

**USC School of Cinematic Arts**  
**CTPR 497: The Shortest Film - Content**  
**MUSIC VIDEO and COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION**  
**Fall 2021**

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CTPR 497 is an intensive workshop experience in short form production content, focusing on music videos and commercials. It is an unique opportunity to learn through practical experience pitching and creating your own short content, as well as through lecture and case study. We will develop your voice as a filmmaker and deepen your creative vision as this is an important part of this type of work. Please keep in perspective that it is ultimately a class and although we encourage you to push your boundaries creatively, you must work within the guidelines of the class.

**SHORT FORM PRODUCTION COURSE OBJECTIVE**

**MUSE VIDEO PROJECT:** A short warm up exercise, of 60 seconds to 2 minutes maximum length, exploring the energies of various authentic voices to be further discussed and explored in class.

**COMMERCIAL/BRANDED CONTENT:** We will explore the timeline from concept through completion of a television commercial. Students experience first-hand the process of commercial production from creative concept through post-production by creating their own commercial/PSA as a :30 or branded content up to 2 minutes with a viable :30. We will have lectures, Q&A and guest speakers to help with commercial production and the development/execution of the creative. Guest speakers and topics may change based on availability.

**MUSIC VIDEO:** We will explore the timeline of making a music video, beginning with a band or recording artist’s new music, commissioning the track among directors and production companies to the making of a music video through post-production and premiere of the final product. This course will give students the opportunity to produce and direct their own music video, beginning with choosing a song, writing an original treatment, budgeting the concept and producing an approximately 3-4 minute music video. Guest speakers will be invited to share their experiences in music video production. Topics and speakers may change based on availability.

**NOTES ON PRODUCTION UNDER COVID-19**

Under our new conditions, you will be allowed to create traditional or experimental videos. You can also use found footage, animation, etc. The basic idea for Music Videos is that you’re working with music as the driving force. You may use the people that you live with within your “safe bubble” or shoot remotely. You will need to pitch your idea and we will figure out the best way to approach it.

**Prerequisite: CPTR 310**

**Grading Breakdown for class:**

Attendance* and Participation.....	10%
Muse Piece.....	10%
Music Video Pre-Production / Presentation.....	20%
Commercial Pre-Production / Presentation.....	20%
Music Video Rough Cut.....	10%
Music Video Final Cut.....	10%
Commercial Rough Cut.....	10%
Commercial Final Cut.....	10%

**\*Students are expected to be on time and prepared for each class.** Two unexcused absences will result in your grade being lowered by one full point (ex: A to B). A third unexcused absence will result in your grade being lowered another full point (ex: B to C). Your grade will be lowered by one point for every absence thereafter. Two late arrivals equate to one full absence. In order for an absence to be excused the student must have approval from the professor and provide documentation at the next attended class session. If you have an emergency and must miss class, please contact your professor prior to class.

You are responsible in this class for adhering to all the rules found in the student

production handbook and the safety rules in the student productions handbook. You can find a copy of both in SPO.

IF ANY RULES ARE IGNORED, SANCTIONS WILL APPLY INCLUDING LOWERING OF YOUR GRADE AND POSSIBLE SUSPENSION FROM THE CINEMA SCHOOL. Any safety issues need to be addressed with the instructor AND Joe Wallenstein at least 5 days before your shoot.

We are looking for an “even playing field” in this class but because of current conditions we will discuss resources and budget in class based on each person’s situation. Please be ready to discuss how you’re working and what your challenges are during this time.

Regarding renting or purchasing equipment or other merchandise or services: You are still responsible for adhering to all the rules including safety guidelines found in the student production handbook. You can find a copy in SPO.

STUDENTS MUST HAVE INSTRUCTORS SIGN HAZARDOUS SHOOTING FORMS BEFORE SHOOTING ANYTHING WHERE A HAZARDOUS SHOOTING FORM IS REQUIRED. ALL FORMS MUST BE SUBMITTED AND APPROVED BEFORE SESSION 7.

**Shoot day must not go beyond a 12 hour day.**

#### **TALENT USED IN STUDENT COMMERCIAL PROJECTS:**

You must use **NON-SAG** talent if you are creating a class commercial project with a recognizable product (not required for PSA). **When putting out a casting call, please make written notes and state that this is a student project and you are casting non-SAG talent only.** Talent needs to sign a release stating that “by signing this release you are confirming you are not a SAG member.” Please send a note to Paula stating that you have made every effort to cast non SAG members in your student production.

MUSIC VIDEOS NEED TO BE SHOT BETWEEN SESSION 4 AND 10.  
COMMERCIALS NEED TO BE SHOT BETWEEN SESSION 8 AND 14.

**FINAL SCREENINGS ARE WEEK 15 AND 16 SO BE PREPARED!!! ANY STUDENT THAT SHOOTS BEFORE OR AFTER SPECIFIED WEEKS WILL RECEIVE A FAILING GRADE!**

## **DUE DATES:**

- Influencer Pitches .....SESSION 2 & 3, - 09/01
  
- Muse Video Project .....SESSION 4, 09/08
  
- Lookbook and Verbal Pitch for MUSIC VIDEO.....SESSION 4 & 5, 09/08 - 09/15
  
- Storyboard and Pitch for COMMERCIAL.....SESSION 8, 10/06
  
- Work-In-Progress Screenings / Troubleshooting.....SESSION 10, 10/20
  
- Elevator Pitches.....SESSION 14, 11/24
  
- Commercial Screening.....SESSION 15, 12/01
  
- Music Video Screening.....SESSION 16, 12/08

## **RECOMMENDED READINGS**

These books are not required, but will be referenced throughout the semester.

1. The Art of Communicating by Thich Nhat Hanh
2. Leap of Perception by Penney Peirce
3. Mastery by Robert Greene
4. The Creative Habit; Learn it and Use it for Life by Twyla Tharp
5. The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles by Steven Pressfield

## **SESSION 1 – 08/25**

- The class overview/business/enrollment / Goals
- The path to becoming an unconscious filmmaker
- Who we are – the path of a Director and Cinematographer
- In depth look at pre-digital photographers
- A glossary of photography, fashion, art, and dance movements

- (stylistic "influencers / influences")
- Start review of music videos artist – FKA Twigs
- Review treatments for music videos artists and discuss some of your favorites - MUSIC VIDEO and COMMERCIAL APPROACH
  - Overall Viewpoint to an aesthetic approach to Music Video and Commercials
    - o Content and Style
    - o Talent and Performance
    - o Movement, Motion, Rhythm
    - o Setting, Styling, Camera, Editing
    - o Becoming an Unconscious Filmmaker
    - o Taking Risks
- **Mini Lecture** on Composition (if time permits)
- **Discussion on Influencer Pitch and Elevator Pitch**

ASSIGNMENT:

- 1) Start thinking about your INFLUENCER PITCH - an "influencer" you would like to make a 5-minute presentation about...
- 3) Start thinking about the song you would like to produce and direct your music video for -- it can be an original song, a famous song, a classical song, avant garde, or any piece of music you wish.

**SESSION 2—09/01**

MUSIC VIDEO OVERVIEW and INSPIRATION

- An intro to Music Videos / Commercials you NEED to know
- The Director's Treatment Process
  - Evaluate creative Source Material, books, web sources, magazines, etc.
  - Drama vs. Poetry vs. Guts
- **Mini Lecture** on *surrealism, magic realism, dadaism, hyper realism, the muses and finding your distinctive personal voice*
- **Mini Lecture** on *Visual Language*
- Half of the class **presents their Influencer Pitches**

**GUEST:** Treatment Writer and/or Visual Artist

ASSIGNMENT:

- 1) Muse Video assigned

2) Start preparing Music Videos pitches

*Muse Videos will be presented starting on Session 4.*

### **SESSION 3 —09/08**

BE PREPARED TO SHARE IDEAS

- **Mini Lecture** on Portrait
- Second half of the class **presents their Influencer Pitches**

### **MUSIC VIDEO PITCH\*\*\* (Group A)**

- Student should be prepared with their pitch and treatment to present during class.  
Music Video

Production can commence after this session.

- Pitching the IDEA – Treatment Language
  - Pitching an idea that can realistically fit the budget
  - The Look
    - o The Set, Production Design, Vanities, Choreography
    - o The look/style -- color, editing, post-production
  - Peer Feedback, Rejection and Constructive Criticism
- 
- The Art of Dance – Dance, Choreographer to discuss how to direct talent in the music video

**Guest Speaker:** Dancer, Performers, Choreographer

**We will learn a piece of movement (come prepared to dance)**

ASSIGNMENT: Produce a written treatment and layout based on class notes to pitch. You may also start production at this point.

### **SESSION 4 – 09/15**

Studio: THE ART of the CLOSE-UP

- **MUSE VIDEOS PRESENTATIONS**
- **MUSIC VIDEO PITCH\*\*\* (Group B)**

ASSIGNMENT: Begin Music Video Production.

### **SESSION 5 – 09/22**

MUSIC VIDEO WORK PANEL // INDUSTRY – How are things being shot now?

- Additional **Muse Video Presentations**

- Remaining music video pitches and influencer pitches if need be.

- Directing Talent & Production Challenges

- Visual Bang for Your Buck, Effective Budgeting
- Test shoots and re-shoots, the power of correction
- The key crew: keeping it small and nimble
- The record label and commissioner
- Artist and Management
- Production Company Executive and Director

- The purpose in this session is to respond to challenges that arise from concepts which may have a diminishing return upon execution.

- This is the final Music Video Prep Class until Rough Cut Viewing in Session 10

- **Mini Lecture** on Settings and Location

**Panel TBA**

ASSIGNMENT: Commercial pitches

### **SESSION 6 – 09/29**

COMMERCIAL OVERVIEW and INSPIRATION

- Start w/ everyone's short pitches

- Roles at the Advertising Agencies
- The client to agency creative to storyboards
- The first call, the conference call, the art of the pitch
- After the call; the art of closing the deal
- Comedy, lifestyle, drama, reality, showbiz/dance, tropes
- Product Categories: cars, pharma, food, etc.
- The good the bad and the ugly: winners / failures
- Visual Language: from Lancôme to pizza

- o King Funny and other examples
- Big Dance, Choreography in Video and Commercials
- Overview of budgets
  - How to look at a budget
  - How to work with a producer to create your budget
- **Mini Lecture** on Product

**Guest Speakers:** Producer Raul Perez

ASSIGNMENT: Develop your **commercial/branded creative idea for Session 8.**  
Written synopsis to be submitted with creative briefs to be presented in front of class.  
Prepare your storyboard and look book.

### **SESSION 7 – 10/06**

Studio: On using outdoor lighting and shooting outside

- Discuss rogue camera equipment

An examination of all new Media outlets which are available for commercial and personal distribution of New Media.

- New / Emerging Media
  - Social Media (YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Vimeo)
  - How not to get lost within the expanse of content.
- **Mini Lecture** on the ethics of commercials
  - How to get a job in today's climate

**Guest Speaker:** Promo Director

ASSIGNMENT: Continue working on your commercial pitch, story board, and look book.

### **SESSION 8 – 10/13**

COMMERCIAL PITCH\*\*\*

- Students should come prepared to pitch with their storyboard and look book.

Commercial

*Production can commence after this session.*



- The commercial bidding process
  - Pitching the idea – Treatment Language and Vocabulary
  - Pitching an idea that can realistically fit within the budget
  - Understanding the Target Piece, Target Audience
  - Selling the Cast, Setting, Production Design, Location
- **Mini Lecture** on Aesthetics
  - In light of COVID how have things changed?
- Guest Speaker:** Rep- Roxanne Artesona with a young upcoming director

ASSIGNMENT:

- 1) Begin Commercial Production.
- 2) First group of ELEVATOR PITCHES goes next class. What's your inner voice and how does it play into your work? What are the things that inspire you the most. Why were YOU born to be a filmmaker? The elevator pitch should be verbal and about three minutes long. When pitching in reality you should be able to pull these thoughts into a logline.

**SESSION 9 –10/20**

COMMERCIAL WORK PANEL // INDUSTRY

- Remaining commercial pitches
  - Production challenges for commercials and music videos in the age of COVID
- what has changed?
  - Agency Board vs Shooting Board
  - Casting, Creativity and Stereotypes
    - o breaking barriers race/sex/politics
  - Historical views of commercials
  - Other forms – Promos, Political, Social
- Lecture on Advertising Ethics / Politics / and the rise of socially conscious content
  - The #MeToo movement, gender and race politics, outdated industry norms
  - Black Lives Matters - how does this influence the industry?
- **Mini Lecture** on Production Design

**Guest Speaker:** Agency Art Director / Promo Director

## **SESSION 10 – 10/27**

### WORK-IN-PROGRESS Session 1

- Screen Rough Cut of Music Videos and/or Commercials
- Troubleshooting, discuss editing
- Peer criticism and discussion of re-shoots and re-cuts
- **Mini Lecture** Lighting Principles
  - Lighting through the centuries

## **SESSION 11 – 11/10**

### WORK-IN-PROGRESS Session 2

- Screen Rough Cut of Music Videos and/or Commercials
- Peer criticism and discussion of re-shoots and re-cuts
- More influencer and elevator pitches

### GUEST ARTIST

## **SESSION 12 — 11/17**

- Studio: Shooting Products/ Macro Lens

### COMMERCIAL // PRODUCT LIGHTING

- Product shot lighting, from plastic to Crystal, Cars, and Jewels
- Surfaces and Background vs. Foreground
- Macro photography, the smaller the object, the bigger the sets
- Single Source Portrait Lighting: Eyes, Mascara and Make Up
- On set Color Correction and Green Screen supervision
- Other in-camera tricks and tips
  - Micro lenses

**Guest Speaker:** Specialty Product DP

**ASSIGNMENT:** Continue fine-tuning your music videos and working on your commercials.

## **SESSION 13 – 11/24**

### COMMERCIAL POST-PRODUCTION DISCUSSION

- Why you will never see your footage again...
  - The director / editor relationship
  - Planning Visual Effects, Visual Effects Producer or Supervisor
  - Graphic titling, compositing, and coloring range.
- **Mini Lecture** on Optics and Resolve

**Guest Speaker:** Colorist or Graphic Designer or Editor: Scott Chestnut

### ASSIGNMENT:

1. Work on music video final cuts and commercial rough cuts.

1. ELEVATOR PITCHES due next class. What's your inner voice and how does it play into your work? What are the things that inspire you the most. Why were born to be a filmmaker? The elevator pitch should be verbal and about three minutes long. When pitching in reality you should be able to pull these thoughts into a logline.

Coaching on how to design the perfect logline that sells you.

## **SESSION 14 – 12/01 - Last Day of Classes**

### •ELEVATOR PITCHES

### ASSIGNMENT:

Final Commercial and Music Videos due the next two classes.

## **SESSION 15 – 12/08 – Final Exam Week**

### Commercial FINAL SCREENINGS

## **SESSION 16 – 12/15 - Final Exam Week**

### Music Video FINAL SCREENINGS

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 this letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible.

\*\* Guest speakers and various assignments may be moved around to accommodate the speaker's schedule.

\*\*\*Office Hours Scheduled as necessary

\*\*\*\* If you do not have a written contract giving you the right to show your music video with the artist's song (or piece of music) then the film cannot be played at festivals or shown on any broadcast including the internet.

\*\*\*\*\* If you do have a written contract allowing you to use the piece of music then the "festival office" will be the office to handle any type of distribution including the internet.

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 Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violatinguniversitystandards-andappropriate-sanctions/>.

Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientificmisconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity

<http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the Department of Public Safety

<http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-publicsafety/online-forms/contact-us>.

This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage [sarc@usc.edu](mailto:sarc@usc.edu) describes reporting options and other resources.

#### Support Systems

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students.

#### The Office of Disability Services and Programs

[http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, includes ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.