

Syllabus CTWR 453
Advanced Feature Re-Writing
Spring 2021
Section 19231D
4 units
Thursdays, 4 p.m. to 6:50 p.m.
Online

Professor Mark Shepherd
gshepher@usc.edu
Office hours: Throughout the week, by appointment

COURSE GOALS:

- To learn and employ methods for rewriting your feature screenplay.
- To refine your understanding of character; especially the story's protagonist.
- To understand the importance of theme in shaping your screenplay.
- To further your understanding of screenplay structure.
- To improve your ability to utilize subplots.
- To deepen your knowledge of the screenwriting craft and specific elements such as planting and play-off, twists and revelations, surprise vs. suspense, use of sound and visuals.
- To learn how to manage your writing experience and meet deadlines.

OVERALL SEMESTER PLAN:

This semester you will revise a draft of your existing screenplay. To this end, you will read and annotate your own first draft and that of your fellow students. After analysis and discussion you will develop an organized plan for your rewrite, following the assigned schedule.

This is a workshop class; in addition to working on your own script, you are expected to help your classmates during the process of 'rebuilding' their scripts. Class participation is a major component of the course, as is the importance of working steadily on your script and meeting deadlines. Finally, completion and quality of the revised script will determine your grade.

You will re-outline your screenplay (scene by scene) and work from this outline as you rewrite your second draft. Some adjustments might be necessary along the way, of course.

COURSE READING:

"Writing is Rewriting," by Jack Epps, Jr. (required)
"How to Build a Great Screenplay," by David Howard
"Your Screenplay Sucks," by William M. Akers

GRADING CRITERIA:

Your grade will be based upon fulfillment of your rewrite outline (30%), your completed second draft (60%), and your participation in class (10%).

Attendance is mandatory. See the attendance policy below.

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%

CLASS SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE based on class progress):

First class, Jan. 21	<i>Introduction: Tell us about your screenplay.</i> Discuss basic premise and characters, especially main character, theme and other major qualities. We will divide class into two groups for reading and feedback. Assignment: One page 'sizzle sheet' about your project.
Jan 28:	Screenplay analysis, Group A Discussion from student feedback; writers are expected to take notes and organize for future reference. For homework, begin to re-outline.
Feb. 4 :	Screenplay analysis, Group B More discussion based on student feedback.
Feb. 11:	Review outlines for rewrite from Group A. Writers will present outlines, questions for the group.
Feb. 18:	Review outlines for rewrite from Group B. Writers present outlines, questions for the class. Discussion of sequences/scenes based on student progress.
Feb. 25—March 4:	Act One and or Act Two rewrites Discussion of sequences/scenes based on student progress.
March 11 & 18	Act Three rewrites Discussion of sequences/scenes based on student progress.

March 25 & April 1 ***Completed second drafts***
Distribution of and planning for reading and discussion of, completed re-writes.

April 8 & 15 ***Screenplay polish***
Review second drafts and focus on improvements that will make it terrific!

APRIL 22 – NO CLASS

April 29 ***Final Class***
Review final polish work, discuss future plans for finished scripts.

Optional class meeting dates may be announced .

The professor also will be available for individual consultations after classes formally end, and throughout the semester.

FINAL DRAFTS OF SCREENPLAY DUE MAY 13.

ZOOM PROFESSIONALISM

Class dynamics are substantially compromised without the ability to see the people in class; therefore, the default is that students have their cameras on during online sessions. Those facing challenging situations, such as internet connectivity, illness, or home environments that make this difficult or impossible should contact the professor to work out accommodations.

You are encouraged to use virtual backgrounds, and earphones or headsets, should your home environment benefit from these privacies.

Keep yourself muted unless called on.

When your camera is on, please dress as you would in the classroom, and behave as you would in a professional environment.

FEEDBACK PROFESSIONALISM

Feedback is an important part of my class (it's a huge part of the film and television business too.) Participation is an important part of your grade so I encourage everyone to give feedback following classmates' presentations. However, the

feedback must be constructive. It is imperative that the workshop environment be one where students feel safe to experiment.

How to give feedback:

Tell the writer which parts of the presentation were most intriguing and entertaining. Let the writer know if anything confused you, or could have been written sharper or differently. Remember that what you are saying is your opinion, not fact.

How to receive feedback:

Please refrain from debating or defending your work. Those receiving notes in general should remain quiet and listen to the feedback. Students should write down suggestions or areas of concern, but don't take time to mull it over. Don't immediately reject a note. You'll be amazed at how many times a "stupid" note will become the key to solving all your problems a few days later.

When utilizing the notes, it's up to you to decide which notes will help you and which notes won't. Some students execute every note given to them and end up with a jumbled mess. Some students reject every note given to them and their work never improves. Do your best to find a happy medium.

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 equate 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.

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 as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU301 and is open 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740.0776.

Statement on Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *SCampus*, the Student Guidebook, (www.usc.edu/scampus or <http://scampus.usc.edu>) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at:

<http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>. Information on intellectual property at USC is available at:

<http://usc.edu/academe/acsen/issues/ipr/index.html>.

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.