

USC School of Cinematic Arts

CTPR 566 - THE PITCH CLASS

Fall 2021 Mondays 6:30 pm – 9:30 pm SCB 104

2 units

Faculty:

Eric Freiser

SA:

Naiyah Ambros

Class Overview:

Learning the skill of presenting your ideas to buyers in a compelling and entertaining way is indispensable to success and survival in Hollywood. We will investigate what makes an idea pitchable, how to develop your pitch, how to assess and effectively target the marketplace, and whether or not to wear flip-flops to the meeting (the answer is not as obvious as you think.) This is boot camp: you will be on the griddle pitching as often as time permits. We will bring in guest speakers to share their wisdom and war stories, and to hear your pitches. Some of the visitors will be friendly; some will be intimidating, just like real life. In addition to frequent short pitches, you will prepare two more fully developed pitches to be presented in class as your midterms, one for a feature, one for a television series, as well as a ten-minute professional-grade pitch to be presented to us individually as your final.

Course Objectives:

To learn the skills of creating, developing and presenting effective and compelling stories for film and television. This includes pitching to sell projects, and also how to simply talk about your stories in an engrossing way.

Class Rules:

Attendance:

Students are expected to be on time and prepared for each class.

Two unexcused absences will result in a student's grade being lowered by one full letter (i.e.: A becomes B). A third unexcused absence will result in a student's grade being lowered by one

additional full letter (i.e.: B becomes C). A student's grade will be lowered by one full letter for each additional unexcused absence. Two late class 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 a student misses a class due to an emergency or illness, the student must contact the professor (or SA) prior to class or contact the Production Office at 213-740-3317.

****Please contact the SA first for all excused absences and late arrivals.**

VERY IMPORTANT: If you feel sick DO NOT COME TO CLASS!!!!

Asynchronous recordings

Asynchronous recordings may be available, but only to students who are not in class for illness-related reasons. Recordings will not be made available to students who are "physically" present in class or who have missed class due to personal or professional obligations.

If guests wish not to be recorded because and protection of their content, then we will comply with their wishes.

STUDENTS WHO ARE PRESENT IN CLASS WILL NOT HAVE ACCESS TO RECORDINGS. Class recordings are not a substitute for class notes.

Students may not record the classes in any way.

Screen Policy:

This is a no screens class. Please be prepared to take notes on paper.

Mask Mandate:

Everyone must wear a mask indoors, whether vaccinated or not. There is no eating or drinking indoors to avoid removing masks. There is no mask mandate outside at this time.

Suggested Reading:

Influence – The Psychology of Persuasion by Robert B. Cialdini, PhD

Made to Stick by Chip Heath & Dan Heath

The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers by Christopher Vogler

Talk Like TED: The 9 Public Speaking Secrets of the World's Top Minds by Carmine Gallo

Office Hours:

By appt.

I can always be reached by email or, when absolutely necessary, text.

Grading:

Your grade will be based on how well you develop the skill of pitching, including idea formulation, character and story development (irrespective of subject matter), and whether your story is presented (pitched) in an engaging and clear manner.

It breaks down like this:

- Pitch #1 - Public Domain – 15%
- Pitch #2 - Feature – 20%
- Pitch #3 - TV Series – 20%
- Pitch #4 - Final Pitch (Feature or TV Series) – 30%
- In-Class Participation (i.e. Q&As, collaborating with fellow students, etc.) – 15%

There will be other homework assignments that will be included in the participation grade.

Fall 2021 Class Schedule

****This class features many industry guests. Due to the potential for scheduling conflicts, the content of individual classes may be changed or re-assigned at the last minute.**

Class #1, August 23rd

- Class Overview
- The Essential Elements of your Pitch: The Logline and the Central Question

Class #2, August 30th

- The Elements of the Feature Pitch (con't.): Pitch Structure and Characters

No Class September 6th -- Labor Day

Class #3, September 13th

- Skill Building: Performance and Presentation:
 - Pitch Notes and How to Prepare/Get Ready
 - The Difference Between a Treatment and a Pitch
(Building a pitch from a treatment)
 - You're in the room, now what happens?
 - Language Skills, Body Language, Handling Questions
 - Handling butterflies and outright panic

Class #4, September 20th

- Public Domain Pitch (Group #1)

Class #5, September 27th

- Public Domain Pitch (Group #2)
- Verbal Loglines, CQ, Characters for Midterm Pitches.

Class #6, October 4th

- Feature Midterm Pitches (Group #1)
 - Half of students do a 5-minute feature pitch, with comments by instructor and visiting professional

Class #7, October 11th

- Feature Midterm Pitches (Group #2)
 - Second half of students do a 5-minute feature pitch, with comments by instructor and visiting professional

Class #8, October 18th

- The Elements of the TV Pitch
- How TV works - The Industry, The Seasons

Class #9, October 25th

- How TV works: Miniseries, Limited Series & Anthologies

Class #10, November 1st

- Children's & Family Media:
 - The marketplace and unique language and pitch styles for Children's & Family Content

Class #11, November 8th

- TV Midterm Pitches (Group #1)
 - Half of students do 5-minute TV Series pitches

Class #12, November 15th

- TV Midterm Pitches (Group #2)
 - Second half of students do 5-minute TV Series pitches

Class #13 : November 22nd

- Pitching Yourself as a Director

Class #14 : November 29th (Last Regular Class)

- **Review Class:** 'How to Get an 'A' on Your Final Pitch'
- Review of final pitches with faculty and student input.

Finals: December 8th - 15th

Final Pitches: A fully developed professional pitch (up to ten minutes long), either feature or television, in a realistic pitch environment

Please be available any time during the finals period (until we have specific dates).

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.

Safety:

All students are expected to abide by USC School of Cinematic Arts Safety Guidelines. Violations of any of the safety guidelines may result in disciplinary action ranging from confiscation of footage to expulsion from the University.

Stressful Times:

These are stressful times in our country, and Graduate School in and of itself is stressful. I encourage you to take care of yourself and your fellow students. USC provides opportunities for Mindful Meditation <http://mindful.usc.edu> and Mental health counseling is available at the Engemann Student Health Center, 1031 W. 34th Street, 213-740-9355.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.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 and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by 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. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity |Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, 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 Campus Support & Intervention - (213) 821-4710

campussupport.usc.edu

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) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

ombuds.usc.edu

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.