

CTWR 519B: MFA Thesis in Television Drama

January 15 – April 28, 2021

Instructor: Ligiah Villalobos **Spring, 2021**
Office Hours: Wednesdays 4-5:00pm (by appt.) **Class:** Wednesdays, 6-8:50pm
Contact Info: ligiahv@usc.edu **Classroom:** ZOOM
310-569-8671 (cell) **Section:** 19247

ZOOM INFO:

<https://usc.zoom.us/j/99536002041?pwd=VHorN1E3QkZrWnVZVUg5VDJJVmVzZz09>

Meeting ID: 995 3600 2041

Passcode: ye51c30w80

COURSE OBJECTIVE:

Complete second draft of thesis pilot, revise the pitch document, and write a 10-episode season arc of the pilot's one-hour drama series.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The focus is on developing the long view of your series. As you go through the process of creating a 10-episode season arc for your series, you will need to consider the depth and breadth of your vision. And now that you have completed a first draft of your pilot script, ask yourself, "Are new characters needed?" "Does your point-of-view need to be revised?" "Does your world need to expand?" "What will escalate the dramatic stakes to insure that your series can evolve into a second season, a third, and beyond?"

In the end, the pitch document, your pilot and the breakdown of a 10-episode Season I arc should showcase your ability to create character arcs and the progression of the stories in the world you've created, distinguishing your ability to tell a good story and sell your creative vision in the marketplace.

ASSIGNMENTS:

In this class, students will get feedback and address notes from their professor, classmates and a thesis committee. The feedback may be both written and verbal and it is designed to not only hear how others feel about each individual's storytelling skills, but to learn and experience what others do well.

Note: **Writing assignments and written notes for and from classmates will be due to them and your professor VIA EMAIL no later than 10:00am on MONDAY MORNING each week.**

In emails, all assigned scenes and acts should be clearly marked (your name and what assignment you're sending. For example: Villalobos – Act I). Late assignments will not be accepted unless you have previously discussed it with your professor.

REQUIRED READING:

There may be some handouts to help in the development of your specific pilot.

SCRIPT FORMAT:

All scripts must be written in "Final Draft." Laptops are required in this class.

CLASS SCHEDULE: Please note that weekly schedule and assignments are subject to change at the discretion of the professor.

Friday – January 15: Thesis Committee Day**Pre-Assignment**

Come prepared for a plan of action for the rewrite of your pilot, based on the notes you received from your thesis committee. It should be a 2-3 page written document that you will be turning in on the first day of class.

Week 1 – January 20: Thesis Committee's feedback and Pitch Document**In Class Discussion**

Go over syllabus.

Go over feedback and plan of action for rewrite of pilot.

Review structure for the pitch document – Logline, genre, synopsis/premise, theme(s), character breakdowns, world building, and summary of pilot episode.

Discuss story arcs vs. character arcs. Review various samples of pitch documents.

Assignment #1

Revised Pitch Document – With all of the elements listed above. (Approximately 8-10 pages).

Email to your classmates and professor a copy of your assignment, no later than Monday morning at 10am. Pages must be read before class. Have written feedback ready.

Week 2 – January 27: Episode 2-5 summaries**In Class Discussion**

Go over feedback on last week's assignment.

Assignment #2

Write Summaries of episodes 2-5 for Season I of your series. Each episode summary should include the A, B and C storylines (and others, if you're doing more than three). These breakdowns should be story arcs NOT character arcs. (5 pages total)

Email to your classmates and professor a copy of your assignment, no later than Monday morning at 10am. Pages must be read before class. Have written feedback ready.

Week 3 – February 3: Episode 6-10 summaries**In Class Discussion**

Go over feedback on last week's assignment.

Assignment #3

Write Summaries for episodes 6-10 for Season I of your series. (Same as above)
 Email to your classmates and professor a copy of your assignment, no later than Monday morning at 10am. Pages must be read before class. Have written feedback ready.

Week 4 – February 10: Rewrite of Act I

In Class Discussion

Go over feedback on last week’s assignment. Think about how the long view of the first season may alter some of the beats/scenes in your pilot as you start the rewrite.

Assignment #4

Rewrite of Act I

Email to your classmates and professor a copy of your assignment, no later than Monday morning at 10am. Pages must be read before class. Have written feedback ready.

Week 5 – February 17: Rewrite of Act II

In Class Discussion

Go over feedback on Act I.

Assignment #5

Rewrite of Act II

Email to your classmates and professor a copy of your assignment, no later than Monday morning at 10am. Pages must be read before class. Have written feedback ready.

Week 6 – February 24: Rewrite of Act III

In Class Discussion

Go over feedback on Act II.

Assignment #6

Rewrite of Act III

Email to your classmates and professor a copy of your assignment, no later than Monday morning at 10am. Pages must be read before class. Have written feedback ready.

Week 7 – March 3: Rewrite of Act IV

In Class Discussion

Go over feedback on Act III.

Assignment #7

Rewrite of Act IV

Email to your classmates and professor a copy of your assignment, no later than Monday morning at 10am. Pages must be read before class. Have written feedback ready.

Week 8 – March 10: Rewrite of Act V

In Class Discussion

Go over feedback on Act IV.

Assignment #8

Rewrite of Act V

Email to your classmates and professor a copy of your assignment, no later than Monday morning at 10am. Pages must be read before class. Have written feedback ready.

Week 9 – March 17: Revise Pitch DocumentIn Class Discussion

Go over feedback on Act V.

Now that you have done revisions on your pilot, it is time to go back and see what additional changes need to be made, or what you may want to add to your pitch document and beyond – photos, images, etc.

Assignment #9

Do second rewrite on Pitch Document – Including first page, character breakdowns and summary of storylines in the pilot.

Email to your classmates and professor a copy of your assignment, no later than Monday morning at 10am. Pages must be read before class. Have written feedback ready.

Week 10 – March 24: Rewrite of episode summaries 2-5In Class Discussion

Go over feedback on last week's assignment.

Assignment #10

Do rewrites on summaries of episodes 2-5.

Email to your classmates and professor a copy of your assignment, no later than Monday morning at 10am. Pages must be read before class. Have written feedback ready.

Week 11 – March 31: Rewrite of episode summaries 6-10In Class Discussion

Go over feedback on last week's assignment.

Assignment #11

Do rewrites on summaries of episodes 6-10.

Email to your classmates and professor a copy of your assignment, no later than Monday morning at 10am. Pages must be read before class. Have written feedback ready.

Wednesday – April 7: No Class due to “Wellness Day”***Week 12 – April 14: Final notes***In Class Discussion

Go over feedback on last week's assignment.

Assignment #12

Do final revisions on pitch document, pilot script, and 10-Episode Season I Arc.

Do a Timeline for Summer 2021.

Email the final draft of your pitch document, pilot script and 10-episode Season

I Arc to your professor and the Writing Office, no later than Friday, April 16 at 12 noon.

FRIDAY, APRIL 16 – FINAL DRAFT DUE TO THE ENTIRE COMMITTEE – Pitch Document, Revised Pilot, and 10-Episode Season I Arc.

Note

***** Due to ZOOM classes this year, thesis committee members will receive an electronic copy over a hard copy of your material.***

All material must be submitted to the Writing Office and committee members **by 12:00 PM.** Your pilot script cover page must have the names of all your committee members.

Wednesday – April 21: No class on Wednesday. Committee meetings will take place on Friday, April 23

Week 13 – April 28: Summary & Questions

In Class Discussion

Discuss final committee notes.

Go over your Timeline for Summer 2021.

Discuss the industry as a whole (and go over handouts on writing female characters and diverse characters which we did not get to last semester).

Assignment #13

Polish everything. Revised documents and pilot are due on Wednesday of Finals Week. (End of day is fine.)

WEDNESDAY, MAY 10: Rewrite of pending decisions due to thesis instructor.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

The demands of this graduate program require that all submitted course assignments adhere to correct English language spelling and grammatical rules. Assignments with any spelling and/or grammatical errors will impact your final grade. I am not here to teach you how to write English and/or in English, I am here to teach you how to write scripts. So...

— PAY ATTENTION TO CORRECT SPELLING AND PUNCTUATION —

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Grading Breakdown:

10% General class participation, including written notes to classmates.

50% Revised pilot

- 10% Pitch Document
- 20% 10-Episode Season I Arc.
- 10% Timeline, Summer 2021.

As per writing 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 Cellphone Policy:

Students will need a laptop/computer in this ZOOM environment. However, internet usage during class is not allowed, unless it is to look up information we may be discussing in class. Cellphone use is not allowed except before and after class and during breaks. If any person is found using the device to anything besides class work, they will be asked to leave the class.

Netiquette

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 synchronous online sessions. Those facing challenging situations, such as internet connectivity, illness, or home environments that make this difficult or impossible shall contact me to work out accommodations. I encourage you 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.

Students are not permitted to create their own class recordings without the instructor's permission. Violations of these policies will be met with the appropriate disciplinary sanction.

During Zoom Workshop Classes

- Keep yourself muted unless called on.
- If your camera is on, please dress as you would in the classroom, and behave as you would in a professional environment.

In Larger Lecture classes **(does not apply to this class)**

- If you have a question for the DAs during the lecture, use the Chat function. (The DA will direct the professor's attention to the question if they can't answer it.)
- If you want to ask a question out loud, use the "raise your hand" function on Zoom. A little hand will appear so that the DA knows you want to speak. The DA will get the professor's attention. Don't unmute until called on. • Professor answers questions in the fifteen minutes before and after the live lecture.

Posting in Forums **(does not apply to this class)**

- Write as if you were speaking in a class discussion: relaxed in tone but respectful, polite, and professional in your choice of words.
- Post thoughtful and meaningful responses to questions and answers. The point is to have an ongoing discussion with your Blackboard Group and one DA. Professor will be joining discussions as well.

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

<https://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

<https://policy.usc.edu/student-health-leave-absence/>

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

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255 – 24-7 On-Call

<http://www.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

<https://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 Compliance - (213) 740-5086

<https://equity.usc.edu>, <https://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

<https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

<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

<https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

<https://diversity.usc.edu/>

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency Information - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 - 24/7 on call

<http://emergency.usc.edu>

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible,

USC Department of Public Safety - 213-740-4321 (UPC) and 323-442-1000 (HSC) for 24-hour on-call

<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. 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.

Note: The statement below does not apply on ZOOM. You can eat during class, as long as it is not disruptive and you can still participate fully in discussions (so, mute yourself while eating).

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