Instructors: Mary Posatko
Class Schedule: Tuesday 9:00 – 11:50am
Class Location: via Zoom
Office Hours: By Appointment

Contact Information: Mary Posatko
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Student Assistant   Anabel Inigo
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                             305 – 335-0492

COURSE OBJECTIVE:
To expose students to "real world" aspects of development, pitching and production from concept to completion. To help prepare all students for a successful transition into the film and television industry job market.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
Students will be encouraged to see development from every angle; including ideation, development of script, television pilot or documentary film treatment, with recognition of the unique production issues inherent in short-form scripted and unscripted projects. Emphasis will be placed on successful collaboration and modeling constructive feedback. All key roles – producer, writer, director, DP, editor, sound design, production design, casting, etc. – will be discussed in terms of successful storytelling in this short form. Differences between television and film; scripted and unscripted in the above areas will also be examined through guest lectures from television industry professionals.

Students will be encouraged to immerse themselves in the process and challenged to choose roles they may not have considered before. The class will mirror real world collaborative development in a way that will teach students to apply the skills learned from short form development to the development of television, film, and unscripted projects.

The opportunity to write and develop 480 screenplays or 484, 486 and 547 treatments is part of the class, but this is NOT a writing class, rather it will be an overview of the entire development process from ideation to just before production. The class will focus first on the roles of writers and producers in development, before learning how to craft a reel and tailor a pitch as a director or crew member towards the scripts being developed in the class, all with an eye towards gaining the tools to get hired after graduation.

Students will learn practical transitional information for creating content post-graduation, including fundraising, festival and distribution, and artist support strategies.

SUGGESTED READING:
- *The Tools of Screenwriting* by David Howard and Edward Mabley.
- *Shooting to Kill* by Christine Vachon & David Edelstein.
- Daily newspaper or websites, the trades, KCRW's *The Business* podcast, short stories, novels, anything you can get your hands on really... READING/LISTENING IS IMPORTANT TO THE PROCESS!

GRADING CRITERIA:
Class Pitch: 30%
Reel, Resume or Website: 30%
Final Exam: 40%

Students are expected to be on time and prepared for each class. Two unexcused absences will result in your grade being lowered by one full point (ex: A to A-). A third unexcused absence will result in your grade being lowered another full point (ex: A- to B+). Your grade will be lowered by one point for every absence after. Two late arrivals equates to one full absence. We understand there may be times where you are required to be in two places at once. The key is communication. If you must miss class, please contact either the SA or one of your instructors <u>prior to class</u>.

Please note: **<u>ALL ASSIGNMENTS ARE TO BE DELIVERED VIA EMAIL TO MARY POSATKO and copied to ANABEL INIGO.</u>**

<u>ANY AND ALL 480/484/486/547 INFO AND DEADLINES FOR SPRING 2021 WILL BE COMMUNICATED AND UPDATED THROUGHOUT THE SEMESTER.</u>

<u>Week One (August 18th, 2020) --- Class overview and orientation.</u>

What is this class? How does this class work? What are my responsibilities?

Developing your area of focus (film/tv/doc/etc.). Learning to pitch story and self. Development process for 480/484/486/547. Transition into job world - resumes & reels, how to get hired. Discovering your classmates as resources and collaborators. How to finance a project and use your resources to push projects forward after graduation.

Syllabus review.

Lecture on short film structure and pitching. Discussion of COVID protocols/remote films, prompt for reels TBD.

Assignments:

Homework: View a 480 film/ a 484/486 pilot/a 547 doc. What worked? Didn't work?

Writers/Producers with an idea(s) to bring in one or two ideas to pitch. If you are *not* a designated writer, but would like to submit an idea, you may pitch your idea to a writer who will then pitch it in the following class.

Pitches should be <8 minutes long and include logline, genre, characters, tone, theme.

Sign up on Class Google Sheet.

Non-writers, begin to think about how you want to pitch yourself during the class (director, producer, DP, editor, sound, documentary, social media, etc.).

Week Two (August 25th, 2020) --- Writer/Story Pitches

Writers/Producers (and others looking for writers) pitch ideas to the class.

Producers begin attaching to writers/ideas/scripts. Discussion of this process.

Any writer who succeeds in attaching a producer from the class will begin developing ideas into outlines and a first draft or treatment/outline with faculty and class support.

Assignments:

Writer/Producer teams work on the first draft of script.

Anyone not pitching, begin to work on reels/resume/personal branding website for crew pitch.

Week Three (September 1st, 2020) --- Writer/Story Pitches Continue

Writer/story pitches continue.

Review of 480/484/486/547 pitching process and timelines.

Assignment: Writer-Producer teams need to email first drafts to Mary by **Sunday September 6th at 9am**.

Week Four (September 8th, 2020) --- Writer Pitches cont.

Writer pitches continue.

Assignment: Writer-Producer teams need to email second drafts to Mary by **Sunday September 13th at 5pm**

Assignment: Writer-Producer teams prepare pitches for next week. <8 minutes, visuals recommended, include story, characters, tone, theme, genre.   Sign up on Class Google Sheet.

Week Five (September 15th, 2020) --- Writer-Producer Pitches

Writer-Producer teams pitch their projects to class. Pitch order will be determined ahead of class by signing up on Google Sheet.

Assignment: Writer-Producer teams will continue to develop their scripts.

Week Six (September 22nd, 2020) Pitches, Cont.

Continue writer/producer/doc pitches if necessary.

Faculty/class critique of presentations and hiring teams.

Discussion of what a crew pitch should look like - general versus tailored to a script, reels, etc.

Assignment: Writer-Producer teams will continue to develop their scripts. Third drafts will be emailed to Mary by **Sunday September 27th, 2020 at 9am.**

Assignment: Interested Directors, DPs, Editors, PDs, Soundies, Costumes Designers, etc. to develop reel and/or verbal pitch for the projects presented in class. <7 minute pitches. Signup on Class Google Sheet.

Week Seven (September 29th, 2020) --- Resumes and Reels/Websites

Guests will include a mid-form content producer and a television post-producer to discuss film versus television versus new media, how to get hired, reels and resumes. **FINAL INFO**

Week Eight - (October 6th, 2020) --- Resumes and Reels/Websites

Guests will include a mid-form content producer and a television post-producer to discuss film versus television versus new media, how to get hired, reels and resumes. **FINAL INFO**

Week Nine : (October 13th, 2020)-- Crew Pitches

Crew pitch for positions. Faculty/class critique of presentations and hiring teams.

Week Ten: (October 20th, 2020) --- Crew and/or story Pitches (Cont.)

Crew continue to pitch for positions, also time for 547 and other story pitches.

Faculty/class critique of presentations.

Week Eleven: (October 27th) - Crew and/or story Pitches (Cont.)

Crew continue to pitch for positions, also time for 547 and other story pitches.

Faculty/class critique of presentations.

Week Twelve: (November 3rd)- Getting a Film Made Now Pt 1

Lecture on the indie path to getting content made now, including legal, financing strategies, grants, fiscal sponsorship, crowdfunding, artist support, festival strategies, sales agents, publicity and press, distribution. **FINAL INFO**

Week Thirteen: (November 10th) - Getting a Film Made Now Pt 2

Lecture on the indie path to getting content made now, including legal, financing strategies, grants, fiscal sponsorship, crowdfunding, artist support, festival strategies, sales agents, publicity and press, distribution. **FINAL INFO**

FINAL EXAM: TO BE SCHEDULED

Production Division Attendance Policy

Students are expected to be on time and prepared for each class. Two absences will result in a student's grade being lowered by one full letter (IE: A becomes B). A third absence will result in a student's grade being lowered by one, additional full letter (IE: B becomes C). A student's grade will be lowered by one full letter for each additional absence. Two late class arrivals equate to one full absence.

If a student misses class due to an emergency, the student must contact the professor prior to class or contact the Production Office at 213-740-3317.

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

Asynchronous Learning

All class sessions will be Zoom recorded and made available for asynchronous viewing until 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.

For this class, students are expected to be live for student's required pitch presentation and the feedback afterwards. Student may choose to participate in further pitches, during which student will be expected to be live.

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.

Virtual Production and Safe Bubble defined

Student film production continues during this pandemic, including quarantine or lockdown conditions. Because of the current situation in Los Angeles County, filmmaking in Fall 2020 will be done with Virtual Production. This will provide a safe environment for the students and cast. It will also be in compliance with SAG's regulations working with their members. Students will receive instruction in the crafts and artistry of traditional filmmaking as well as new virtual production while collaborating to make their films.

Filming plans during the time of coronavirus are subject to change.

Virtual Production:

- Pre-production will be done completely online.
- Production is filmed remotely with students fulfilling their roles from their homes. Each student will work on computers from their separate homes. The communication between the students and the performers is through Zoom, Facetime or another remote service. Actors** in their own homes will perform and assist in lighting and recording sound. Performers will capture the performance with smartphones or approved personal or rental cameras as directed by the students. If the director chooses not to use professional actors, they may cast themselves and/or their own housemates.

- Additional photography, such as establishing shots and B-roll, may be shot in the students' own houses or approved safe locations. Projects may also include stock footage, still photographs, self-generated VFX and animation.
- Post-production will be done completely online: picture editing on Avid, sound editing on ProTools, remote color grading on Avid, and sound mix.
- Workflow will be modified to support different cameras available to students & actors.
- As with any SCA production class, students will follow current safety and health guidelines for LA County, USC and SCA.

Bubble Definitions:

- Student **Safe Bubbles** are zones within which safe contact normally occurs for each participant. These are your housemates (people <u>with whom you live</u> and interact without a mask or physical distancing on a daily basis). Each student has their own **Safe Bubble.** They must not meet in person with other students.
- Each actor in a film is also in their own **Safe Bubble**. Students may not interact in-person with their actors. Unless actors live with one another, they will not have any in-person interaction with each other.
- Note: When you cast an actor, you are also casting a location (their house, yard, apartment, stairway, etc.) available to that actor for production as well as others in the actor's bubble – their roommate, housemate, spouse, etc.
- Students will sign a **Bubble Lock Agreement** signifying who is in their Bubble at the beginning of the semester. Actors will sign a Bubble Lock Agreement certifying that everyone in their Bubble has been in it at least 14 days prior to the start of production; thereafter actors will not be able to add anyone to their Bubble.
- Students will cast, rehearse, block and shoot remotely as defined above.
- Actors may use their own faculty-approved equipment. Students may furnish actors with production gear purchased or rented (from SAG approved houses). Students may use your own faculty-approved gear when filming, and/or may send actors their gear directly. All equipment sent must be sanitized and transferred back to students or sent to another

actor for additional filming. Equipment transfer will follow SCA guidelines.
● Physical location work must be approved by your producing faculty on a case-by-case basis and comply with COVID Precautions (i.e. masks & physical distancing) and conform with all LA County Dept. of Public Health Guidelines & SCA Safety Rules.

**“Actor” also refers to “Documentary Subjects.”