

**USC SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS**  
CTWR 514b: SCREENWRITING FUNDAMENTALS II  
Spring 2020      Section number 19236D  
Tuesdays, 10-12:50pm      SCA 361

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(or by appointment, set up by email)  
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**CLASS OBJECTIVE:**

You will develop two feature-length story ideas presented both orally and in written form. From those ideas, we will choose one to develop into a sequence breakdown, then step outline and finally into a first draft feature screenplay.

**CLASS GOALS:**

- Expand the process first presented in 514a of developing an idea into a feature screenplay.
- Create unique characters with strong inner lives and complex relationships.
- Establish a clear personal connection to the story being told in order to drive and enliven the story.
- Deepen understanding of narrative cinematic technique and structure established in earlier courses.
- Acquire complete command of format, visual writing style, and dialogue.
- Remove the inhibiting sense of preciousness while learning to make decisions and work fast, always with the knowledge and plan that rewriting will follow.

**RECOMMENDED READING:**

The Tools of Screenwriting by David Howard and Edward Mabley. Various screenplays from produced films.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Every class session you will be given a writing or story development assignment. You will generally present your work aloud and you will comment on each other's work. This process of creating, presenting, giving and taking feedback are the core hallmarks of this class. In later stages of the semester, written material will be given to instructor and classmates as part of the process and written material will be required for mid-semester and final evaluations.

## **SCHEDULE OF WRITING ASSIGNMENTS**

### **Week 1**

Jan 14: Course introduction. Discussion of previous semester, expectations for this semester, how to develop and manage ideas and "Is this a movie?"

Assignment: Develop first story pitch

### **Week 2**

Jan 21: Story #1: Oral presentation & development questions

Assignment: Two-page story summary and character sketches.

### **Week 3**

Jan 28: Discuss first story summaries

Assignment: Develop second story pitch

### **Week 4**

Feb 4: Story #2: Oral presentation & development questions

Assignment: Two-page story summary and character sketches.

### **Week 5**

Feb 11: Discuss second story summaries

Decide between two story ideas for semester script

Assignment: Character exploration/development = protagonist

Assignment: Character constellation

### **Week 6**

Feb 18: Discuss protagonists and character constellation

Hand-out: Sequence breakdown

Assignment: write a one page sequence breakdown.

### **Week 7**

Feb 25: Discuss and elaborate on sequence breakdowns

Assignment: Revise sequence breakdown

Step outline of act one of script

### **Week 8**

Mar 3: Discuss step outlines of first acts

Assignment: Step outlines of full script

### **Week 9**

Mar 10: Discuss full script step outlines

Assignment for over break: Write first act

**Mid-term to hand in: REVISED SEQUENCE BREAKDOWN**

Mar 17: **Spring break.**

### **Week 10**

Mar 24: Discuss first act

Assignment: Revise/adapt step outline based on first act discoveries, character growth

**Week 11**

Mar 31: Discuss completion of step outlines  
Assignment: First half of Act II

**Week 12**

Apr 7: Discuss first half of Act II  
Assignment: Second half of Act II

**Week 13**

Apr 14: Discuss second half of Act II  
Assignment: first half of Act III

**Week 14**

Apr 21: Discuss first half of Act III  
Assignment: Second half of Act III

**Week 15**

Apr 28: Discuss second half of Act III

**Final to hand in: A game plan for rewrite of project**

**EVALUATION CRITERIA:**

Your grade will be based on classroom participation (10%) and in-class work (10%), the fulfillment and quality of the weekly assignments (40%), and the quality of the feature story, the first draft feature screenplay and revision plan (40%).

You can't participate in class if you're not in class. You're expected to be on time. Two absences result in your grade being lowered two steps (A to a B+); a third absence results in another two steps (B+ to B-). Two late arrivals equal an absence.

Assignments should be professionally presented - properly formatted and free of typos, misspellings, errors in grammar and syntax.

Late assignments not accepted and receive a failing grade.

**Writing Division Attendance Policy:**

Students are expected to 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 absence. 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 accommodations are needed, those accommodations 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.

**Phones off. Laptops closed.**

## 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](https://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](https://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](https://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](http://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](http://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.**