

CTPR 508 PRODUCTION II SYLLABUS

BLUE - 18621 (aka "E")

SPRING '12 SEMESTER

USC SCA

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COURSE OVERVIEW

Production II (CTPR 508) is a course in beginning film production skills while working in a three-person crew --or "trio." The course will provide experiences in developing skills in the five disciplines: film producing, directing, cinematography, editing, and sound --including sound recording, sound editing, and sound design. Above all else, 508 is a course in communication and collaboration.

Students will work in trios to make three 6-minute HD projects as they continue to develop skills in visual and aural storytelling. The focus of the class is to communicate ideas, story-beats, feelings, moods and emotions through the design of visual and aural elements. All approaches to cinema may be pursued --in addition to narrative fiction-- including non-fiction, imagistic, and experimental.

Fiction film scripts must be 5 pages maximum, with no more than two pages (40% cumulatively) of dialogue. Non-fiction films must be prepared with a treatment, shot list, and interview questions (if relevant to film's approach). Observational non-fiction films must be prepared with a statement of intent, locations, and potential on-camera subjects. Experimental and imagistic films must have statements of intent and storyboards.

Trios are formed randomly by the department and are assigned at the end of the previous CTPR507 semester. Students will work in these specific roles on each project:

1. Director, Sound Designer, Sound Editor
2. Producer, Sound Recordist, Picture Editor
3. Cinematographer, Production Designer

Students will work in all three of the above roles during the semester, rotating project-to-project.

Fiction projects note: it is not necessary to write an original script for 508, you may adapt (or have someone else adapt) a pre-existing work, as long as you obtain the rights. However, it is required that you function in the all of roles listed in the previous paragraph. Again, students outside of your trio may not be engaged to function in any of those roles.

CTPR 508 will provide these skill-sets:

Producing: Team leadership and collaboration; resource allocation and management; development, including script breakdowns, call sheets, production scheduling, casting and locations; guiding the production team through all phases of production; working within the budget; creative problem solving.

Directing: Story interpretation and adaptation: developing a comprehensive aesthetic approach to the goal, central idea, and theme of the project; including: story-beats, character arc, directing dialogue and behavior that reveals character; shot lists and shot breakdowns; casting, rehearsals, and working with actors in a fiction piece.

Cinematography: a series of interior and exterior lighting workshops. Students will work in crew rotation, learning the skills of each position, while they work in teams. Students will be exposed to several different scenarios and techniques to help them tell their stories visually. This discipline is meant to hone the students' skill with lighting, color temperature, composition, lens choice etc. This component will ultimately focus on visual storytelling.

Editing: Working directly with scenes from the students' films, this component will focus on scene and story structure: how are story-beats revealed? How does the audience connect with the story and characters? How are the elements of "surprise" and "reveal" engaged? We will focus on matching visual action, visual fluidity, pacing, transitions, montage, time manipulation and time ellipses; fulfilling the producer's and director's vision; collaboration among the filmmaking team will be foremost.

Sound: Creative use of sound in the Sound Design; Production Sound recording, booming, mixing, and miking techniques; Sound Editing principles and practices for Dialogue, FX, Foley; Programming Foley and limited ADR, if necessary; working with a composer to develop an effective soundtrack; Directing the mix; and all around collaboration with the filmmaking team.

Production Design: Collaborating with the Director and Producer, the Cinematographer will also act as the Production Designer. He or she will be responsible for the overall visual concept of the film including sets, locations, graphics, props, lighting, costumes, etc. Crew from outside the trio may work in the art dept.

COLLABORATION

At the core of the 508 experience is collaboration. A functional three-person team involves open communication, shared responsibility and mutual trust. You will be expected to work as an equal with your partners, resolve disagreements in a constructive manner, and make sure that all three of you have a full opportunity to take responsibility in turn for all the roles in this hands-on filmmaking experience — producing, directing, cinematography sound recording, picture editing, sound design and sound editing. If you feel this is not happening in your trio, talk to your partners. If this is not successful, contact the producing instructor.

It's assumed that students have no more than the minimal 507-level experience, and the course is designed for experientially *learning by doing*, as well as through instruction. Trios are required to shoot over two weekends even if they could manage with one -

there should be a learning curve from week to week as a result of seeing dailies and getting feedback. The need to learn on the job is one of the main reasons everyone is urged in 507 and again in 508 to choose and design limited-scale and focused, yet creatively challenging projects that can succeed, both as learning experiences and as cinema, without requiring advanced technical proficiency.

No one in this course should ever think of a 508 project as "my film" or as "your film" as opposed to "our film." No one should ever make a trio partner feel that they are letting down the trio because they are learning on the job; that's what they're supposed to be doing.

Each trio will select a name which can be used for class identification purposes. This name cannot be used for presentation credits on projects.

JOURNALS

On Monday by 9AM you will e-mail to the producing and directing instructors a copy of your journal for the previous week. A lot of your most important learning will happen experientially outside of the classroom. Journals are a way to be more conscious of all aspects of the learning process, more observant and more self-aware. They should not be dry, factual reports but rather a chance to reflect, analyze, vent, and track the creative development of your work. They become a record of your creative ideas (one that can be valuable to refer back to) and what you have accomplished (it's easy to forget, once a film is finished, all the work that went into it, and all the problems — artistic, logistical and emotional — that were confronted and overcome.

The journals are private, seen only by the producing and directing instructors (this restriction doesn't apply if there are safety or legal implications). You can discuss anything. The instructors will only respond to something in a journal if you add a note addressing the instructors and asking for a response (e.g., "please help me with this problem"). Occasionally, if several students are encountering the same problem or concern, the instructor might address the generic issue in class so long as it can be done in a way that is entirely anonymous. Students may address additional journals and questions to other faculty if they are specifically commenting on (or need feedback) about specific disciplines: directing, cinematography, sound & editing.

PROJECT, ETHICAL AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

You have complete creative freedom in this class. There are only four simple, but inviolable, requirements:

1. Do your own work.
2. Stay within the limitations on footage shot and equipment used.
3. Cut your projects to time.
4. Make sure everyone is safe and treated ethically.

1. It is an ethical violation to have any another person do your job (including another member of your trio). Use of outside personnel or film facilities for shooting, lighting, editing, mixing or any other creative or technical aspect of your project is an infringement of academic integrity. The only exceptions for outside contributions are script supervision, art direction, wardrobe, hair/makeup, stunts, focus pulling, assistant directing, and film scoring. Production assistants may provide general help under your supervision.
2. It is an ethical violation for a member of a trio to take on another student's work, such as cinematography or editing. For example, if a director were to shoot or edit the film they are directing, they are essentially depriving the assigned student of an assigned learning experience. Directors and editors are expected to find ways to communicate and collaborate to find the film's form without the director taking on the role of editor. Co-editing is not an acceptable practice nor credit on a 508 film. It is an ethical academic violation to misrepresent the work and credits on a film.
3. A total of four S x S cards can be used for a total of 32GB. Students are not permitted to transfer data and re-use their cards, without prior written approval from producing faculty. Failure to obtain prior approval will be taken into account when final grades are determined. Students should be aware that editing SAs for each section will be monitoring the cards. If approval is granted to re-use card space, students must consult with their editing SA's about how to safely download their data to an appropriate storage device.
4. Shooting must take place on the two shooting weekends, a maximum of two days per weekend. Any non-weekend shooting must be justified by compelling reasons (e.g., location or actor availability), be approved by the producing instructor in writing in advance, and must not interfere with the classes of anyone on the set. However, minimal pickup shots - e.g., inserts - when they can be done with little investment of time and effort, there's room left on a card, funds in the budget, there's a clear story value, and they will not impose an undue burden on the editor, can be done with prior written approval from producing faculty. Pickups must be performed by the trio.

Note: Pickups are distinct from re-shoots.

Gear returns will be scheduled within 48 hours after last pickups.

5. Certain minimal outside equipment rentals are permissible; ask the cinematography instructor in advance. Permission for outside rentals must be given in writing on **2nd SEMESTER CAMERA, GRIP, & ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT PETITION LIST** . See item #5 under "General Guidelines."

6. All editing must be done in USC's post facilities.
7. The limit on final running time is invariable and there are no exceptions (see General Guidelines #1 below).
8. You must make the safety of everyone, including yourself, the highest priority. All class members on a set are responsible at all times for production safety. Any scenes or shots, however innocuous-seeming, that involve safety and/or ethical considerations (including any physical stunt, any representation of a weapon, explosion, collision or projectile, and any work with a minor) must be approved in advance, with all required paperwork completed and submitted. Actions that might seem safe under normal circumstances (e.g., hurrying down stairs or crossing an uncontrolled street) may not be under production conditions and must be discussed with the producing instructor. Take extra care when shooting at night, and do not leave equipment in your car (not even the trunk).

Any violation of the above course requirements is considered an academic, ethical violation, governed by the USC Code of Conduct. (see Statement on Academic Integrity below) and is grounds for confiscation of footage, lowered grade, failing grade, probation, suspension, or expulsion from the University. Ethical violations are enforced by course faculty, the Head of Physical Production, the SCA Disciplinary Committee, and may be sent to the USC Student Judicial Affairs for review/action. Any ethical or safety violation will become a part of the student's record at SCA.

All students are expected to understand and abide by the USC School of Cinematic Arts guidelines. All students are equally responsible at all times for production safety.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. Maximum length is strictly set at 5:30 minutes plus 30 seconds of credits which may be supered over a single shot with one audio track for credits.
2. Dialogue (including voice-over) should amount to 40% or less of the final running time. Exposition in dialogue should be minimal. Gray areas (e.g., walla, muttered lines, background radio/television) must be discussed with the faculty in advance. Every effort should be made to tell the story visually wherever possible. Final edits will not be approved for picture lock if they violate this guideline without specific written permission from the producing instructor.
3. Given the short semester, the deadlines set out in the class schedule are immutable except under extreme circumstances. Dates for, principal weekends, screenings, picture lock, mixing are firm since there is simply no possibility to play catch-up given the tightness of the schedule.

4. Each production must have all the proper actor releases, location permits, insurance coverage, copyright arrangements, hazardous shooting forms etc., to cover every shooting situation. Please note that location releases in apartments need to be signed by the owner or manager, NOT the tenant.
5. Projects must be shot with our camera, the SONY HD EX-1. Any additional items that are not part of your semester package from the PEC must be cleared by your cinematography instructor. Any equipment obtained from outside sources must be **cleared in writing** from the involved instructor to assure the appropriateness, legality and safe operation of the items in question. Outside equipment rental restrictions must be adhered to and if outside cinematography equipment is rented or donated, students MUST fill out the **2nd SEMESTER CAMERA, GRIP, & ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT PETITION LIST** form and get it signed by the producing and cinematography faculty in advance. (this is available @scacommunity.usc.edu)
6. During the first full crew meeting each crew will determine how they will handle any loss and damage that might occur during the shoot. Each crew will decide if the individual responsible for the loss or damage is financially liable or if it will be split between crew members.
7. Crews will limit their workday to 12 hours from call to wrap. Travel time outside the Los Angeles 50-mile zone is considered work time. Within thirty miles from the School the location is a "report to" location meaning that the work time clock starts at the location. Between thirty and fifty miles "travel time is work time," meaning the work time starts at school and continues until the return to school. A location an hour and a half away from school means the workday is shortened by three hours. In 508 you are not allowed beyond fifty miles. (This rule is based on the SAG rule that actors asked to report more than fifty miles from home base are considered on a distant location and must be paid per diem and put up in a first class (or best available) hotel or motel and only one to a room.) Sunday shoots must wrap by 11pm if there is a 9am class on Monday.
8. Crews must be given 10 hour turn around between shoots. SAG requires that actors have a 12 hour turnaround.
9. It is the responsibility of all crew members to ensure that all rules and guidelines are followed. It is further every crewmembers responsibility to ensure a safe set for everyone.
10. All 508s must use original music or music from the USC cinema music library. Any deviation will only be considered by petition.
11. All cast members must be available for scheduled shooting days during production.

It is also advisable to check additional availability in the event that weather or other circumstances forces a change in the production schedule.

12. No proprietary credits are allowed (i.e.: A film by) on films. All works must display:
© 2011 University of Southern California
13. Each production will complete a production notebook (see producing syllabus for further information). The notebook will be due three days after the mix. In order that projects be festival eligible, production notebooks will be vetted & signed-off by your Producing professor, then approved by Archives, and, finally, by Student-Industry Relations.
14. The use of minors is strongly discouraged, due to both the cost of required on-set studio teachers and the limited shoot times minors can work. Minors can be included in no more than 50% of scenes (by page count).
15. Use of special effect prosthetics and extensive special effects makeup is strongly discouraged due to impact on the budget and limited amount of shooting time.
16. Green (or any other color) screen work is prohibited.
17. Adobe After Effects, Photoshop, other visual effects work, and front/rear screen projection, is unsupported. Trio producers must seek approval of these processes with their faculty, but these processes are not taught or supported in 508.
 - due to scheduling constraints, visual effects are discouraged by the faculty
 - a VFX shotlist and schedule must be approved by producing and editing faculty prior to shooting
 - VFX must be created by a trio member other than the editor, or, with permission, by an outside entity
 - no shot substitutions after picture lock
 - all work must be done according to editorial technical specifications
18. Dailies. The director selects circle takes during shooting. Then, before dailies class, the director, cinematographer, and producer-editor consult to select a presentation of dailies that best conveys the full range of scenes, setups, performances and story points captured over the weekend. Students must screen one take from every set up and are encouraged to select shots that didn't work as well as those that did.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Shooting To Kill

Christine Vachon & David Edelstein, Quill paperback, 2002

And continue to be (as in 507):

Voice and Vision: A Creative Approach to Narrative Film & DV Production, Hurbis-Cherrier, Focal Press, 2007

Sound for Film and Television, Second Edition (Book & CD-ROM)

By Tomlinson Holman, Focal Press, 2001

RECOMMENDED TEXTS

The Power of the Actor, Ivana Chubbock, Gotham, 2005

The Intent to Live: Achieving Your True Potential as an Actor, Larry Moss, Bantam, 2005

Directing Actors: Creating Memorable Performances for Film and Television, Judith

Weston, Michael Wiese Productions, 1999

GRADING BREAKDOWN

Students are graded in their overall growth and collaboration in these five disciplines:

Producing: 20%

Directing: 20%

Cinematography: 20%

Editing: 20%

Sound: 20%

Timely attendance is mandatory and failure to attend all class sections from beginning to end may affect grades. Any absences must be pre-arranged through the student assistant for instructor's approval.

Students will have mid-term conferences with informal grades and evaluations; students in danger of failing will be notified at that time.

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. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

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, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>. 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/>.

LAPTOP POLICY

The use of laptop computers, smartphones and tablets to take notes or go over each other's work is permitted in this class. Any use of equipment that detracts from the class (such as surfing the Web for non class-related purposes, IM-ing other students or doing work for other classes) will result in the loss of privileges for the student.