you will improve your retention of the material

### “Incomplete” Grades

Officially, a grade of “IN” or “Incomplete” is to be issued only in the event of an emergency or misfortune that prevents a student from taking the final exam. Since this course does not have a final exam, there really should be no reason for anyone to request an “Incomplete.” If you find that you are unable to complete the projects, you should officially withdraw from the course. If an emergency should arise that prevents the completion of the projects, please notify me as soon as possible so that I can help you decide the course of action that will be in your best interest.

### The Use of Computers

This is not a course on using the Movie Magic or EP Scheduling or Budgeting programs. There will be one class in which I will introduce the program to you in the Leavey Library. However, I am requiring that the projects be done manually. You do not use a calculator when you are learning arithmetic, and likewise, I think that the computer, while a valuable tool, gets in the way of learning the concepts that the course is teaching.

This restriction applies *only* to production scheduling software. You are free to use word processing or spreadsheet programs to write out your schedule if you prefer.

### Materials

There is one required text that closely covers the subject matter of the course. It is available at the USC Trojan Bookstore, on Amazon.com, Samuel French Bookshops, The Writer’s Store, and from the publisher at [www.chalkhillbooks.com](http://www.chalkhillbooks.com).

*Planning the Low-Budget Film*

ISBN-13: 978-0-9768178-0-2

Author: Robert L. Brown

Publisher: Chalk Hill Books, 2006 \$29.95

You will also need a production board and strips. If you already have one, you are set. If you need strips and/or a header board, I can order them for you. If you don’t have a production board, I can order that for you also. These materials are are priced as follows:

11-inch, 4-panel board	\$40.00
Header strip	2.50
1 bundle each of white, blue, green, yellow, and black & white (\$4.50 ea.)	22.50
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$65.00</b>

These items are also available at the Writer’s Store on Westwood Blvd., and online through Chalk Hill Books. This package normally sells for \$77.50 at [Chalkhillbooks.com](http://Chalkhillbooks.com) and at least \$87.50 at the Writer’s Store. Students who have taken this class in earlier semesters might have materials left over that you can use.

## **Office Hours**

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As an adjunct, I share an office on campus with other adjuncts (LUC 304a). If you need to make an appointment to discuss the material with me, you can leave a message at (818) 999-9475. I will arrange a time to meet with you either before or after class, or at some other mutually agreeable time.

You can also reach me by e-mail at [robert@chimere-inc.com](mailto:robert@chimere-inc.com). I am often working at my computer and will respond as quickly as I am able, sometimes within a few minutes depending on the time of day.

My campus mailbox is located in the hall near the elevators on the 4th floor of Lucas. There is a box in the cabinet below my mail box labeled "CTPR 425" which you can use to drop assignments or anything else that does not fit in the mailbox. I check my mailbox no less than once each week, usually just before class on Wednesday night.

I encourage you to contact me by any of the above methods if you have any questions or any other matter you need to discuss. I welcome your questions. They are never an imposition.

## **Students With Disabilities**

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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 8:30am-5:00pm Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776. I encourage any student with special needs to take advantage of this program.

## Course Outline

### Class #1 - August 29

Introduction to Production Planning -  
Syllabus.  
Grade Criteria.  
Text.  
Required materials.  
Why do we plan?  
5 steps.  
The shooting sequence -  
1 Shooting sequence = 1 breakdown page = 1 strip.  
Inclass exercises.  
Distribute script -  
Parts of a shooting script.  
**ASSIGNMENT -**  
Due Class #2, Sept. 5:  
Read the script.  
Read Chapters 1-4 in the text.  
Bring 2 different highlighters, a pencil, and a ruler  
to class.

### Class #2 - September 5

Discuss script and possible production problems -  
Process of *lining* a script.  
Concept of *page count*.  
Broken lines and overlapping page count.  
In-class lining of sample pages.  
Discuss things to look for.  
Problematic situations -  
Int./Ext., Int. Car, Telephone conversations.  
Creative geography: Hotel across street from café.  
Guiding principle: Where is the camera?  
**ASSIGNMENT -**  
Due Class #3, Sept. 12:  
Line the script.  
Read Chapters 5 & 6 in the text.

### Class #3 - September 12

*Lined scripts due.*  
*Take orders for Production Boards*  
What problems did you encounter in lining the script?  
Scene numbering.  
The Production Staff -  
The Unit Production Manager.  
The First Assistant Director.  
The Second Assistant Director.  
The process of filming a scene.  
The Production Meeting.  
**ASSIGNMENT -**  
Due Class #4, Sept. 19:  
Read Chapter 7 in the text.

### Class #4 - September 19

*Graded lined scripts returned to students.*  
*Hand out breakdown sheets*  
Demonstrate how to fill out breakdown sheets.  
Items not mentioned in the script -  
Extras.  
Standins.  
Special Equipment.  
From Script to film -  
video examples.  
**ASSIGNMENT -**  
Due Class #5, Sept. 26:  
Read Chapters 8 and 9 in the text.  
Due Class #6, Oct. 3:  
Completed breakdown sheets.

### Class #5 - September 26

Review the breakdown sheets and discuss problems  
*Hand out Production Boards, headers and strips.*  
The production board as a tool -  
The elements of the board.  
Form and function.  
The header.  
The strips -  
Strip info.  
color coding.  
Filling out the production board.  
**ASSIGNMENT -**  
Due Class #6, Oct. 3:  
Read Chapter 10 in the text.

**Class #6 - October 3**

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*Completed Breakdown Pages due.*

Locations -

Why location? Why stage?

Locations vs. Stage.

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.

**Class #7 - October 10**

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*Graded Breakdown Pages returned to students.*

Review production board strips.

Arranging the board -

Scheduling considerations.

Scheduling Criteria.

List of Assumptions.

Working with Minors.

**ASSIGNMENT -**

**Due Class #8, Oct. 17:**

**Read Chapters 11 & 12 in the text.**

**Due Class #11, Nov. 7:**

**Completed production board.**

**Class #8 - October 17**

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Management and Work Ethics -

Responsibility and safety.

Review scheduling -

Sorting -

location vs. stage.

sets.

actor carry.

day player vs. weekly.

Day-out-of-days.

Shooting Schedules -

One-Line Shooting Schedule.

Full Shooting Schedule.

Discuss Class Production Board Problems.

Adjusting the board.

**ASSIGNMENT -**

**Due Class #9, Oct. 24:**

**Read Chapters 15, 16, 17, & 18 in the text.**

**Class #9 - October 24**

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Discuss Class Production Board problems.

Begin discussion of Budgeting.

Hand out studio budget.

Top Sheet -

Production levels.

Contractual charges.

Methods of entry.

Above the Line -

Story.

Writers.

Producers.

Director.

Cast -

Daily.

Weekly.

Stunt Players.

Above the line fringes.

**ASSIGNMENT -**

**Due Class #10, Oct. 31:**

**Read pp. 189-227 in the text.**

**Class #10 - October 31**

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Below-the-line -

Production -

DGA staff.

Script Supervisor.

Location Manager.

Accounting.

Production office staff.

Camera.

Set Design.

Set Construction.

Set Strike.

**ASSIGNMENT -**

**Due Class #11, Nov. 7:**

**Read pp. 228-244 in the text.**

**Class #11 - November 7**

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*Completed Production Boards due.*

Below-the-line continued -

- Special Effects.
- Set Operations -
  - Grips.
  - Craft Service.
  - Greens.
  - Standby Painter.

Set Lighting.

**ASSIGNMENT -**

**Due Class #12, Nov. 14:**

**Read pp. 244-291 in the text.**

### **Class #12 - November 14**

*Graded Production Boards returned to students.*

Review Day-out-of-days.

Below-the-line continued-

- Set Dressing
- Props
- Picture Vehicles
- Animals
- Extras
- Makeup & Hairdressing
- Sound
- Locations
- Transportation
- Film & Lab
- Tests
- Facility Expenses

**ASSIGNMENT -**

**Due Class #13, Nov. 21:**

**Day-out-of-days due.**

**Due Class #14, Nov. 28:**

**Read Chapters 20 & 21 in the text.**

### **Class #13 - November 21**

*Day-out-of-days due.*

Post production

Two Path: Image & Sound

Editing & Projection

Music

Post Production Sound

Post Production Film & Lab

Titles & Opticals

Other Expense

Insurance

Publicity

General Expenses

MPAA Rating

Legal Costs

**ASSIGNMENT -**

**Due Class #14, Nov. 28:**

**One-line Schedule**

### **Class #14 - November 28**

*Graded Day-out-of-days returned to students.*

*One-line Schedule due.*

Software Demonstration -

EP Scheduling.

EP Budgeting.

**ASSIGNMENT -**

**Due Class #15, Dec. 5:**

**Read Chapters 22 & 23 in the text.**

### **Class #15 - December 5**

*Graded One-line Schedule returned to students.*

Tracking a film's progress.

Production paperwork as tools of control

Call Sheets

Production Reports

SAG Exhibit G

View "A Material Difference"

### **Final Exam**

There is no final exam.