

**School of Cinematic Arts**  
**The John Wells Division of Writing for Screen and Television**

**CTWR 415A: Advanced Writing**  
**Fall 2020**

Instructor: Alexa Alemanni  
Class Schedule: Monday 4pm - 6:50pm  
Class Location: SCA room 342  
Office Hours: By appointment  
Contact Information: alemanni@usc.edu

**Course Objective:**

The objective of this course is to learn how to break a story, develop an idea and craft that idea into three act structure and eventually a full outline. It teaches a professional approach to screenwriting that will develop good writing habits and a sharpened creative voice.

**Course Description:**

Students will go through a step by step process to build their story: logline, summary, character arcs, beat sheet and outline. All assignments will be discussed aloud in class with constructive discussions to follow.

**Course Reading:**

Readings and screenplays will be provided throughout the class.

**Grading Criteria:**

All written assignments must be turned in on Blackboard as a PDF and emailed to your classmates as a PDF no later than 11:59pm on Tuesdays.

Because this is a workshop students must provide constructive feedback to one another, and participate in class discussions.

All class work must be based on new, original ideas and completed on your own. No previously written scripts or treatments may be used.

Your final grade will be based on your written work as well as your attendance, and contribution to the workshop environment.

Participation:	10%
Homework:	35%
Beat Sheet	15%
Final Outline/ pages:	40%
-----	
	100%

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%

**Expectation of Professionalism:**

All material is expected to be turned in on time and in the proper format. Assignments will be penalized for grammatical mistakes, spelling errors, format mistakes, and typos. Please proof your assignment prior to submission.

**Internet Policy:**

Material discussed in the room is considered private and should not be blogged, tweeted, posted, snapchatted, or be posted anywhere else on the internet.

**Laptop and Cell Phone Policy:**

No texting or talking on cell phones, please.

Laptops may be used for taking notes, for workshop, and when approved for specific assignments. No internet surfing or texting during class, please. Points may be deducted from your final grade if you violate this policy.

**Writing Division Attendance Policy:**

Students are expected to be on time and prepared for each class. Two unexcused absences will result in your grade being lowered by 5%. Your grade will be lowered by 5% for every absence after. Two late arrivals equates to one full absence.

In order for absence to be excused the student must have approval from the professor and provide documentation at the next attended class session.

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 must miss class please contact your professor prior to class or contact the Writing Division at 213-740-3303.

**Class Schedule:**

Please note that all dates are subject to change at the discretion of the professor.

**Week 1: Course Overview / Story Generation**

Details:

- \* Go over the syllabus, talk about writing practices and workshop guidelines.
- \* Discuss loglines, story generation, and thematic POVs.
- \* Exercises to generate loglines

**WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT #1:**

\* Write three loglines for three different ideas. Assignment pages must be posted on blackboard & emailed to everyone by 11:59pm on Saturday.

**Week 2: Structure / Workshop**

Details:

- \* Workshop and narrow down your loglines
- \* Discuss Character Arcs and how they connect to feature film structure.

**READING ASSIGNMENT:**

\* Read up until the Inciting Incident/Catalyst of *Parasite* (provided)

**WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT #2:**

\* Write a summary for the idea you've chosen using any of the templates provide in class. Assignment pages must be posted on blackboard & emailed to everyone by 11:59pm on Saturday.

**Week 3: Character Development / Workshop**

Details:

- \* Workshop three act summary
- \* Discuss character development, thematic resolution, wants/needs, character circles

**READING ASSIGNMENT:**

\* Read Act 1 of *Get Out* (provided)

**WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT #3:**

\* Character wheel for your project & sequence questions. Assignment pages must be posted on blackboard & emailed to everyone by 11:59pm on Saturday.

**Week 4: Structure & Sequences / Workshop**

Details:

- \* Workshop wheels and sequence questions
- \* Discuss reading

**WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT #4:**

\* Complete a beat sheet for your project. Assignment pages must be posted on blackboard & emailed to everyone by 11:59pm on Saturday.

**Week 5: Act Ones / Workshop**

Details:

- \* Workshop beat sheet
- \* Discuss and watch several Act ones. Break up into groups A & B.

**READING ASSIGNMENT:**

\* Read *JoJo Rabbit* (provided)

**WRITING ASSIGNMENT #4A:**

\* Both groups begin writing Act one of their outline. Assignment pages must be posted on blackboard & emailed to everyone by 11:59pm on Saturday.

**WEEK 6: Visual Storytelling / Workshop**

Details:

- \* Group A workshops Act One outline.
- \* Discuss *JoJo Rabbit*, and visual storytelling techniques

**READING ASSIGNMENT:**

- \* Read *Crazy Rich Asians* (provided)

**WRITING ASSIGNMENT #4B:**

\* Group A revises their Act One outline, Group B prepares to workshop their Act One outline. Assignment pages must be posted on blackboard & emailed to everyone by 11:59pm on Saturday.

**WEEK 7: Subplots / Workshop**

Details:

- \* Group B workshops their Act One outline.
- \* Discuss subplots

**READING ASSIGNMENT:**

- \* Read *A Beautiful Day In the Neighborhood* (provided)

**WRITING ASSIGNMENT #5A:**

\* Group B revises their Act One outline, Group A works on their Act Two outline. Assignment pages must be emailed to everyone by 11:59pm on Saturday.

**WEEK 8: Act Two difficulties / Workshop**

Details:

- \* Group A workshops their First Half of Act Two outline.
- \* Discuss act two difficulties, watch and discuss examples, discuss King's Speech

**READING ASSIGNMENT:**

- \* Read *12 Years a Slave* (provided)

**WRITING ASSIGNMENT #5B:**

\* Group A revises their first half of Act Two outline, Group B works on their first half of Act Two outline. Assignment pages must be emailed to everyone by 11:59pm on Saturday.

**WEEK 9: Act Two difficulties / Workshop**

Details:

- \* Group B workshops their first half of Act Two outline.
- \* Discuss second half of Act Two, building new tension, is the story working?

**WRITING ASSIGNMENT #6A:**

\* Group B revises the first half of their Act Two outline, Group A works on their second half of Act Two outline. Assignment pages must be emailed to everyone by 11:59pm on Saturday.

**WEEK 10: Act Three / Workshop**

Details:

- \* Group A workshops their second half of Act Two outline.
- \* Discuss Act Three, satisfying endings, tying up plot lines, resolving conflict, protagonist growth/change

**READING ASSIGNMENT:**

- \* Read one screenplay of your choice in your genre.

**WRITING ASSIGNMENT #6B:**

\* Group B works on their second half of Act Two outline, Group A revises their second half of Act Two outline. Assignment pages must be emailed to everyone by 11:59pm on Saturday.

**Week 11: Voice / Workshop**

Details:

- \* Group B workshops their second half of Act Two Outline
- \* Discuss voice of the screenwriter on the page, discuss endings, discuss the screenplays you read.

**READING ASSIGNMENT:**

- \* Read either *Vice* or *Call Me By Your Name* (provided)

**WRITING ASSIGNMENT #7A:**

\* Group B revises their second half of act Two Outline, group A works on their Act Three outline. Assignment pages must be emailed to everyone by 11:59pm on Saturday.

**Week 12: Practice & Methodology / Workshop**

Details:

- \* Group A workshops their Act Three outline.
- \* Discuss practice & methodology, discipline, writing systems, habits and more, discuss writers voice.

**WRITING ASSIGNMENT #7B:**

\* Group B workshops their Act Three outline. Assignment pages must be emailed to everyone by 11:59pm on Saturday.

**Week 13: Dialogue / Executing on the Page / Workshop**

Details:

- \* Group B workshop their Act Three outline.
- \* Discuss dialogue tips, executing on the page

**WRITING ASSIGNMENT:**

- \* Group A & B revise their final outlines, DUE ON NOVEMBER 20th.

**FINAL OUTLINES DUE ON: NOVEMBER 20th <sup>1</sup>VIA EMAIL AND UPLOADED TO BLACKBOARD IN PDF FORMAT.**

**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” <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, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

**Support Systems:**

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

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255*

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call*

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

*Sexual Assault Resource Center*

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086*

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. <https://equity.usc.edu/>

*Bias Assessment Response and Support*

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs*

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. <http://dsp.usc.edu>

*Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710*

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

---

<sup>1</sup> Writing Division: Curriculum: Syllabus: CTWR 415A “Advanced Writing”

*Diversity at USC*

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. <https://diversity.usc.edu/>

*USC Emergency Information*

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, <http://emergency.usc.edu>

*USC Department of Public Safety – 213-740-4321 (UPC) and 323-442-1000 (HSC) for 24-hour emergency assistance or to report a crime.*

Provides overall safety to USC community. <http://dps.usc.edu>

**PLEASE NOTE:  
FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY  
INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX**