

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

**CTWR 321: Introduction to Hour-Long Television Writing  
FALL 2020**

Instructor: Alexa Alemanni  
Class Schedule: Thursdays 7-10pm  
Class Location: Zoom  
Office Hours: By Request  
Contact Information: [alemanni@usc.edu](mailto:alemanni@usc.edu)

**Course Objective and Overview:**

Our objective is to understand the structure of television drama, to understand the inner workings of a writers room, to understand how to break story for a season and for an individual episode, and how to take story to completion via notes and classroom (studio) feedback, and to replicate the experience of an actual writing staff.

We will accomplish this by writing scenes from various existing TV Drama Series and we will culminate by writing TWO complete original episodes of a current TV drama. This will serve as the final course project.

**Course Reading:**

*Writing the TV Drama Series* – Fourth Edition By Pamela Douglas  
Pilot scripts provided throughout the class.

**Grades:**

Attendance is mandatory because of the ‘workshop’ element of this class. Three unexcused absences will result in a FAILING GRADE.

**Grading Breakdown:**

10% Participation throughout the semester  
10% Writers Assistant Notes on your assigned week  
10% Two-Pager for Episode  
15% Practice Scene Work  
15% Act Outline  
20% Completed Act First Draft  
20% Completed Act Final Draft

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:**

Please refrain from using cell phones in class. We will work in 48s, during writing room sessions, no laptops allowed except for the assigned writers room assistant for the week. If you have an emergency, you may excuse yourself from class to complete a phone call.

**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.

**CLASS SCHEDULE & ASSIGNMENTS****Week One**

Discussion of pilot structure & series structure.

Differences with one hour network vs. cable, the effect of streaming, how it changes storylines. How a writers room runs, and what the structure of the semester will be.

**Week One Assignment:**

\* Watch the pilot episode of *Homeland*.

**Week Two**

Break the story backwards, we will take the pilot of Homeland and reduce it down to story cards, and a thematic POV for the season and the episode.

Vote on a show we want to work on.

### **Week Two Assignment:**

- \* Watch / read, do your research on one of the series we will vote to work on:
  - \* *The Morning Show, Euphoria, Zoey's Extraordinary Playlist, For Life, Party of Five, The Great*
- \* Write two scenes from a show you personally most want to work on. Expectations for the scene will be discussed in class. Uploaded to Blackboard and emailed to your classmates.

### **Week Three**

Workshop scenes.

Pick a show.

Assign writers assistants & story editors for each week.

Talk about A, B & C storylines, thematic POV, acts out, character voice and more.

### **Week Three Assignment:**

Practice Scene Assignment from the show we have selected.

### **Week Four:**

Workshop Practice Scenes.

Talk about A, B & C storylines, thematic POV, acts out, character voice and more.

### **Week Four Assignment:**

Research & Preparation

### **Week Five & Six:**

Writers Room: Season arc, theme, story ideas.

### **Assignments for Week Five & Six:**

- \* Research & Preparation for each week
- \* Each Writers Assistant shares notes every week with class no later than the following Sunday at midnight.

### **Week Seven & Eight:**

Writers Room: Episode 1. Break an episode of television.

### **Assignments for Week Seven & Eight:**

- \* Each Writers Assistant shares notes every week with class no later than the following Sunday at midnight.
- \* Turn in a studio two-pager.

### **Week Nine:**

- \* Talk through the story, make adjustments, fix holes.
- \* Assign out acts.

### **Assignment for Week Nine:**

- \* Each team of two writes one act for the outline.

**Week Ten:**

Workshop Outline for Episode 1

**Week Ten Assignment:**

\* Each team of two tries one act for the script.

**Week Eleven**

Workshop Part 1 of Episode 1.

**Week Eleven Assignment:**

\* Make edits to the script.

**Week Twelve:**

Workshop Part 2 of Episode 2.

**Week Twelve Assignment:**

Edits on Episode.

**Week Thirteen:**

Final thoughts on writers rooms, the business & more.

**Final Assignment:**

Turn in final Episode.

## **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).

**Support Systems:**

*Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call*  
[engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling](http://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](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 Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call*

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

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>PLEASE NOTE:</b> <b>FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX</b></p>
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