UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS – WRITING DIVISION
Course: CTWR 415A
Semester: Fall 2019

INSTRUCTOR: Lindsay Stidham
CLASS SCHEDULE: Mondays, 4:00 to 6:50 PM
CLASS LOCATION: SCA 259
OFFICE HOURS: By appointment, Mondays and Tuesdays
CONTACT: lstidham@usc.edu 323-251-7185

COURSE OBJECTIVE:

Students create an outline/ treatment and scenes for a feature screenplay in a constructive, workshop-style environment. Each student will be expected to complete a draft of their treatment and a polish of that treatment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Students will continue their study of the feature film screenplay, create an outline and treatment for a screenplay and revise said treatment. They will focus on creating original, complex characters while developing a strong story and scene structure. The class will focus on visual storytelling, act breaks, character needs and wants, set-ups and payoffs, subplots, original dialogue and subtext.

READING:

Students will be required to read and annotate (per instructions) at least two scripts that they select. Some suggestions if you need them: *The Apartment*, *Jerry Maguire, Sideways, Adaptation, Moonlight, LALA Land, Her, The Big Sick*

Online resource for script by genre:
https://www.scriptreaderpro.com/best-screenplays-to-read/

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1) Completion of a full screenplay treatment, and a full revision of that treatment. Depending on class progress we will work on first act pages. Proper grammar, spelling and format are expected.

2) Your outlines and scripts will be discussed in class so you will need to email any writing assignments to the instructor and your classmates before class (Fridays by 12 noon), as a PDF. (Points will be deducted for late delivery.)

3) Group Interaction: Students will be required to read each other's work, make notes on the PDFs of the outlines/scripts, and provide constructive feedback to their classmates. Because this class does involve workshopping, students must contribute to all class discussions, read their classmates' work, and email notes by the start of class. (Points will be deducted for failure to deliver notes.) Being prepared, meeting deadlines and participating with enthusiasm is expected at all times

4) Assignments are to be completed in proper format, and submitted by specified due dates and times as discussed in class. Consistently late work will cost you a grade.

5) Read ONE published screenplay and annotate per instructions. The goal is for students to learn to read like a writer. Ideally, you should be reading scripts and watching films as often as possible.

Your reading/ script annotating assignment is due by **October 28th**. The assignments can be delivered early if you wish.

An additional reading assignment may be completed to make up lost points. However, this must be proposed and agreed to by your instructor in advance.

GRADING CRITERIA:

Assignments:	**20%**
Participation:	**20%**
Treatment:	**50%**
Final Polish:	**10%**

As per Writing Division policy the following is a breakdown of numeric grade to letter grade:

A 100% to 94%	**C 76% to 73%**
A- 93% to 90%	**C- 72% to 70%**
B+ 89% to 87%	**D+ 69% to 67%**
B 86% to 83%	**D 66% to 63%**
B- 82% to 80%	**D- 62% to 60%**
C+ 79% to 77%	**F 59% to 0%**

Expectation of Professionalism:
All material is expected to be turned in on time and in the proper format. Assignments will be penalized for grammatical mistakes, spelling errors, format mistakes, and typos. Please proof your assignment prior to submission.

Internet Policy:
Material discussed in the room is considered private and should not be blogged, tweeted, posted, snapchatted, or be posted anywhere else on the internet.

Laptop and Cell Phone Policy:
Laptops will be used in class for note taking only. Cell phones should be turned off except during breaks.

Writing Division Attendance Policy:
Students are expected be on time and prepared for each class. Two unexcused absences will result in your grade being lowered by 5%. Your grade will be lowered by 5% for every absence after. Two late arrivals equates to one full absence.

In order for an absence to be excused the student must have approval from the professor and provide documentation at the next attended class session. Religious holiday absences are permitted per school policy.

Please note that if you are a Writing for Screen and Television major/minor you must receive a grade of a C or better in order to receive degree credit. If you have any questions about the minimum grade required for credit please check with your home department.

If you have an emergency and must miss class please contact your professor prior to class or contact the Writing Division at 213-740-3303.

OFFICE HOURS & CONFERENCES

Individual conferences will be available by appointment. Upon the end of this class, I do encourage students to stay in touch, and you are always welcome to reach out to visit me again during the office hours I keep each semester.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

WEEK 1, August 26th:

Introduction to the course and the collaborative workshop process. Intro to the power of your own personal narrative and writing things you can shoot. In-class writing assignment to brainstorm your project. Log lines and what makes an excellent log line.

ASSIGNMENT: 1. Write your log line for your film you outline and treatment in this class. Research treatment formats (there's no right or wrong way to treatment your script--we will examine multiple formats in this class). Email your favorite treatment you found to the group.

2. Reading Assignment. Read a script of a produced film that interests you. You might choose one that relates to what you're working on. Annotate per reading assignment instructions given out in class. Email to your instructor by **September 9th.**

WEEK 2 OFF FOR LABOR DAY

WEEK 3, September 9th
Deliver reading assignment. (Worth 5 points.)

Workshop log lines. Review types of treatments and your favorites from your research. Structure review + opening scenes and character set-up. Protagonist study in script format with opening scenes. Completion of protagonist profile.

Assignment 2: Complete protagonist profiles. Revise your log line if needed.

WEEK 4, September 16th:

Discuss your character profiles. Review internal and external conflicts. Do we need a "save the cat moment" aka likeable vs unlikeable protagonists in famous films. Review first act structure. Review of strong famous first acts of screenplays. Introduce chapter outlines.

ASSIGNMENT: Chapter outline your first act and brainstorm multiple opening scenes. What's the craziest, most attention grabbing way to go? What's the safe way to go? Are you intro-ing your protagonist? Are you intro-ing the theme of your film?

WEEK 5, September 23rd:

Review and discuss your Act I chapter outlines. Discuss Dialogue and subtext (case studies in some classic films). Discuss Act II structure. Introduce genre structure for comedies.

ASSIGNMENT: Revise your Chapter Outlines for Act I. Work on your chapter outlines for Act II.

WEEK 6, September 30th:

Review Chapter Outlines through Act II. Introduce genre structure for rom coms and horror. Review midpoints. Is your current midpoint working? Where is your character on their journey? Are your supporting characters serving the story of your main character? Is your treatment delivering on your original theme? Are there extraneous scenes? Is your character taking action to drive their story forward?

ASSIGNMENT: Revise Chapter outlines through Act II. Brainstorm your best midpoint/ break into Act III moments.

WEEK 7, October 7th:

Review revised Chapter Outlines. Intro Act III structure. Genre structure of action adventure films. Amazing closing scenes in film history.

ASSIGNMENT: Generate ideas for your closing scene… how does it reflect back to your opening/ are we resolving your character's journey in a satisfying why? How about supporting characters?

WEEK 8, October 14th:

Review your closing scenes. Study of 3rd act structure and character arc tracking.

ASSIGNMENT 1: Character track each arc of every major character in your script throughout the story.

ASSIGNMENT 2 Reminder. Read a script and annotate per instructions. Email to your instructor by October 28th.

FALL RECESS: GRADES SENT TO SEE WHERE YOU STAND

WEEK 9, October 21st:

Review your character tracking assignment. Is the protagonist developing/learning/changing? How are your supporting characters helping or hurting your protagonist? Where are each of your character's highest and lowest moments? Review Act III structure.

ASSIGNMENT: Complete your Act III of your Chapter Outline. Split into groups A and B.

WEEK 10, October 28th:
Deliver reading assignment. (Worth 5 points.)

Review complete chapter outlines for Group A. With additional time class will present favorite scenes of their annotated scripts.

ASSIGNMENT: Group A revise Chapter Outlines. Feeling inspired? Write your opening scene in script format.

WEEK 11, November 4th:

Review Chapter Outlines for Group B. With additional time class will present favorite scenes of their annotated scripts.

ASSIGNMENT: Group B revise Chapter Outlines. Feeling inspired? Write your opening scene in script format.

WEEK 12, November 11th:

Review revised outlines/ treatments. Possible class guest.

ASSIGNMENT: Work on polish. All students to attempt first 5 scenes of their script.

WEEK 13, November 18th:
Class guest on indie filmmaking

Review scripted scenes. Choose scenes for a class staged reading.

ASSIGNMENT: Group A polish draft due for staged reading next week. Print pages for actors.

WEEK 14, November 25th

Staged reading on Group A's chosen scenes

ASSIGNMENT: If you missed turning in an annotated script, now is the time. :) Group B polish draft due for staged reading next week. Print pages for actors.

WEEK 15, December 2nd

Staged reading on Group B's chosen scenes.

ASSIGNMENT: If you missed turning in an annotated script, now is the time. :)

FINALS WEEK: All work due. Any final meetings schedule with Professor in advance.

Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call
engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

Student Health Leave Coordinator – 213-821-4710
Located in the USC Support and Advocacy office, the Health Leave Coordinator processes requests for health leaves of absence and advocates for students taking such leaves when needed.
https://policy.usc.edu/student-health-leave-absence/

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call
suicidepreventionlifeline.org
Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call
engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) | Title IX - (213) 740-5086
equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu
Information about how to get help or help a survivor of harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations.

Bias Assessment Response and Support - (213) 740-2421
studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support
Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions for appropriate investigation and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776
dsp.usc.edu
Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710
studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa
Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.
Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101
diversity.usc.edu
Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu
Non-emergency assistance or information.

Diversity and Inclusion
Diversity and Inclusion are foundational to the SCA community. We are committed to fostering a welcoming and supportive environment where students of all identities and backgrounds can flourish. The classroom should be a space for open discussion of ideas and self- expression; however, SCA will not tolerate verbal or written abuse, threats, harassment, intimidation or violence against person or property. If students are concerned about these matters in the classroom setting they are encouraged to contact their SCA Diversity and Inclusion Liaison, http://cinema.usc.edu/about/diversity.cfm; e-mail diversity@cinema.usc.edu. You can also report discrimination based on a protected class here https://equity.usc.edu/harassment-or-discrimination/

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.

PLEASE NOTE:
FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX