

USC School
of Cinematic Arts

Production Planning
CTPR 425

SYLLABUS

Fall 2012

Instructor: Robert L. 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, develop a shooting schedule and create a day-out-of-days. 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

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 written 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, well done, and accurate, you get 25 points.
- The Scheduled Production Board – if it is on time, organized and well thought out per the concepts we will be discussing in class, you get 40 points.
- The Day-Out-Of-Days – Using the DOD generated by the software and a spreadsheet I have designed, I will ask you to come up with a plan to meet SAG's Diversity in Casting requirements. If it is on time, neatly done, and the actors' work days are consolidated in a logical manner, you get 10 points.
- The Budget - We will be creating a partial budget based on the board we will have created in class. This will be due the Friday after the last class by email. If this is on time and consistent with the class discussion 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.

The class will be on Blackboard and you will be able to turn most of your assignment in as digital files. 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.

Materials

Text

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.

Planning the Low-Budget Film

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

Author: Robert L. Brown

Publisher: Chalk Hill Books, 2006 \$29.95

Software

You will also need to purchase *Movie Magic Scheduling*. This is available to you at a steep discount. The program normally retails for \$489. As a student attending the USC School of Cinematic Arts, you can get it for \$99. I’ll be giving the information on how to obtain the program in class.

We will also be using *Movie Magic Budgeting* in class. You are not required to buy this although if you should chose to do so, I believe you can obtain it for the same price as *Movie Magic Scheduling*.

USB Flash Drive

It will be necessary for you to have available a USB flash drive so that you will be able to store the various handout files that you will be receiving in addition to your production schedule. Bring this to class each time so that the handouts will be available for reference in class. This will also be handy for saving the budget that you will be constructing in class.

Office Hours

As an adjunct, I share an office on campus with the other adjuncts (SCA410). 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*. 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. Certain assignments will be turned in via email and this is the address to use to turn in your assignment.

My campus mailbox is located on the 4th floor of SCA (SCA404). 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

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 from 8:30am to 5:00pm Monday through Friday. Contact information is listed below. I encourage any student with special needs to take advantage of this program.

Director: Edward Roth, Ph.D.
Associate Director: Mattie Grace Ph.D.
(213) 740-0776 (voice)
(213) 740-6948 (TTD)
Student Union 301
Email: ability@usc.edu
www.usc.edu/disability

Course Outline

Class #1 - August 29

Introduction to Production Planning -
 Syllabus.
 Grade Criteria.
 Text.
 Required materials.
 Why do we plan?
 5 steps.
 Script Lining
 Breakdown Sheets
 Scheduled Board
 Day out of Days
 Budget
 The shooting sequence -
 1 Shooting sequence = 1 breakdown sheet = 1 strip.
 Location, time, action, cast.
 In-class exercises.
 Distribute script -
 Parts of a shooting script.
ASSIGNMENT -
 Due Class #2, Sep. 5:
 Read the script.
 Read Chapters 1-4 in the text.
 Bring 2 differently colored 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 sequences.
 In-class lining of first 5 pages of script.
 Discuss things to look for.
 How are you going to shoot the sequence?
 Why highlight the elements?
 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, Sep. 12:
 Line the script.
 Read Chapters 5 & 6 in the text.

Class #3 - September 12

Lined scripts due.
 What problems did you encounter in lining the script?
 Scene numbering.
 Who does this stuff? The Production Staff -
 The Unit Production Manager.
 The First Assistant Director.
 The Second Assistant Director.
 The process of filming a scene.
 From Script to film -
 video examples.
 Items not mentioned in the script -
 Extras.
 Standins.
 Vehicles (WHO ARE IN THE VEHICLES?)
 Special Equipment.
 The Production Meeting.
ASSIGNMENT -
 Due Class #4, Sep. 19:
 Read Chapter 7 in the text.

Class #4 - September 19

Graded lined scripts returned to students.
 Introduce *MM Scheduling*.
 Set up schedule file.
 Naming conventions for sets (general to specific).
 I/E vs E/I for vehicles
 Cast, Stunts, Extras
ASSIGNMENT -
 Due Class #5, Sep. 26:
 Read Chapters 8 and 9 in the text.
 Due Wednesday, Oct. 3:
 Completed breakdown sheets.

Class #5 - September 26

Review the breakdown sheets and discuss problems
 The production board as a tool -
 The elements of the board.
 Form and function.
 The header.
 The strips -
 Strip info.
 color coding.
 The Calendar.
 Sorting the Cast by ID.

Class #6 - October 3

MMS file with completed Breakdown Sheets due by midnight.

Review production board strips.

Arranging the board -

Scheduling considerations.

Scheduling Criteria.

List of Assumptions.

ASSIGNMENT -

Due Class #7, Oct. 10:

Read Chapter 10 in the text.

Class #7 - October 10

Breakdown Sheets grades returned.

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.

ASSIGNMENT -

Due Class #8, Oct. 17:

Read Chapters 11 & 12 in the text.

Due Class #9, Oct. 24:

MMS file fully scheduled.

Class #8 - October 17

Management and Work Ethics -

Responsibility and safety.

Working with Minors.

Review scheduling -

Sorting -

location vs. stage.

actor carry.

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

Scheduled Production Boards due at midnight.

Begin discussion of Budgeting.

Top Sheet -

Chart of accounts

Production levels.

Contractual charges.

Methods of entry.

Introduce *EP Budgeting*

Setting up a new budget

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

Production Board grades returned.

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.

Completed DIC DOOD

Class #11 - November 7

DIC DOOD due at midnight.

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

Diversity in Casting DOOD grades returned.

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. 28:

Read Chapter 20 in the text.

Class #13 - November 28

Post production

Two Paths: Image & Sound

Editing & Projection

Music

Post Production Sound

Post Production Film & Lab

Titles & Opticals

ASSIGNMENT -

Due Class #14, Dec. 5:

Read Chapter 21 in the text.

Class #14 - December 5

Other Expense

Insurance

Publicity

General Expenses

MPAA Rating

Legal Costs

ASSIGNMENT -

Due Class #15, Dec. 12:

Read Chapters 22 & 23 in the text.

Class #15 - December 12

Tracking a film's progress.

Production paperwork as tools of control

Call Sheets

Production Reports

How do you know if you're ahead or behind?

View "A Material Difference"

ASSIGNMENT -

Due Friday, Dec. 14 by email:

Budget from in-class work.

Final Exam

There is no final exam.