

SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS
The John Wells Division of
Writing for Screen and Television
CTWR 419B: Senior Thesis in Dramatic Television
Writing Majors - 4 Units
Section 19430D
Spring 2020

Instructor: Kate Powers
Class Schedule: Mondays, 7-10 p.m.
Class Location: SCA 345
Table Reads: Friday 2-5:50 p.m.
Table Read Location: SCA 310
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 3-6 p.m. and by appointment
Contact Information: kapowers@usc.edu

Course Objective:

Plan and execute a second draft of your thesis pilot, write a detailed outline for a mid-season episode and complete a bible for the first season. In addition, students will produce a table read for their revised pilots. The polished pilot script, completed mid-season outline, and bible will be turned in on the last day of finals week and count as the course final.

Course Reading:

Screenwriting is Rewriting: The Art and Craft of Professional Revision by Jack Epps, Jr.

Course Description:

Congratulations -- you've finished a draft of your thesis pilot!

Now what?

Now we step back to develop the long view of your series. Working from your pilot, we'll be asking: What is this series about, in terms of plot and theme? What are your protagonists' inner stories? Do those stories echo your intended theme? Does the main cast have clear, intriguing arcs through the entire season?

As you revise your pilot to clarify and sharpen these elements, you'll also identify and plant the seeds that will launch all future storylines. Your mid-season episode – Episode 7 – is the “reality check” that will evaluate the depth and breadth of your series vision while the first season bible showcases character arcs and story developments that distinguish your ability to sell your creative vision in the marketplace.

Are new characters needed? Does your point-of-view need to be revised? Does your world need to expand? What will escalate the dramatic stakes to insure that your series can evolve into a second season, then a third, fourth and beyond?

Laptop and Cell Phone Policy:

As you know, I firmly believe the most effective writers' rooms restrict laptop and cellphone access to the writers' assistant -- and to a lesser degree, the showrunner -- in order to keep the staff focused on the work at hand.

Therefore, we will be adopting the same policy as last semester, relying on paper notebooks, the classroom projector and, as needed, physical documents.

Laptops and cellphones are still forbidden during classtime, the only exception being during discussion of your work, when you may use your phone's voice memo feature to record the conversation. At no other time may you record lectures or workshops without the consent of the instructor, per department policy.

As in professional writers' rooms, material discussed in the room is considered private and should not be blogged, tweeted, posted, snapchatted, or be posted anywhere else on the internet.

Expectation of Professionalism:

All material is expected to be turned in on time and in the proper format.

Please proof your assignment prior to submission. If an assignment contains more than three grammatical mistakes, spelling errors, format mistakes or typos per five pages, the resulting grade will be lowered by half a point. A semester-long pattern of sloppy proofing or an obviously unproofed final documents will result in a final grade being lowered by a full point.

Grading Criteria:

For this class, weekly written assignments are to be delivered as PDFs, attached to an email to kapowers@usc.edu and, if required, to the entire class by 6 p.m. on the announced deadline.

Late assignments will result in the grade being lowered half a point.

The file name, header and email's subject line should read:

Last Name Assignment name (Revised Outline, Revised Act One, etc.) Date

For example, this document is named: Powers 419B Syllabus 011320

SCRIPTS should be written in Final Draft or Movie Magic Screenwriter.

Your grade is based primarily on written assignments. Your mid-term grade will be based on all graded assignments submitted before Sunday, March 1. Your revised mid-season outline, bible and polished pilot are your semester final.

You are expected to read ALL your classmates' submitted pages in advance of class, and to have prepared feedback. Your participation during class -- what I call

“staff ethic” -- is also important. This means not just giving and receiving notes, but listening to your classmates, contributing to the discussion and above all, helping create a safe space for this class to do its best work.

Staff Ethic:	10%
First draft of season bible:	10%
Expanded beatment-style full-season document:	10%
Statements of intent and goals charts (3 total, 5% each):	15%
Revised pilot beatment:	10%
Mid-season episode outline draft:	5%
POLISHED PILOT (30%), REVISED MID-SEASON OUTLINE (5%) and REVISED BIBLE (5%):	40%
(due via email by 1 p.m. Wednesday, May 13th)	

TOTAL	100%
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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%

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 unexcused 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.

Class Schedule:

Please note that all topics and assignments are subject to change at the discretion of the professor.

TABLE READ PREPARATION should begin at the start of the semester. Each student will be responsible for producing his or her own table read. This includes casting roles, supplying scripts for actors to read, prepping the room (supplying water) and getting parking permits for any guests who need them.

Week 1: Monday, January 13, 2020

Discussion of where each student's pilot ended and where the series will now go. The entire season will be discussed with its possibilities and challenges. Review series bibles. Discuss where and how the mid-season episode will fit in. Discussion of table reads – what are they? How do they work? What you will need to do to prepare for it.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE NEXT TWO WEEKS:

1. Read Screenwriting Is Rewriting through the end of Chapter 6, "Foundation Pass."
2. All students respond to class notes by revising their statement of intent and a notes/solution chart (**5% of final grade**) focused on the 4 to 5 goals you're focusing on in your next draft, to be **emailed ONLY TO THE INSTRUCTOR by 6 p.m., Saturday, Jan 18.**
3. Prepare 1 to 3 specific ideas to address each of your goals and come to class prepared to pitch and discuss them.
4. Complete a first draft of your bible (**10% of final grade**) and **email as PDF to the entire class by 6 p.m. on Tuesday, January 21.**

This draft bible should consist of six episode synopses (including A/B/C storylines for each episode) PLUS the final episode of the season. A complete 13-episode bible will be due at the end of the semester, so this assignment is intended to get you thinking about the first half of your season and the finale.

Note: Please approach this assignment as if your thesis project will have a 13-episode first season, even if you suspect this will ultimately not be the case.

Week 2: Monday, January 20, 2020 - MLK DAY - NO CLASS

Week 3: Monday, January 27, 2020

Discussion of series bibles, statements and charts; workshopping of pitches. Individual conferences to be scheduled for 1/28-2/3/20.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR NEXT WEEK:

1. Read Screenwriting Is Rewriting through the end of Chapter 9, "Story and Theme Pass."
2. Expand draft bible into a full season "beatment-style" document (**10% of final grade**), including A & B stories for each episode, and submit via email to the entire class by 6 p.m. on Saturday, February 1.
3. Come to class prepared to pitch your full season.

Week 4: Monday, February 3, 2020

Pitch and workshop 13-episode arcs. Decide which mid-season episode you will outline.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR NEXT WEEK:

1. Read Screenwriting Is Rewriting through the end of Chapter 13, "Plot Pass."
2. Draft a new beatment for your pilot (**10% of final grade**), addressing the 4 to 5 goals of your next draft and email your beatment to the entire class by 6 p.m. on Saturday, February 8.
3. Prep a detailed pitch for your mid-season episode.
4. Read your fellow classmates' pilot beatments and come prepared with notes.

Week 5: Monday, February 10, 2020

Pitch and workshop mid-season episode pitches. Discuss pilot revision beatments.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR NEXT TWO WEEKS:

1. Read Screenwriting Is Rewriting through the end of Chapter 14.
2. Outline your mid-season episode (**5% of final grade**) and email to entire class by 6 p.m. on Saturday, February 15.
3. Draft a revised statement of intent and a notes/solution chart (**5% of final grade**), incorporating any new adjustments discovered in the process of breaking the full season. **Email to the instructor ONLY by 6 p.m. on Sunday, February 16.**
4. Begin second pass on your pilot. Table reads will start in Week 10, so you will need a full revised draft by Monday, March 23. (Yes, you will be working over Spring Break.)
5. **AIM TO FINISH AND EMAIL YOUR REVISED PILOT TEASER AND FIRST ACT TO THE ENTIRE CLASS BY 6 p.m. on SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22.**
6. Read your fellow classmates' outlines and revisions; come prepared with notes.

Week 6: Monday, February 17, 2020 - PRESIDENTS' DAY - NO CLASS**Week 7: Monday, February 24, 2020**

Workshopping mid-season outlines and pilot revisions. Decide on table read line-up.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR NEXT WEEK:

1. Begin revising mid-season outlines.
2. Email your revised pilot through Act Two by 6 p.m. on Saturday, February 29.
3. Read your classmates' revisions and come prepared with notes.

Week 8: Monday, March 2, 2020

Workshopping pilot revisions.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR NEXT WEEK:

1. Email your pilot through Act Three by 6 p.m. on Saturday, March 7.
2. Read your classmates' revisions and come prepared with notes.

Week 9: Monday, March 9, 2020

Workshopping pilot revisions and pitching leading characters.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR NEXT WEEK:

1. Email a fully revised pilot by 6 p.m. on Saturday, March 21. (Yes, at the end of Spring Break. If you anticipate difficulty tracking down internet access due to travel or social obligations, email the revised pilot BEFORE Saturday, not after.)
2. Read your classmates' revisions and come prepared with notes.
3. Read Screenwriting Is Rewriting through the end of Chapter 23, "Polish Pass."

Monday, March 16, 2020 SPRING BREAK - NO CLASS**Weeks 10-14 (March 23, March 30, April 6, April 13, April 20):**

Table reads. One to two students per week.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT SIX WEEKS:

1. Prepare to turn in a polished PILOT (**30% of final grade**), MID-SEASON OUTLINE (**5% of final grade**) and REVISED BIBLE (**5% of final grade**) by 1 p.m. on Wednesday, May 13, which means:
 - a. Incorporating feedback from table reads, most likely including character and dialogue passes on the revised pilot.
 - b. Adjusting season arc and mid-season outlines as needed
 - c. Meticulously proofreading all documents or trading favors to obtain proofreading from an eagle-eyed classmate.

Week 15: Monday, April 27, 2020

Discussing any last-minute issues with script, season, bible, etc. Wrap-up.

Classes end: Friday, May 1, 2020

POLISHED PILOT, REVISED MID-SEASON OUTLINE and REVISED BIBLE due via email by 1 p.m. on Wednesday, May 13th.

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. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:

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