



**CTPR 438 – PRACTICUM IN PRODUCING  
USC SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS**

**Units: 2**

**FALL 2020 – Thursdays, 6:00 – 8:50 PM**

**IMPORTANT:**

**Pre-Requisite:** CTPR 310 – Intermediate Production or  
CTPR 425 – Production Planning

**Classroom:** ONLINE

**Instructor:** Carol Baum

**Office Hours:** by appointment

**Contact Info:**

**Student Asst:**

**Contact Info:**

**Course Description**

This course will provide a comprehensive overview of the world of producing. It is designed to provide the skills for producing a CTPR 480 project, other advanced USC projects, and projects produced outside of USC. We will look at how projects are conceived, developed, packaged, financed and marketed. Who are you as a producer? What kind of projects do you want to make? How do you get them made?

The course will consist of lecture, discussion, audiovisual presentation and guest speakers from different disciplines who will discuss their areas of expertise, i.e. agents, writers, directors, etc.

Weekly, we will look at how culture shapes films, box office and criticism. Become acquainted with different reviewers to see how they capture the zeitgeist.

**Learning Objectives and Outcomes**

We'll cover the nuts and bolts of short and long-form projects. By the end of the semester, each student should have the practical skills to pitch a project and package the talent.

**Supplemental Suggested Reading**

*A Long Time Ago in a Cutting Room Far, Far Away: My Fifty Years Editing Hollywood Hits – Star Wars, Carrie, Ferris Bueller's Day Off, Mission: Impossible, and More* by Paul Hirsch (Chicago Review Press)

*Adventures in the Screen Trade* by William Goldman (Grand Central Publishing)

*Shooting to Kill* by Christine Vachon (William Morrow)

*So You Want to be a Producer* by Larry Turman (Three Rivers Press)

*The Hollywood Pitching Bible* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition) by Douglas Eboch and Ken Aguado (Screenmaster Books)

*The Movie Business Book* by Jason E. Squire (Routledge)

## **GRADING:**

Class Participation 15%

- discussion
- Q&A
- collaboration

Individual Pitch Project 25%

*You will be pitching one 3-5 minute feature project over the course of the semester.*

Coverage 10%

*(Half page coverage of a script to be handed out)*

Packaging Exercise 10%

IP Exercise 10%

*(verbal presentation of a property from a true story or book)*

Final Pitch 30%

*(culmination of all parts of pitch)*

## **Asynchronous Learning**

All class sessions will be Zoom recorded and made available for asynchronous viewing until the end of the grading period in early December. Students enrolled in this course from outside the U.S. Pacific Time Zone will still be expected to participate in real time assuming that the official class time falls between 7am and 10pm in their time zones. Wherever possible faculty will be understanding and make accommodations to ease the inconvenience of asynchronous learning.

Students from outside the U.S. Pacific Time Zone for whom the class falls between the hours of 10pm and 7am may still be required to complete certain components of the course synchronously. These components will be announced at the beginning of the semester and students with concerns about meeting these requirements should discuss them with their faculty at that time.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE: A WEEKLY BREAKDOWN**

**NOTE:** This schedule is approximate. It may be adjusted as required.

### ***WEEK 1 – Thursday, August 20: COURSE OVERVIEW. WHAT IS A PRODUCER and WHERE DOES MATERIAL COME FROM?***

- Introductions. Each student will discuss their favorite movies and why they've come to USC.
- Course Overview. Individual meetings will be scheduled over the course of the semester (one-on-one with the professor).
- Review Syllabus, projects, and grading. Course goals and assignments will be discussed.
- What is a producer?
- Producer titles and definitions – various types of producers
  - Define Creative Producer vs. Line Producer
  - Packagers and developers
  - Who are you? How do you define yourself as a producer? What kinds of film & TV do you want to make?
- What does a producer do?
  - Discussion of many styles of producing and how to keep the approach personal.
  - The producer temperament – are you a line producer or a creative producer?
- Work Ethic
- Where does material come from?
  - Where do ideas come from? What stories do you want to tell?
- What will work in the market place? How do you know? Current trends?

- What's the right medium for the idea?
  - How we determine the right medium – half-hour or hour TV, feature, limited series?
- What is source material? Intellectual Property (IP) and how to get it.
  - Own ideas vs. acquiring material? Originals vs. adaptations?
- What's the difference between a studio project and an indie?
  - Who are the buyers?
- Partnering – the viability of taking on a partner who compliments you
- Fantasy vs. naturalistic genre? Comedy vs. drama?

**ASSIGNMENT:** Students will come up with a name for their production company and a logo. Email logo to Carol's SA (TBD).

Read *The Hollywood Pitching Bible* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition) by Douglas Eboch and Ken Aguado in preparation for next week's guest.

## **WEEK 2 – Thursday, August 27: STEP ONE – THE ART OF THE PITCH**

**Guest: Ken Aguado**

- Present production company logos
- Structure – what are the 3 acts that tell the story in movies?
- How to present your idea in a concise, coherent fashion.
- Rehearsal – work with each other before pitching in class
- The relevance of trailers, one sheets, movie stars, sizzle reels, look books and/or pitch decks.
- Who is your audience? Whom are you pitching to?
  - Pitch character to an actor; themes to a director
- What is a formula and what is fresh?
- What is a pitchable story?
- The high concept movie vs. the execution piece
- How do TV and film pitches differ?
- Television is all about the characters; movies tend to be plot driven
- The logline
- Personal style
- The leave behind
- Accepting a Pass on your project

**ASSIGNMENT:** Prepare your pitch of an original idea to present to the class (and guest). Pitches should be 3-5 minutes for a feature film. Students will be divided into groups with two or three executives responsible for giving notes. You will work on refining this pitch over the course of the semester and will pitch again as your final project.

## **WEEK 3 – Thursday, September 3: PITCHING**

**Guest:**

**PRESENTATION:** Students will pitch their ideas to guest. Each group of executives will respond and give notes. Comments from the rest of the class are also welcome.

**ASSIGNMENT:** Read script (to be provided) written by next week's guest.

## **WEEK 4 – Thursday, September 10: WORKING WITH WRITERS**

### **Guest:**

- Adaptations vs. Originals
- Writing steps – drafts and polishes
- How does the producer work with the writer?
- Difference between Coverage and Notes
- How to do Notes
- How to give script notes
  - How to talk to a writer so that the writer will listen
- What if the writer won't do the notes?
- When to replace the writer
- WGA vs. non-WGA
- What is development hell?

**ASSIGNMENT:** Adjust your pitch in ways to see if can be improved based on class input.

## **WEEK 5 – Thursday, September 17: COVERAGE/NOTES or CASE STUDY: \$5 A DAY – HOW TO GET A FILM MADE**

- Coverage:
  - Premise vs Concept vs Logline vs Idea
  - Writer's Strengths & Challenges – story/plot/structure
  - Theme
  - Genre
  - Setting/Milieu
  - Characters
  - Market – who is audience?
  - Conclusion
- Case Study: *\$5 a Day* – How to get an independent movie made:
  - Finding material and financing
  - How to determine what size project you have, based on your idea and your creative elements
  - How to figure out where and how to shoot
  - Casting
  - Role of the producer during production

**ASSIGNMENT:** Depending on class: Either write coverage for a script (to be provided) or write up a production plan for getting a 480 script (to be provided) made.

## **WEEK 6 – Thursday, September 24: REPRESENTATION**

### **Guest:**

- Difference between an agent and a manager
- When do you attach yourself as a producer?
- Do you negotiate as manager, get jobs?

**ASSIGNMENT:** Choose a writer, director, and lead cast for your Pitch Project. Write up your choices and bring to next week's class.

## **WEEK 7 – Thursday, October 1: DEALS**

### **Guest:**

- Writer Deals
  - Deal memos, Shopping agreements, option purchase agreements, chain of title, the handshake
- Director deals
- Actor deals
- Production deals
  - Cast, crew, E&O insurance
- Producer deals
- Personal attorneys vs. Production attorneys
- Negotiation exercise: Are you a buyer or a seller?
- What is a completion guarantee?

**HAND-OUT:** Sample shopping agreement

**ASSIGNMENT:** Refind second pitch with creative elements of writer, director, and key cast.

## **WEEK 8 – Thursday, October 8: STUDIO/INDIE/STREAMING – How do you know where your project belongs? How do you get a movie distributed during a pandemic?**

### **Guest:**

- How do you know what kind of project you have and how to best get it made?
- Identifying and distinguishing between projects that are right for the studio system, the independent marketplace, streaming platforms, or the international production or co-production structures
- Packaging – what is it? How do you do it?
- Tenacity: How to keep spirits up after the inevitable rejections
- Volume: The benefits of having many projects
- Writing – How is it the “be all and end all” of everything we do.
- The importance of internships

**ASSIGNMENT:** Determine if your Final Pitch Project is a studio, independent, streaming project (and/or international or co-production) and what budget level it will be and where you will shoot it.

## **WEEK 9 – Thursday, October 15: TELEVISION & DIGITAL**

- How the producer works in Television
- How the producer works in streaming series
- Web-based entertainment
- Short form/mobile entertainment (i.e. Quibi)

**ASSIGNMENT:** Pick an article from a magazine, newspaper or book and present it on paper in one paragraph (to guest speaker/book agent at next class)

Prepare to pitch your Final version of your Pitch Project, complete with writer, director, lead cast, budget level and production plan.

**WEEK 10 – Thursday, October 22: INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY (IP)**

**Guest:**

- How to get rights
- How to get a free option on a book or article
- The value of old books
- Why the studios buy bestsellers
- Life rights
- Navigating politics between writer and director; writer and studio; writer and stars

**ASSIGNMENT:** Prepare to pitch your Final version of your Pitch Project, complete with writer, director, lead cast, budget level and production plan.

**WEEK 11 – Thursday, October 29: THE DIRECTOR**

- How does the producer work with the director?
- How to give notes to a director
  - How to talk to a director so that the director will listen
- Working with a director in Pre-Production, Production, and Post-Production

**ASSIGNMENT:** Prepare your Final Pitch, complete with writer, director, lead cast, budget level and production plan. Students will again be divided into groups with two or three executives responsible for giving notes.

**WEEK 12 – Thursday, November 5: FINAL PITCH PROJECTS (PART ONE)**

- The centerpiece will be the project you've been pitching, but with a budget figure, a production plan, and a cast list and director. Final projects should be handed in on a digital file, as well as a hard copy.

**WEEK 13 – Thursday, November 12: FINAL PITCH PROJECTS (PART TWO)**

- Continuation of final pitch projects from second half of class.

## 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](http://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).

### Safety:

All students are expected to abide by USC School of Cinematic Arts Safety Guidelines. Violations of any of the safety guidelines may result in disciplinary action ranging from confiscation of footage to expulsion from the University.

### Stressful Times:

These are stressful times in our country, and school in and of itself is stressful. I encourage you to take care of yourself and your fellow students. USC provides opportunities for Mindful Meditation <http://mindful.usc.edu> and mental health counseling is available at the Engemann Student Health Center, 1031 W. 34<sup>th</sup> Street, 213-740-9355.

### Support Systems:

*Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call*  
[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](http://studenthealth.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://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 and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call*

[studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault)

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298*

[equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://titleix.usc.edu)

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by 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. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

*Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298*

[usc-advocate.symplcity.com/care\\_report](https://usc-advocate.symplcity.com/care_report)

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776*

[dsp.usc.edu](https://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 Campus Support & Intervention - (213) 821-4710*

[campussupport.usc.edu](https://campussupport.usc.edu)

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](https://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](https://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) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](https://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

*Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)*

[ombuds.usc.edu](https://ombuds.usc.edu)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.



## Covid Safety Compliance Understanding and Agreement

Due to concerns regarding the spread of COVID-19 in California and around the world, USC and the School of Cinematic Arts (SCA) have taken a strong stance regarding the need for safe and mindful behaviors among all members of the SCA community. Medical authorities agree that even the young and healthy are capable, if infected, of becoming ill, or of being non-symptomatic, unconscious vectors of the disease's spread.

The health and wellbeing of all community members has to be our paramount concern as we return to learning and collaborating together. We understand that attentiveness to the concerns of all SCA community members – students, staff and faculty, including those with underlying health conditions -- is simply an extension of the key principle of creative collaboration that has guided our school for decades. We're all in this pandemic together and need to behave accordingly.

All of SCA's production work, whether "Virtual" or "in-person, will be governed by rules laid out in each course syllabus. Compliance with these regulations will be monitored by faculty in conjunction with SCA designated Covid Monitors. The rules follow the guidelines in SCA-Covid Production Protocols, which follows SAG/DGA and other industry protocols, and are being interpreted by a SAG-certified SCA Covid Advisor.

Students indicate their agreement to abide by these regulations by enrolling in the production program fall semester 2020.