

CTPR 425 PRODUCTION PLANNING

FALL 2017

SECTION: 18538

UNITS: 2

TERM–DAY–TIME: FALL 2017, WEDNESDAYS, 7 PM TO 8:50 PM

LOCATION: SCA 356

USC Cinematic Arts

Instructor: *Robert L. Brown*

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

How long will it take to shoot your film? How much will it cost? What's the most efficient way to schedule the scenes? Who and what need to be there? This course will give you the tools to answer those questions by examining the process of production planning. 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 with an emphasis on scheduling and budgeting.

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 create a film budget for a low budget independent in order to reach an understanding of the various elements that go into the making of a film.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ♦ Develop an understanding of the shooting sequence and how it is used in constructing a shooting schedule.
- ♦ Develop an understanding of the principles of scheduling a film in a way that is efficient yet preserves a director's freedom as much as possible and fosters a comfortable and creative atmosphere to help the actors reach their best performances.
- ♦ Develop an understanding of film budgets such that each student will know how to read and construct a budget with confidence.

As the course is open to students who are not Cinema majors, there are no prerequisite courses.

COURSE NOTES

The course meets once a week. Research and assignments will be conducted outside of class except for the budgeting assignment which will be done in class. I will use Blackboard to deliver course materials and post grades.

TECHNOLOGICAL PROFICIENCY AND HARDWARE/SOFTWARE REQUIRED

Movie Magic Scheduling published by Entertainment Partners. Students will be given a coupon to purchase this software at a discounted rate of \$149. Without the coupon, the software normally retails for \$489 as a downloaded version and the academic edition sells for \$185. This software is the industry standard and is used by all the major studios and production companies.

You will *not* be required to purchase *Movie Magic Budgeting* although you may use the coupon for this program too, if you wish. For our budgeting work, we will be using the software installed on the computers in the production lab (SCA 356).

REQUIRED READING

There is both required and optional reading listed below. The required reading will be closely tied to the course content and will cover in great detail the subjects we address in class. The optional reading listed comes with my highest recommendation and will prove useful for anyone wanting to deepen his or her understanding of production and production planning.

Required reading:

Planning the Low-Budget Film, 2nd edition by Robert Latham Brown

Optional reading:

The Producer's Business Handbook by John J. Lee, Jr. and Anne Marie Gillen

The Complete Film Production Handbook by Eve Light Honthaner

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

Grades will be awarded based on five projects which will be due at various specific times during the term plus a final exam. The due dates of the projects are specified in the Course Outline. I will grade them based on clear criteria with which you will be provided, and I will return them to you with written comments explaining why I graded them the way I did.

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
LINED SCRIPT		
Each student will line a one-hour episodic television script indicating shooting sequences, their length, and essential elements.	20	20%
BREAKDOWN SHEETS		
Each student will create a set of breakdown sheets from the lined script using Movie Magic Scheduling.	10	10%
SCHEDULED PRODUCTION BOARD		
Each student will create a production schedule for the script showing the order in which the sequences will be shot, using Movie Magic Scheduling and good scheduling practices.	20	20%

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
DAY-OUT-OF-DAYS Using the DOOD generated by Movie Magic Scheduling and an Excel spreadsheet which will be provided, each student will devise a plan to meet SAG's Diversity in Casting requirements.	10	10%
FINAL BUDGET The class will be divided into six groups. Each group will be assigned certain major accounts in the budget and will be required to create a plausible, defensible budget for each of those accounts. Each group will present its work and defend it in front of the rest of the class.	20	20%
FINAL EXAM The exam will be drawn from both the assigned reading and the lectures.	100	20%

ADDITIONAL POLICIES

Students are expected to attend each of the classes. Doing so will insure that you will have all information needed to complete the assignments. If you must miss a class, please notify me or our SA, Shelby Adair, ahead of time. In addition, you should arrange to get any materials or notes you may have missed.

Students are expected to arrive at class on time. Repeated late arrivals are disruptive to the class and may mean you will miss material that is important. If you are unavoidably late due to another class, discuss this with me so that I can accommodate you.

You are free to bring a laptop or tablet to class for note taking or use of the scheduling or budgeting software. There may be times that you will go online in class for research, however if you are browsing the web or indulging in social media during class-time I will ask you to stop.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1 Wednesday, August 23

- ◆ Introduction to Production Planning: Syllabus, Grade Criteria, Text, and Required materials.
- ◆ The Projects: Script Lining, Breakdown Sheets, Scheduled Board, Day out of Days, and Budget
- ◆ The *shooting sequence*: 1 Shooting sequence = 1 breakdown sheet = 1 strip.
- ◆ Shooting Sequence Unities: Location, time, action, cast.
- ◆ In-class exercises.
- ◆ Distribute script: Parts of a shooting script.

ASSIGNMENTS:

- ☐ Read and visualize the script. *Due Wednesday, August 30.*
- ☐ Read Brown, Chapter 3, "The Shooting Sequence. *Due Wednesday, August 30.*
- ☐ Read Brown, Chapter 5, "Lining the Script." *Due Wednesday, August 30.*
- ☐ Bring 2 differently colored highlighters, a pencil, and a ruler to next class.

Week 2 Wednesday, August 30

- ◆ Discuss script and possible production problems.
- ◆ The process of *lining a script*, concept of *page count*, broken lines and *overlapping sequences*.
- ◆ In-class lining of first 5 pages of script.
- ◆ Things to look for: shooting sequence *elements*, how will the sequence be shot?
- ◆ Problematic situations: Int./Ext., Int. Vehicles, telephone conversations, movie within the movie.
- ◆ Creative geography: Hotel across the street from a café.
- ◆ Guiding principle: Where is the camera?

ASSIGNMENTS:

- ☐ Line the script for *Reckless*. ***Due Wednesday, September 6.***
- ☐ Read Brown, Chapter 4, "The Production Board." ***Due Wednesday, September 6.***

Week 3 Wednesday, September 6*Lined scripts due.*

- ♦ What problems did you encounter in lining the script?
- ♦ Scene numbering.
- ♦ Terms not mentioned in the script:
 - ▷ Extras.
 - ▷ Stand-ins.
 - ▷ Vehicles (Who are in the vehicles?)
 - ▷ Special Equipment.
- ♦ From Script to film: video examples.
- ♦ 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.
- ♦ The Production Meeting.

ASSIGNMENTS:

- ☐ Read Brown, Chapter 6, "The Script Breakdown." ***Due Wednesday, September 13.***

Week 4 Wednesday, September 13*Graded lined scripts returned to students.*

- ♦ Introduce MM Scheduling.
- ♦ Set up schedule file.
 - ▷ Show Info.
 - ▷ Categories
 - ▷ Calendar
 - ▷ Strip Colors: Int/Ext, Day/Night, Stock
- ♦ Naming conventions for sets (general to specific).
- ♦ The Breakdown Sheet.
 - ▷ INT. vehicles - naming conventions.
 - ▷ Cast, Stunts, Pilots, Extras
- ♦ In-class work on breakdown sheets.
- ♦ Sorting the Cast by Occurrence and then by ID.

ASSIGNMENTS:

- ☐ Complete breakdown sheets. ***Due Wednesday, September 20.***
- ☐ Read Brown, Chapter 7, "Scheduling the Board." ***Due Wednesday, September 20.***

Week 5 Wednesday, September 20*MMS file with completed Breakdown Sheets due by midnight.*

- ♦ Review production board strips.
- ♦ Sorting and arranging the board.
- ♦ Scheduling considerations.
- ♦ Scheduling Criteria.
- ♦ First steps.
- ♦ List of Assumptions.

SORT YOUR CAST LIST BY OCCURRENCE AND NUMBER THEM BEFORE TURNING IN YOUR SCHEDULE.

- ♦ Using Final Draft Tagger or Movie Magic Screenwriter.

ASSIGNMENTS:

- ☐ Read Brown, Chapter 8, "Locations." *Due Wednesday, September 27.*

Week 6 Wednesday, September 27

Breakdown Sheets grades returned.

- ♦ Locations:
 - Why location? Why stage?
 - Locations vs. Stage in *Reckless*
 - » List of location interiors.
 - 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.

ASSIGNMENTS:

- ☐ Read Brown, Chapter 9, "The Day-Out-of-Days." *Due Wednesday, October 4.*
- ☐ Read Brown, Chapter 10, "The Published Schedule." *Due Wednesday, October 4.*
- ☐ Read Brown Chapter 11, "Unions." *Due Wednesday, October 4.*
- ☐ Schedule *Reckless* in MMS. *Due Wednesday, October 11.*

Week 7 Wednesday, October 4

- ♦ Management and Work Ethics:
 - Responsibility and safety.
 - Working with Minors.
 - Unions.
- ♦ 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.

ASSIGNMENT -

- ☐ Read Brown, Chapters 12, 13, 14, & 15. *Due Wednesday, October 11.*

Week 8 Wednesday, October 11

Scheduled Production Boards due at midnight.

- ♦ Begin discussion of Budgeting:
 - Top Sheet.
 - Chart of accounts.
 - Production levels.

- Contractual charges.
- ♦ Introduce EP Budgeting:
- ♦ Methods of entry.
- ♦ Setting up a new budget.
 - Budget Info.
 - Globals.
 - Groups.
 - Fringe Benefits.

ASSIGNMENTS:

- ☐ Read Brown, Chapter 16, “The Shooting Period.” *Due Wednesday, October 25.*

Week 9 Wednesday, October 18

Production Board grades returned.

- ♦ SAG Diversity in Casting DOOD.
- ♦ Movie Magic Budgeting in depth (continued).
- ♦ Form budgeting groups and assign accounts to each group.
 - Determine who will research what.

ASSIGNMENTS:

- ☐ Completed DIC DOOD. *Due Wednesday, October 25.*
- ☐ Read Brown, Chapter 17, “Post Production.” *Due Wednesday, October 25.*
- ☐ Read about *your* group’s budget accounts in Brown, Part III.

Week 10 Wednesday, October 25

DIC DOOD due at midnight.

- ♦ Post Production
- ♦ Budget Grading Rubric.
- ♦ In-class group budget work.

ASSIGNMENTS:

- ☐ Call vendors, unions, etc. to get answers to budget questions. *Due Wednesday, November 1.*
- ☐ Read Brown, Chapter 18, “Other Expense.” *Due Wednesday, November 8.*

Week 11 Wednesday, November 1

Diversity in Casting DOOD grades returned.

- ♦ Finish in-class group budget work.

ASSIGNMENTS:

- ☐ Group budget files. *Due Friday, November 3.*

Week 12 Wednesday, November 8

- ♦ Budget Defense.

ASSIGNMENTS:

- ☐ Final budget presentations: all groups. *Due Wednesday, November 15.*

Week 13 Wednesday, November 15

- ♦ Budget Defense continued.

ASSIGNMENTS:

- ☐ Read Brown, Chapter 19, “Tracking the Film’s Progress.” *Due Wednesday, November 29.*

Week 14 Wednesday, November 29

- ♦ Final Exam REVIEW

- ♦ View *Reckless*.
- ♦ Production paperwork as tools of control.
- ♦ Call Sheets.
- ♦ Production Reports.
- ♦ Tracking a film's progress.

Final Exam Wednesday, December 6

- ♦ The exam is expected to be at 7 pm in SCA 356. To confirm the date and time of the final for this class, consult the USC Schedule of Classes at <http://www.usc.edu/soc>.

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 Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards <https://scampus.usc.edu/b/11-00-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. 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/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the Department of Public Safety <http://capsnet.usc.edu/departement/departement-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center web page sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more.

Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. They are located at

3601 Watt Way
 Grace Ford Salvatori Hall, 120
 Phone: (213) 740-0776
 Video Phone: (213) 814-4618
 Fax: (213) 740-8216
 Email: ability@usc.edu

If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

