Instructor:	Anne McIntyre Postman	**Time:** WEDNESDAY, 10:00a-12:50p	
Email:	apmcinty@usc.edu	**Location:** ONLINE	
Section #:	19342D	**Office hours:** Wednesday, 1:30p – 2:30p	
		(please always make an appointment)	

GOALS OF THIS COURSE:

• Introduction to the craft of screenwriting

• To learn and practice the elements of "a good story well told"

• To strengthen and deepen your ability to conceive compelling ideas, characters and stories through experience and observation

• To learn to write from a visual and aural perspective

• To learn narrative structure

• To learn the building blocks of the dramatic scene

• To write two short screenplays

This is an introductory course in writing for the screen in which you will learn and develop your craft as a storyteller. You will learn to draw on your memories, experiences, observation, and, of course, your imagination to create compelling characters and stories for the screen.

This is a workshop class. Together we will read and critique a series of weekly assignments, both in and outside the class, designed to help you understand the fundamentals of screenwriting. You will learn how to bring your visual and aural senses to your writing, to see and hear your film as you write it, developing and exploring your characters through situations of conflict.

At the end of the class you will apply your skills to polishing a short narrative **5-page CTPR 310 script.**

READING:

Read as many screenplays as possible to familiarize yourself with the styles and form of other professional writers. You will be assigned one script to read on your own time and must complete an assignment on it. We have a selection of scripts posted on our class Blackboard site. Additionally, the following texts are suggested:

The Tools of Screenwriting, by Howard & Mabley

Creative Filmmaking from the Inside Out, by Dannenbaum, Hodge, Mayer

Your Screenplay Sucks!: 100 Ways to Make It Great, by William Ackers (a handy primer)

GRADING:

*8 Writing Prompt Assignments (5 points each) = **40 points***

*2 Script Pitches (2 ideas each) = **10 points***

*Script 1 (2 drafts / 5 points each) = **10 points***

*Script 2 (2 drafts / 5 points each) = **10 points***

*Final Chosen 310 Script = **5 points***

*Weekly Notes to other writers = **10 points***

*Final Notes to other writers = **5 points***

*Screenplay Reading Assignment = **5 points***

*Class Participation = **5 points***

Class participation includes full involvement in and contribution to all class discussions, as well as reading the assignments of the other students in advance and posting thoughtful, constructive comments on Blackboard.

Writing Division Attendance Policy:

This class is a workshop and your participation in the discussion is important. Participation includes full involvement in, and contribution to, class discussion, as well as reading in advance the assignments of your colleagues and offering thoughtful, constructive comments.

Class attendance is mandatory and students are expected to be on time and prepared for each class. Tardiness is unprofessional and disrespectful to your classmates and me. Two late arrivals equal one full absence. Two unexcused absences will result in your final grade being lowered by a third grade point (Ex. A to A-). Any further unexcused absences will result in your final grade being lowered another two thirds of a point (ex: B to a C+) for each absence.

Excused absences can include, but are not limited to illness, both physical and mental; death of a loved one; personal emergency; sporting events (for Student-Athletes) or other university-sponsored activities; religious holidays, and so on.
If you find you must miss class due to personal emergency or personal crisis, please contact your professor as soon as possible – preferably ahead of time – so they can assist you in finding the appropriate University care and guidance. Your health and well-being are of utmost importance to the Wells Writing Division and to your Faculty.

Late work will result in lowered grades. Please be on time and treat this class like a job.

**SUBMITTING WORK:

1. **By class time**, post your work as a PDF to the week's
   a. Discussion Forum **AND**
   b. Assignments Module

You must submit your assignments to BOTH places. Failure to do so will cause Blackboard to calculate a lower course grade for you.

2. After class, but no later than Thursday at midnight, submit brief comments for those writers who were **not** workshopped in class. (Post as a Reply to each writer's assignment in the Discussion Forum.) Your comments should include at least two positive observations and two "needs improvement" suggestions. Be specific, and quote, if you can.

All outlines and script pages must display proper format as well as correct spelling and grammar. *Scripts not conforming to these guidelines cannot receive a grade in the A range.* Your work must be based on new, original ideas and completed on your own. No previously written work may be used.

Use professional screenwriting software for this class. I recommend Final Draft. Let me know if you need guidance in this area.

Please ONLY post your work to Blackboard. Do not email me your work.

<u>Very Important:</u> *It is possible to get full points for all Assignments (because you completed them), and still not get an A in the class because you failed to address story notes from draft to draft in your 310 scripts and make needed improvements. Revision counts; and how skilled your work is by the end of the class is most important.*

WRITING DIVISION GRADING BREAKDOWN:

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%

A : Work of **excellent** quality. Outstanding application of the dramatic principles and fulfillment of course requirements and deadlines as specified in the syllabus.

B : Work of **good** quality. Above average fulfillments of course requirements and deadlines.

C : Work of **fair** quality. Minimum fulfillment of course requirements and deadlines for passing graduate credit.

C-: FAIL to meet minimum grade for credit. NON-PASSING GRADE.

This class will be taught online by Zoom. Class meetings may include some or all of the following: short presentations, film viewing, script reading, discussion of concepts, pitching ideas, reading pages aloud, and workshopping assignments, either as a full class or in smaller breakout groups. In addition, expect at least one private conference with me.

We will be improving and revising our process as we go, but I am confident that conducting our writing class remotely will be every bit as enjoyable and productive as meeting in person—and will lead to exciting results for you.

The Online Classroom

Class dynamics are substantially compromised without the ability to see each other, 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.

<u>**ASSIGNMENTS & SCHEDULE:**</u>

Look ahead each week to see the Assignment due.

WEEK ONE (WED., JAN. 20TH): ATMOSPHERE & VISUALIZATION

***In-class Assignment** – "**TRIP TO SCHOOL**" (5 points)

Creating a sense of place and atmospheric locations are part of the writer's job.
Lighting, time of day, weather, architecture, use of sound, props and objects all help create mood and the world of your story.

• List the places you went to school starting as far back as you can remember.

• List how you got to each school. Pick the emotionally "hottest" place/trip.

• List things, places, activities, people, clothes connected with that trip.

• Now describe the trip, telling us about how you got to school. (Your description may be bullet-pointed, as you will be asked to tell the class about the trip rather than read your description.)

Part 2: (complete as soon as possible) CONNECTING TO SELF – *LE MENU* (5 points)

In order to create work of any worth, an artist must have something to say, some values, some attitudes, some store of experience—a vision. <u>And</u> an artist must identify those attitudes before they will ever energize a work of value.

What I Love	What I Hate	What I Fear	What I Believe	What I Value	What I Want	What I Know About	People who made a difference in my life	Discoveries that made a difference in my life	Decisions that made a difference in my life

Write 5 answers to each statement. <u>Post to Blackboard when complete</u>.

Choose a *feature Screenplay to read and report on* (check Blackboard for some choices). No television scripts, please. Must be approved by me, so <u>email me with your choice</u>. Start reading!

WEEK TWO (WED., JAN. 27ᵀᴴ) <u>DUE IN CLASS:</u> "ROOMMATES" (5 points)

Write a non-dialogue sequence. Designed to introduce characters through visuals and props -- and conflict -- without seeing or hearing the characters themselves. In three parts.

*First part: Describe through sight and sounds a significant space shared by two interesting characters who are living together in **harmony**.*

*Second part: Describe the same space, but now the characters are in apparent **conflict**.*

*Third part: One of the characters is now **gone**, the remaining one has the location to his or herself. This should not be a guessing game. The point is to engage the audience and let us clearly know who these people are and what the conflict is about. The elements in the second part ought to be **planted** in the first part, and may be missing or changed, or used again in the third.*

Remember, don't show the actual characters!

Length: A page and a half, tops. May be written in Screenplay format, but not required for this assignment. **Continue reading feature Screenplay.**
After every class, Submit notes for all Writers <u>not</u> workshopped.

WEEK THREE (WED., FEB. 3ᴿᴰ) <u>DUE IN CLASS:</u> No Dialogue – "PREPARATION FOR A DATE or SIGNIFICANT EVENT" (5 points)

Also designed to build audience engagement and expectations. Introduces the use of props, costume, and character-revealing activity and action. Helps the writer practice time ellipsis, the technique of planting and payoff, and/or repetition with a variation. And, of course, **preparation and aftermath**. In two parts. (See sample on Blackboard)

*<u>Pick an engaging character</u> and place him or her **alone** in a location **significant** to them (a home, an office, a combat bunker). Show the character preparing for some character-revealing event, such as a crucial job interview, a romantic liaison, a murder, an encounter with aliens. The point is to show through props and movement not only what the event is, but how the character feels about what's about to happen. This should not be a guessing game. We are not given clues, but glimpses into the character's hopes and fears. It should be crystal clear what the event is when <u>the character leaves the location</u>.*

*Then, <u>ellipse time and show the character's return</u>. (**Note: we do not see the primary scene of the event!**) But when the character returns to his home, office, aircraft hanger, abandoned vehicle... we should know exactly what happened and how the character feels about it by changes in demeanor, costume, props, etc.*

Length: <u>No more than a page total.</u> Must be written in screenplay format and uploaded to Blackboard as a PDF. **Continue reading feature Screenplay.**

CTWR 413 Syllabus. SPRING 2021.

**WEEK FOUR (WED., FEB. 10TH) DUE IN CLASS: Dialogue Scene –
"SEDUCTION / PERSUASION" (5 points)**

The goal of this scene is to explore characters – their past and present relationships. This is a good scene to introduce the concept of exposition through conflict.

One character wants another character to do something. The seducer should know which "buttons" to push. The goal should be appealing to the person being seduced, but that person should have legitimate, character-revealing opposition. This need not be sexual or romantic. The seduction/persuasion should escalate. The scene ends when the seducee agrees or doesn't.

Length: 3-4 pages. **ALSO DUE: Screenplay Craft Assignment (be sure to use Assignment sheet). (5 points)**

WEEK FIVE (WED., FEB. 17TH) DUE IN CLASS: Dialogue Scene – (5 points)

Paradigm 1: "THE DISCOVERY"

"Discovery scenes" in movies advance plot and tension in important ways. If you can write a good discovery scene, you can write a good screenplay.

Write a short screenplay about a character making a discovery that makes a difference to the character. Make sure the discovery – the precise moment of change – is clearly rendered on paper and therefore on screen. The audience must understand the difference the discovery makes to your character. They must be able to see the shift, however subtle, in your character's life.

Length: 3-4 pages.

WEEK SIX (WED., FEB. 24TH) DUE IN CLASS: Dialogue Scene – (5 points)

Paradigm 2: "THE DECISION"

Discoveries are often beyond our control, but decisions are not. They come from our experiences, values, and worldview. Decisions reveal who we are and shape who we become. In screenplays, a character's biggest decisions are often the story turning points.

Write a short screenplay about a character making a decision that makes a difference to the character. The decision – the precise moment of change – must be rendered on paper, i.e. on screen. The audience must understand the decision.

Length: 3-4 pages.

WEEK SEVEN (WED., MAR. 3RD) Dialogue Scene – (5 points)

Paradigm 3: "THE IMPROBABLE CONNECTION"

Write a screenplay about two characters who initially feel no connection whatever – a connection between them is, in fact, highly improbable – but by the end of the screenplay they have come to feel an authentic connection. Think stepping stones... discoveries and decisions your characters make that bring them closer together. Moments of change.

<u>Length:</u> 4 pages.

WEEK EIGHT (WED., MAR. 10TH) "PITCHING 310 IDEAS" (5 points)

Prepare 2 ideas to pitch in class as <u>FIRST</u> **5-page maximum** CTPR 310 scripts. Each pitch should be short – 2-3 sentences.

Students should consider the production limitations of the 310 project and strive to limit the number of locations, characters, physical complexity of action, use of minors, animals, etc. The most successful 310 films are simple and small in scope.

WEEK NINE (WED., MAR. 17TH): "REVIEW AND WORKSHOP FIRST DRAFT 310 SCRIPT #1" (5 points)

First draft of 310 script #1.

WEEK TEN (WED., MAR. 24TH): "REVIEW AND WORKSHOP SECOND DRAFT 310 SCRIPT #1" (5 points)

Second draft of 310 script #1.

WEEK ELEVEN (WED., MAR. 31ST): "PITCHING 310 IDEAS" (5 points)

Prepare 2 ideas to pitch in class as <u>SECOND</u> **5-page maximum** CTPR 310 scripts. Each pitch should be short – 2-3 sentences.

Students should consider the production limitations of the 310 project and strive to limit the number of locations, characters, physical complexity of action, use of minors, animals, etc. The most successful 310 films are simple and small in scope.

WED., APRIL 7TH, WELLNESS DAY – NO CLASS

WEEK TWELVE (WED., APRIL 14TH): "REVIEW & WORKSHOP FIRST DRAFTS 310 SCRIPT #2" (5 points)

First draft of 310 script #2.

WEEK THIRTEEN (WED., APRIL 21ST): <u>DUE IN CLASS:</u> "REVIEW & WORKSHOP SECOND DRAFTS 310 SCRIPT #2" (5 points)

Second draft of 310 script #2. Pick ONE script to revise for Final.

WEEK FOURTEEN (WED., APRIL 28TH): *FINAL CLASS MEETING*

<u>DUE IN CLASS:</u> **POST 1 FINAL REVISED 310 SCRIPT (5 points)**

<u>Must</u> conform to required CTPR parameters.

DUE FRIDAY, APRIL 30TH by MIDNIGHT:

As your summary project, **POST NOTES** on everyone's final script, including your own. **(5 points)**

<u>Additional points:</u>

OVERALL WEEKLY NOTES TO WRITERS (10 points)

OVERALL CLASS PARTICIPATION (5 points)

CONGRATULATIONS, and have a restful, happy summer!

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, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:

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

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

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

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, 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

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

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

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

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, 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

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.