

CTPR 508 PRODUCTION II MASTER SYLLABUS
18619 (Brown)
Fall '17 SEMESTER
USC SCA

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COURSE OVERVIEW

Production II (CTPR 508) is a course in film production skills while working in a three-person crew --or “trio.” The course will provide experiences in developing skills in the six disciplines: producing, directing, cinematography, production design, editing, and sound -- including sound recording, sound editing, and sound design. Above all else, 508 is a course in creative 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 6 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, Production 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 or other individuals outside of your trio may not be engaged to function in any of those roles.

CTPR 508 will help you develop 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 in-class 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, production design, 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. At no time can you usurp your triomates responsibilities. Use these moments to develop the collaboration and communication skills that will help you in your career for the rest of your life. It's not always easy, but it is what you must do to thrive in this course and in a career creating media.

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, focused, yet creatively challenging projects that can succeed, both as learning experiences and as cinema, without requiring advanced technical proficiency.

Trios should plan their three productions together before the semester begins. All trios should think of their three films as “our films,” as opposed to each film as “my 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.

Decades of students have formed trios in this class, made great films, and gone on to flourishing careers. The success of each trio depends on all three of you working together in creative collaboration. Should you find yourself unable to work collaboratively with your trio-mates, all three of you risk failing, with a real possibility of one or all of you being asked to leave the class. Because a production period for each project is only 5 weeks, it is entirely possible to fail this course in just the first few weeks of the semester during the very first project. Once an individual or trio gets into this kind of trouble it becomes impossible to recover from the disruptive impact on the trio and other class members, and earning a failing grade for the course is entirely possible during any week of the three 5 week productions. The result is that any student receiving that grade will not be allowed to continue in the MFA Program at the School of Cinematic Arts. The possibility of this kind of circumstance arising is very low. Just keep in mind that one cardinal rule: Collaboration.

JOURNALS

Each Monday by 9AM you will e-mail 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

1. You have complete creative freedom in this class. There are only four simple, but inviolable, requirements:
 1. Make sure everyone is safe and treated ethically.
 2. Do your own assigned work.
 3. Stay within the guidelines of footage shot and equipment used.
 4. Cut your projects to time.

2. Students must purchase two of their own SD cards for using the SONY FS5's. We recommend: Sandisk, Kingston, Transcend, & Lexar.
 - 1) 64GB sdxc class 10
 - 2) 8GB, 4GB, 2GB, or smaller, for retaining camera settingsAll trios will be assigned two prime lenses: 25mm & 50mm. We also have a few Zoom lenses (18mm-105mm f/4) for documentaries. (who will trade-in their primes)

We recommend that each project shoot no more than 125 minutes total. (23:1)

3. 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.

4. Certain minimal outside equipment rentals are permissible; please see attached memo "2nd Semester Equipment Planning List."

5. Editing should be done on the Editor's laptop and the Director's drive at home, in the SCA editing labs, or in B152 (the laptop lab). Editors must backup each project on their own drive. It is an Academic Violation for directors to edit the films they directed.

6. The limit on final running time is invariable and there are no exceptions (see General Guidelines #1 below).

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 super-imposed over a single shot with one audio track for credits.
2. The emphasis should be placed on visual and aural expression.
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. Projects must be shot with our camera, the SONYFS5. Please see “Use of Non-USC Equipment” Memo attached.
5. 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.
6. Sunday shoots must wrap by 11pm if there is a 9am class on Monday.
7. Crews must be given 10 hour turn around between shoots. SAG requires that actors have a 12 hour turnaround.
8. All 508s must use original music or music from the USC cinema music library. Any deviation will only be considered by petition.
9. 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.
10. No proprietary credits are allowed (i.e.: A film by) on films. All works must display:
© 2018 University of Southern California
11. 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). Student Producers must file child work papers with Office of Physical Production in compliance with California State law.
12. 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.

13. Green Screen (or any other color) may be used with permission.
14. 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
15. Dailies: the director and editor will select 10-12 minutes of dailies; the editor will create an AVID timeline for in-class screenings.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Shooting To Kill

Christine Vachon & David Edelstein, Quill paperback, 2002

Producer to Producer 2nd edition

Maureen A Ryan, Michael Wiese Productions 2017

<http://www.producertoproducer.com>

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 must notify their partners immediately by phone or text (and faculty within 24 hours) of any delays –including those caused by medical reasons. Doctor's notes must be provided to Producing faculty by the next class meeting.

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

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.

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/1100-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 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 webpage 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. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

Disruptive Student Behavior:

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.

<p style="text-align: center;">PLEASE NOTE: FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX</p>
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