School of Cinematic Arts

The John Wells Division of

Writing for Screen and Television

**WRITING THE SHORT SCRIPT**

**SPRING 2020**

**CTWR 413 SECTION 19184D**

**Instructor: Bonnie Garvin**

**Wednesdays 10 AM – 12:50 PM**

**SCI 209**

**Email:bgarvin@usc.edu**

**Office Hours: By Appointment Only**

**CTWR 413 is a course in screenwriting fundamentals preparing students to write short films that can be used in their CTPR 310 production course the following semester. Students should write and revise two scripts for possible 310 production, then choose one and rewrite it in preparation for 310 production.**

**The first half of the semester will be devoted to exercises and laying the groundwork for your short films. The second will focus on writing and rewriting your short films and selecting one for production.**

**GOALS OF THIS COURSE**:

• Introduction to the craft of screenwriting.

• To learn and practice the elements of a “good story well told.”

• To strengthen & deepen your ability to conceive compelling ideas, characters and stories through experience and observation

• To learn to write from a visual and aural perspective.

• To learn narrative structure

• To learn the building blocks of the dramatic scene.

• To write a short script screenplay

This is an introductory course in writing for the screen in which you will learn and develop your craft as a storyteller. You will learn to draw on your memories, experiences, observation and of course imagination to create compelling characters and stories for the screen.

This is a workshop class. Together we will read and critique a series of weekly assignments, both in and outside the class, designed to help you understand the fundamentals of screenwriting. You will learn to bring your visual and aural senses to your writing, to see and hear your film as you write it, developing and exploring your characters through situations of conflict.

At the end of the class you will apply your skills to writing two short narrative ***5-page CTPR 310 scripts.***

**READING:**

You should read as many screenplays as possible to familiarize yourself with the styles and form of other professional writers. You will be assigned some scripts to read on your own time and be prepared to discuss them in class. Additionally, the following books are highly suggested:

"*The Tools of Screenwriting*" by Howard & Mabley

*“Creative Filmmaking From the Inside Out*” by Dannenbaum, Hodge, Mayer

“Stephen King: On Writing” by Stephen King

**GRADING**:

***First Script: 35%***

***Second Script: 35%***

***In Class Assignments: 20%***

***Participation 10%***

**Class participation includes full involvement in and contribution to all class discussions, as well as reading (in advance at times; see schedule above) the assignments of the other students and offering thoughtful, constructive**

**comments.**

**Writing Division Attendance Policy:**

**Students are expected be on time and prepared for each class.**

**On the third absence, students will have their final grade lowered by 10% and an additional 10% for each absence thereafter.  Two late arrivals equates to one full absence.**

**Note: This is a change in policy.  Instructors will no longer distinguish between an excused or unexecused absense.  An absence will be an absence.**

**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/or know you will miss class please contact your professor prior to class or contact the Writing Division at 213-740-3303.**

**If a student has an emergency and additional accomodations are needed, those accomodations will need to come through the USC Campus Support and Intervention (CSI) office. The Writing Division recommends the student and/or advocate contact CSI at 213-821-4710 and their home department adviser for additional support.​**

**BE ON TIME. Tardiness is unprofessional, and unacceptable. You will be allowed no more than one unexcused tardiness. Further tardiness will result in one-sixth letter grade for each occurrence. (e.g., A- down to B+, B down to B-)**

**Late assignments will result in a lower grade.**

**All work must be delivered in proper format.**

Per the 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%

**A :** Work of **excellent** quality. Outstanding application of the dramatic principles and fulfillment of course requirements and deadlines as specified in the syllabus.

**B :** Work of **good** quality. Above average fulfillments of course requirements and deadlines.

**C :** Work of **fair** quality. Minimum fulfillment of course requirements and deadlines for passing graduate credit.

**C-: FAIL to meet minimum grade for credit. NON PASSING GRADE.**

**COMPUTER USE**:

Laptops and tablets may be used in class for class related matters. Their use

beyond class related matters can result in loss of the privilege to use them.

Cell phone use is not permitted during class time, barring a life or death emergency.

**ASSIGNMENTS & SCHEDULE**

**WEEK ONE**

Introduction to Class. What is a short film?

**ASSIGNMENT: Choose a day in your life that stands out because of the emotions it triggers in you. Set a timer for 15 minutes. Write down everything you can think of about the day. EVERYTHING. Include smell, sound, taste, weather, etc. Do not stop to analyze your writing, just write.**

**WEEK TWO**

Read and discuss assignments. Finding the “heart” of your story. A scene vs

a short. Receive screenplay assignments.

**ASSIGNMENT: 1) Listening to how people actually talk. Go to public place and observe people. Focus on somebody you find interesting. Turn on your recorder and tape their conversation. Type it up VERBATIM. DO NOT USE FRIENDS for this assignment. 2) Start reading assigned screenplay.**

**WEEK THREE**

Workshop assignment. Discuss text and subtext within the conversations.

**ASSIGNMENT: Turn the character from first assignment into a scene. Continue reading screenplay.**

**WEEK FOUR**

Screen and discuss shorts. Creating memorable characters.

**ASSIGNMENT: Chose three ideas. Prepare 3 ideas to pitch in class as 5-page CTPR 310 scripts. Write each idea in one paragraph but only include what we will see. Anything that can’t be shown does NOT appear in paragraph.**

**WEEK FIVE**

Pitch and workshop story ideas. Choosing an “active” word to reveal character. Find and discuss “active” word in relationship to the screenplay you’ve been assigned.

**ASSIGNMENT: Revise first idea based on feedback. Write two-page character bios. Chose an active word to describe character(s).**

**WEEK SIX**

Workshop bios. How to externalize the interior.

**ASSIGNMENT: Make a beat sheet.**

**WEEK SEVEN**

Workshop beat sheets.

**ASSIGNMENT: Revise beat sheets.**

**[CTPR 310 TEACHERS WILL VISIT FOR 20 MINTUTES DURING WEEK 6 TO DESCRIBE PARAMETERS OF THE CLASS.]**

**WEEK EIGHT**

Workshop revised beat sheet.

**ASSIGNMENT: First draft of 310 script #1.**

**WEEK NINE**

Review and workshop first drafts 310 Script #1

**ASSIGNMENT**: **Revise 310 script #1.**

**WEEK TEN**

Review & Workshop First Draft Script #1

**ASSIGNMENT: Write first draft of 310 script #2.**

**WEEK ELEVEN**

Review & Workshop First Draft Script #2

**ASSIGNMENT**: **Revise 310 script #2.**

**WEEK TWELVE**

Review & Workshop First Draft Script #2

*Select one of the two revised scripts to pursue further*.

**ASSIGNMENT: Rewrite selected 310 script.**

**WEEK THIRTEEN**

Review & Workshop Rewrite of 310 script

**ASSIGNMENT:** **Revise rewritten selected 310 script.**

**WEEK FOURTEEN**

Review Revisions

**ASSIGNMENT: Final polishes of selected 310 script.**

**WEEK FIFTEEN**

Table Read of Final Scripts.

**ASSIGNMENT**: **Final Script is due to CTPR 310 faculty by end of week 15.**

**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 Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” [policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b](https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, [policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

**Support Systems:**

*Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call*

[engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling](https://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](http://www.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](https://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](https://equity.usc.edu/), [titleix.usc.edu](http://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](https://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](http://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](https://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](https://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](http://dps.usc.edu/), [emergency.usc.edu](http://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](http://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](mailto: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**