USC School of Dramatic Arts

THTR 574b: Dramatic Writing Across Media for Playwrights

Semester: Fall 2020   **Units: 2 Units**
Day: Thursdays   **Time:** 8p - 9:50pm
Location: Online, Zoom link located on class Blackboard page

Instructor: RODNEY TO
Office Hours: by Appointment
Contact: rodneyto@usc.edu **/** (917) 445-1040 (cell)

Course Description (from USC Course Catalogue)

Intensive overview of career paths for playwrights in a wide array of media as they exist now, and as new opportunities arise.

Overview

This course is an in-depth examination of alternate and supplemental writing opportunities for playwrights as they prepare for a professional writing career. This section of the course seeks to expand knowledge of writing paths by focusing on writing for web-based, digital platforms and short-form content culminating in the creation of a new media project for the playwright's portfolio.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify the core differences in multimedia, short-form, digital content vs. traditional media.
- Define the personal video blog (aka 'vlog') and understand its use in terms of salable content. What attracts audience and how can traditional writers translate their work in such a medium.
- Conceive, develop, pitch, and create personal vlog.
- Define the podcast. Understand its use in terms of salable content through marketing trends and strategies.
- Understand fundamental writing strategies for podcasts.
- Conceive, develop, pitch, and create a podcast.
- Playwrights will explore (in-depth) web series and restructure traditional film/tv formats for short-form digital content.
- Identify various major digital/streaming platforms and understand the core content that identifies each.
- Conceive, develop, and create a professional pitch (verbal and written) for a web series.
- By the end of the coursework, the playwright will have samples of digital projects that supplement, enhance and diversify the playwright's theatrical portfolio, giving them a competitive edge in the writer's multi-hyphenate marketplace.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

No initial textbooks required. Various coursework and assigned reading will be conferred throughout the semester.

GRADING: DESCRIPTION OF GRADING CRITERIA AND ASSESSMENT OF ASSIGNMENTS

SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS NEEDED. WILL NOTIFY OF ALL CHANGES

Grading Criteria
The quality of work for all components(see *Grading Breakdown)* is determined by the thoroughness of the effort, comprehension, the continuing process, and the imagination displayed.

Grading Scale (*based on USC Grading Scale*):
A = 96-100%
A- = 91-95%
B+ = 88-90%
B = 85-87%
B- = 81-84%
C+ = 78-80%
C = 75-77%
C- = 71-74%
D+ = 67-70%
D = 64-66%
D- = 61-63%

[Failing Grade for Graduate Credit = C-]

Grading Breakdown:

Weekly assignments	60pts
Final Project	30pts
Weekly participation (discussions, contributions, etc.)*	10pts

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Total Points	**100pts**

* **10pts EXCELLENT participation.** Demonstrates active, everyday engagement. Shows willingness & enthusiasm in discussions, class activity, and collaborations.
* **8pts GOOD participation.** Frequent active participation. Engaged, willing, semi- regular participation in discussions, class activity, and collaborations.
* **6pts AVERAGE participation.** Semi-regular, but active participation in discussions, class activity, and collaborations.
* **4pts BELOW AVERAGE participation.** Infrequent participation. Predominately passive and rarely demonstrates willingness to contribute to discussions, class activity, and collaborations.
* **2pts POOR/INSUFFICIENT participation.** Does not participate willingly. Extremely passive and lacks enthusiasm. Poor, if any, contribution to discussions, class activity, and collaborations.

Further Grading Notes:
- When the GPA falls between two grades, the final grade will be weighted toward the positive end of the scale for students with excellent in-class participation. Grades will be weighted towards the negative end of the scale for those with poor in-class participation.
- I am available to discuss work and progress at anytime.

Participation

Collaboration and contributing to class discussions, lectures and presentations are essential components to developing all areas of your writer's skillset. Daily participation and active engagement in class is encouraged and will absolutely factor into the student's mid-semester and final grade. **Therefore no absences or late arrivals will be allowed**. *Participation is weighted at no more than 15% as per University Guidelines.*

* Special Note re: Participation

All students enrolled in MFADW are required to attend program events. This includes all of the New Works Festival events (NWF I, II, and III), all Western Edge Playwrights' Salon events, and the student orientation held in late August. While some of these dates are not yet solidified, please put the times/dates in your calendar as soon as you can. Because we are monitoring professional development in every course that you take, and in the MFADW overall, your participation in these program events will have a direct impact on your annual review.

Assignment Submission Policy

Most of the required assignments will be either emailed or a hardcopy will be provided to the instructor. Occasionally, video assignments will assigned, in which case, files will be uploaded and submitted through Google Drive - provided free to all enrolled students. *See Late Submission below.*

Late Submission Policy

Assignments are expected to be completed **by the due date & time**. Late assignments *WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED*.

Additional Policies

NETIQUETTE:

The online learning modality for the Arts & Entertainment Industry is somewhat of a new frontier for everyone. We are discovering how to best navigate these newer practices together. While certainly not ideal, let's embrace this as an opportunity.

- I will be expecting that you do your best to treat this as a traditional classroom. Do your best to find a quiet space in your home where you can sit up comfortably and focus with little-to-no distractions or disturbances. No outdoor spots unless you discuss it with me first. I am acutely aware (and sensitive to the fact) that everyone's circumstances vary, so if you're unable to find a reasonable working spot for class, please contact me privately to discuss.
- Even though we will be online and in your homes this semester, students must wear appropriate, casual, classroom clothes - no pajamas. Be professional, mature, and respectful; wear nothing revealing or distasteful.
- Please log-on from a desktop (or laptop) if possible. Oftentimes, I find when students log-on from their phone or tablet, the smaller nature of these devices lends itself to the student being too casual, less alert and easily distracted.
- Remember safety at all times. Do NOT drive while in class. Yes, I've seen it all. You will be logged- off and marked with an unexcused absence if you attempt to take class while driving or exercising or shopping or cleaning or babysitting - you get the idea.
- No 'other' technology during class. Phones must be on silent and put away. Unless I invite you to do so, phones may only be taken out during breaks. I am aware when you are reading your phones unnecessarily - trust me. Any intentional use of your devices for non-class purposes (texting, emailing, viewing of non-class related materials, playing video games, etc.) will negatively reflect your participation grade.
- Except for water, no food or drinks are allowed in class.
- No pets or any other distractions such as toys, video games, etc.
- Do not share personal class dealings and discoveries outside of class. We will be working hard to establish trust with each other. Respect is paramount. Communicate freely, honestly, and frequently, but always be respectful, mindful, mature.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown
==***SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS NEEDED. WILL NOTIFY OF ALL CHANGES***==

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/ Due Dates
Week 1 8/20	INTRO TO COURSE (w/ Paula Cizmar & Rodney To)	Watch assigned vlogs (links provided by Rodney)	Be prepared to discuss in class on 9/3
Week 2 9/3	Intro to video blogging 'Vlog' / Use, effectiveness, trends, etc.	Prep personal vlog / Watch materials for Guest Vlogger (links provided by Rodney)	
Week 3 9/10	Guest Vlogger(TBA)	Shoot, record, film 5 min personal vlog.	Upload vlog to Google Drive and email link to Rodney by WEDNESDAY, 9/16 at 12noon!
Week 4 9/17	Continue Vlogs: watch & discuss personal vlog assignments	Watch assigned podcasts(links provided by Rodney)	Be prepared to discuss in class on 9/24
Week 5 9/24	Intro to Podcast: styles, uses, effectiveness, trends, technical requirements	Prep personal podcast(interview) / Watch materials for Guest podcaster (links provided by Rodney)	
Week 6 10/1	Guest podcaster	Record 5min(minimum) podcast	Upload podcast to Google Drive and email link to Rodney by WEDNESDAY, 10/7 at 12noon!

Week 7 10/8	Continue Podcast: watch & discuss podcast assignments	Watch assigned short-form series(links provided by Rodney)	
Week 8 10/15	WEB SERIES / Intro, short-form structure	Prepare short-form/web series ideas	Prepare to discuss series ideas in class on 10/22. Have notes & ideas written down.
Week 9 10/22	WEB SERIES (cont'd.)/ PITCHING: writing one-sheet, pitch packet and in-class practice	Lock down final pilot idea / Write one-sheet / Watch material for Guest Speaker (material provided by Rodney)	One-sheets due to Rodney on MONDAY, OCTOBER 26 at 12NOON! No late submissions. Must give Guest Speaker time to read pitches.
Week 10 10/29	WEB SERIES / GUEST SPEAKER on SHORT-FORM (TBA)	Begin writing pilot	
Week 11 11/5	WEB SERIES(cont'd.) / table reads and notes	Web series pilot revisions	
Week 12 11/12	WEB SERIES(cont'd.) / Final reads and notes	TURN IN PITCH & PILOT	Due SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15 at 12NOON!
FINALS WEEK	FINAL PROJECTS	FINAL PROJECTS SHOULD BE COMPLETED FOR SUBMISSION	FINAL WEB PILOTS DUE! (TBA)

<mark>**FINAL EXAMINATION DATE: TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17 @7PM
(agenda TBA)**</mark>

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, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Statement for Students with Disabilities
Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in GFS 120 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website for DSP and contact information: (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 814-4618 (Vidoe Phone), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis
In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies. See the university's site on Campus Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

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Support Systems:
Campus Support & Intervention (CSI) – (213) 740-0411
Campus Support & Intervention is an office within Campus Wellbeing and Crisis Intervention. We are a team of professionals here to assist students, faculty, and staff in navigating complex issues. Whether you are here seeking support for yourself or someone else, we are available to help you problem solve, understand options, and connect with resources. https://uscsa.usc.edu

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. 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. 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. 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: https://titleix.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. 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://titleix.usc.edu/

The Office of Disability Services and Programs
Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations.
dsp.usc.edu

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. 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. emergency.usc.edu

USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime.
Provides overall safety to USC community. dps.usc.edu