CMGT 552: Visual Storytelling
4 Units

Fall 2021 – Thursday – 6:30-9:30pm
Section: 21767D
Location: ASC 331

Instructor: Andy Merkin
Office: Send an email at least one day in advance with a detailed reason for meeting. A Calendly link will be provided with available times to meet.
Contact Info: amerkin@usc.edu

Course Description

We identify the creative and critical media management strategies in the creation and production of scripted, linear entertainment (e.g. feature films, episodic, series, and digital series) in a transmedia era. Media management refers to the progress from conception and development to financing, packaging, production, post-production, programming, marketing, distribution to reception. Creative media management refers to communication management strategies designed to better foster creativity, including problem-solving, articulating a vision, providing leadership, building a team, delegating responsibility, operating collaboratively, crisis management, resource development, securing support, effective time management, etc. Critical media management strategies (aka Producing to Power or P2P) includes the tactics for introducing social issues and/or foregrounding questions of identity in the scripting or production of the projects. For assignments, students will conduct "making of" case studies of a US film or TV series, write and produce an original scripted series, and generate reflective creative and critical media management case studies. There is reading and an assignment due every week**.**
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Student Learning Outcomes
- Understand creative media management strategies of visual storytelling;
- Conduct creative media management through visually oriented IP production;
- Understand production management, roles of non-creative personnel;
- Understand the dynamics of creative and production team roles; and,
- Develop transferrable skills, e.g., crafting visual presentations and conducting research.

Recommended Preparation
- Prior screenwriting or production experience is **not** required.
- Minimal production skills will be taught. If your series team lacks production skills:
  - You should take outside classes, e.g., Annenberg Digital Lab or CreatorUp.com,
  - Media management is a collaborative process; You are encouraged to recruit outside production experts.

Course Notes
Grading will be conducted based on your engagement, leadership, responses, and enthusiasm within the group dynamic and class. The results of the production project are not strictly graded but instead your responses to how the process evolves. For instance, this course will provide simulated challenges to the production process and students will be expected to supply a variety of solutions. The ability for you to navigate which solution is viable and your awareness of how the team dynamics will inform those solutions is the important factor; not the group's ability to actually execute the solution (e.g. edit a new draft, film a new location, etc.). Given the current global pandemic conditions, you will be expected to best navigate solutions to your challenges with communication with your professor on how you plan to execute it, how it was executed, and the results of the execution. Physically or virtually disappearing, *not* attempting a solution, and not communicating are not viable solutions. The rule of thumb is to perform as you would if this were your profession. Your professor will work to be as accommodating as possible for challenges that external factors on the course may present but this does require communication with him.

Policies and Procedures
a. Additional Policies (including DIEA statement)
It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that the students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally, or for other students or student groups.

Important note: I advise my students to create from what they know and tell their own personal stories, whenever possible. Given the personal nature of what may be discussed in class, and my attempt to an open dialogue on creative feedback within the process, it is expected that some of the conversations may evoke strong emotions. It is critical that each class member show respect for all worldviews expressed in class and limit conversations to strictly the project case at hand. Sweeping and broad generalizations are not in themselves valuable contributions to the case at hand. Critiques of creative elements, story plot points, and production decisions must be made from a strategically neutral stance (to be discussed further in class). Please be respectful of each others' emotions and be mindful of your own.

Please let me know if something said or done in the classroom, by either myself or other students, is particularly troubling or causes discomfort or offense. While our intention may not be to cause discomfort or offense, the impact of what happens throughout the course is not to be ignored and is something that I consider to be very important and deserving of attention. If and when this occurs, there are several ways to alleviate some of the discomfort or hurt you may experience:

1. Discuss the situation privately with me. I am always open to listening to students' experiences and want to work with students to find acceptable ways to process and address the issue.
2. Discuss the situation with the class. Chances are there is at least one other student in the class who had a similar response to the material. Discussion enhances the ability for all class participants to have a fuller understanding of context and impact of course material and class discussions.
3. Notify me of the issue through another source such as your academic advisor, a trusted faculty member, or a peer. If for any reason you do not feel comfortable discussing the issue directly with me, I encourage you to seek out another, more comfortable avenue to address the issue.

b. Communication
This course is modelled on real-world, professional production structure. I fully recognize that there are external factors, including but not limited to other coursework, family life, personal life, cross-cultural and subcultural challenges, and a global pandemic. This course is not a single, fixed, unalterable path but occurs within your world.

If that world impacts your ability to focus and execute within this course, I would like for you to reach out to me so that we can arrange viable alternatives. You can reach me via email and I will respond within 48 hours. Urgent messages should have a follow up call (in addition to the email, in case we do not connect).

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required
Industry-standard creative production software including Adobe Creative Suite, Final Draft, and/or Open-Source software such as Blender will be referenced.
- Production management software such as Movie Magic Budgeting & Scheduling will be referenced. Working files must be in Final Draft, Movie Magic, or Adobe Creative Cloud compatible formats (.fdx, .aep, .edl., .psd, etc.) or rendered/exported as PDF, .docx, .xlsx, and/or .mov files when shared.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials
- Anderson, C. (2008). The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business is Selling Less of More
- Donaldson, M., Callif, L (2014). Clearance & Copyright, 4th Edition: Everything You Need to Know for Film and Television
- Landry, P., Greenwald, S. (2018) The Business of Film: A Practical Introduction
- Levy, B. (2019). Television Development
- Additional reading/media will be posted on Blackboard or sent in Announcements.

Readings and Supplementary Materials

- Producing to Power: Christian, A.J. (2018). Open TV.
- Concept/Story Structure: Campbell, J. (2008). The Hero with a Thousand Faces
- Concept/Story Structure: Campbell, J. (1991). The Power of Myth or Watch Series
- Narrative/Character Development: Snyder, B. (2005) Save the Cat!
- Industry Landscape: Shapiro, C., Varian, H. (1998) Information Rules: A Strategic Guide to the Network Economy
- Production Budgeting: Movie Magic Budgeting Academy
- Production Scheduling: Movie Magic Scheduling Academy

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Reading Blog & Entries

- Compose a 150-character summary of the reading with a link to the reading.
- Find a related industry news item from the past week that ties in with the reading.
- Describe the relationship to the reading in 2-3 sentences and post the link.
- A blog is due every week before class. You cannot make up for missing blogs.
- Use reputable sources, e.g., Deadline, Variety, New York Times, Wired, Vox, etc.
- Additional points may be granted for truly insightful input and/or original discovery, awarded at the sole discretion of the Professor. Student requests for these additional points will automatically disqualify the post from consideration.
- Grading will be based on clear summaries working news links and posting on time.

Making of Film/Series Case Study (group)

- Students will conduct a media management case study of the making of a US-made, scripted feature film, series, or other mass market, visually oriented IP medium, upon approval of the Professor.
- The case study traces the conception, development, financing, production, marketing, distribution, and reception of the film.
- The topic must have been released or distributed in the US in 2019 - 2020.
- I will prompt you with instructions in class for your choice of topics to include films and series. Wait for detailed instructions, including group size (likely groups of 2).
- You must conduct exhaustive research. Seek out trade and reputable sources.
- The presentation must be designed and recorded. Length is TBD.
- Grading will be based on your research, design, performance, and interviews.

Making of Interviews (individual)

- Secure an interview for their making of case study project with someone either involved in production or marketing.
- For production, these could be producers listed in IMDb, studio or production company executives (often not listed in IMDB).
- For marketing, these include marketing and PR executives at the TV network, film studio, or production company OR outside creatives hired on the project (not listed on IMDb).
- For either interview, **you must prove** their direct and creative involvement, whether listed on IMDB or LINKEDIN, or interviewed in the press, or an award recipient.
- You may help each other secure interviews.

Concept Pitch

- Every student must conceive, rehearse, and present a 1-minute story concept pitch with supplemental media (images, video, etc.) and a video version.
- You will vote for the best pitches in class and winning pitches will be produced.
- You will be assigned the visual media platform for the story you will develop.
- Pitches should include title, setting, 3 main characters, their relationship, and basic story arc.
- Your pitch should mention how you will be Producing to Power (P2P) and moving the needle into new narratives. What forms of power are reflected in your narrative? How will identity be represented in your production?
- Grading will be based on following instructions and not voting outcomes.

Creative Media Production - Studio Executive Concept Pitch (group)

- The winning pitches will be assigned a team and produce a Studio Executive Concept Pitch.

- o The Author of the winning pitch will be given the opportunity to assume the role of Creative or Production Lead (Director/Producer) and awarded additional points. If s/he declines, the additional points will not be awarded.
- Teams will self-elect their roles across the Creative and Production categories. The dynamics among these roles will be evaluated during class. These roles will help organize the team efforts, but students are expected to take on multiple roles according to the needs of the project. "That is not my job" is not an excuse for stalled productions. Creative solutions are expected to the challenges that may present themselves.
- SCRIPT: Each team will deliver and outline and multiple drafts for review.
- STORYBOARD: Each team will deliver a storyboard and multiple drafts for review.
- ANIMATIC/RIPOMATIC: Each team will produce a animatic or ripomatic establishing the style of the visual story concept.
- CALL SHEET: Once script/storyboard is approved, each team must provide a call sheet listing details about your crew, resources, casting, and production schedule. I will post samples.
- LIVE ACTION PRODUCTION: Once the script and call sheet is approved, you may proceed with Live Action Pre-Production, including casting, filming, and post-production.
- LICENSED CONTENT: Clearance is not required for this project, but care and respect must be made to protect the intellectual property being used. **Do not** present other's work as your own and ensure that credit is provided to all resources used. Producers will be asked to provide a list of assets to be cleared as part of their responsibilities.
- PRESENTATION: Design and present a multimedia creative pitch presents the concept to a media executive showing the creative intent and production strategies including budget and timelines. The class invest in the pitches to see if the project is picked up and funded.
- GRADE: Will depend on *completion* of the series and comprehensive experience analysis. The class decision to invest/forgo will not affect your grade.

Experience Analysis (individual – Final)
Design and record a 3:00 analysis of your experience from a 360º perspective. What went well? What were the challenges? If you could do it all again, what would you do? This is not a praise or finger-pointing exercise but an analysis of how the dynamics of a multi-team, multi-interest, creative collaboration unfolds.

Breakdown of Grade
Grading is on a point system. You will have points deducted based on these criteria: not following directions, e.g., missing blogs, failure to turn in outlines, etc.; weak research, including missing data, failure to conduct analysis, etc.; and, poor presentation design and performance

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Blog Entry (10 x 3 points each)	30	30%
Concept Pitch	5	5%

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Making of Case Study (Group)	30	30%
Studio Executive – Concept Pitch Production (Group)	30	30%
Experience Analysis	5	5%
TOTAL		**100%**

Additional Points	Points
Concept Selected (assuming role of Director or Producer)	10
Blog Postings with Discovery and/or New Insight	1
Making of Interviews	5

Grading Scale

94 to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B-	67% to 69%: D+
90% to 93%: A-	77% to 79%: C+	64% to 66%: D
87% to 89%: B+	74% to 76%: C	60% to 63%: D-
84% to 86%: B	70% to 73%: C-	0% to 59%: F

Grading Standards

Letter Grade	Description
A	Excellent; demonstrates extraordinarily high achievement; comprehensive knowledge and understanding of subject matter; all expectations met and exceeded.
B	Good; moderately broad knowledge and understanding of subject matter; explicitly or implicitly demonstrates good, if not thorough understanding; only minor substantive shortcomings.
C	Satisfactory/Fair; reasonable knowledge and understanding of subject matter; most expectations are met; despite any shortcomings, demonstrates basic level of understanding.
D	Marginal; minimal knowledge and understanding of subject matter; more than one significant shortcoming; deficiencies indicate only the most rudimentary level of understanding.
F	Failing; unacceptably low level of knowledge and understanding of subject matter; deficiencies indicate lack of understanding.

Grading Timeline

For effective learning, students should receive timely feedback on assignments and exams. Therefore, every attempt will be made to grade assignments/exams and post grades within two weeks. Scores for all assignments and exams are regularly updated on Blackboard. You are responsible for notifying the Instructor **within one (1) week** of a score posting if you think a score is missing or inaccurate. Moreover, you only have this period of time to contest a score on an assignment/exam. If you fail to inquire/notify us of any discrepancy, missing score, or contest a score within one week of the date the score is posted, no further changes will be made.

Assignment Submission Policy

A.   All assignments are due on the dates specified. Lacking prior discussion and agreement with the instructor, late assignments will automatically be given a grade of F.

B.   Assignments must be submitted via Blackboard (blog) and email. Emailed submissions are limited to 25MB (or a file transfer link) and will be confirmed by your professor.

Add/Drop Dates for Session 001 (15 weeks: 8/23/21 – 12/3/21)

Link: https://classes.usc.edu/term-20213/calendar/

Friday, September 10: Last day to register and add classes for Session 001

Friday, September 10: Last day to change enrollment option to Pass/No Pass or Audit for Session 001

Friday, September 10: Last day to purchase or waive tuition refund insurance for fall

Tuesday, September 14: Last day to add or drop a Monday-only class without a mark of "W" and receive a refund or change to Pass/No Pass or Audit for Session 001

Friday, October 8: Last day to drop a course without a mark of "W" on the transcript for Session 001. Mark of "W" will still appear on student record and STARS report and tuition charges still apply. [Please drop any course by the end of week three (or the 20 percent mark of the session) to avoid tuition charges.]

Friday, October 8: Last day to change pass/no pass to letter grade for Session 001. [All major and minor courses must be taken for a letter grade.]

Friday, November 12: Last day to drop a class with a mark of "W" for Session 001

Saturday, November 13: Last day to change between letter grade or Pass/No pass in a letter graded course for Session 001.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Important note to students: *Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change - and probably will change - based on the progress of the class, news events, and/or guest speaker availability.*

Week	Date	Creative	Production	Academic	Progress[1]	Reading/ Media[2]
Concept						
Week 1	8/26	Introduction to Project		g		*Supplemental Reading
Week 2	9/2	Story – Plot, Structure Design: Characters/World	Development Process	Power of Visual Storytelling History of Visual Storytelling	Conceive Concept	Long Tail 1-7
Week 3	9/9	Pitching Basics			Concept Review	Long Tail 8-14 Business of Film 1-6

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[1] Email progress by noon (12:00pm PST)

[2] Reading and Media should be read/viewed ***prior*** to class.

Week	Date	Creative	Production	Academic	Progress[1]	Reading/ Media[2]
Week 4	9/16		Transmedia Principals		PitchFest	Business of Film 8-10
Design						
Week 5	9/23		Producing to Power		Storyboard v1 Script v1	By All Means Necessary Smith Inclusion Rider CSPAN Video Weiler 396-400
Week 6	9/30	Brand Storytelling Potterian Marketing		Lifecycle Management	Storyboard v2 Script v2- table read	Long Tail 15 Business of Film 7
Week 7	10/7		Pre-Pro		Boardomatic/ Ripomatic	TV Development 1st half
Week 8 Fall Break	10/14					
Week 9	10/21		Live Action Production	First Follower	Budget/ Schedule	TV Development 2nd half
Production						
Week 10	10/28	Editorial	Clearance & Copyright		Call Sheet Live Action Production	Clearance & Copyright Pt 1-2
Week 11	11/4	Post Production	Pipeline Management		Live Action / Post	Clearance & Copyright Pt 3-4
Week 12	11/11				Case Studies	
Week 13	11/18	Immersive			Post	
Week 14 Thanksgiving Break	11/25					
Week 15	12/2	Present				
Week 16	12/9	No Class – Final Post				

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

a. Academic Conduct

Plagiarism

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." Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

The School of Communication maintains a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found responsible for plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, or purchasing papers or other assignments will be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards and may be dismissed from the School of Communication. There are no exceptions to the school's policy.

In addition, it is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself, and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course, without approval of the instructor.

b. 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.

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 Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710
uscsa.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) 442-120 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu
Non-emergency assistance or information.

Annenberg Student Success Fund
https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/annenberg-scholarships-and-awards
The Annenberg Student Success Fund is a donor-funded financial aid account available to USC Annenberg undergraduate and graduate students for non-tuition expenses related to extra- and co-curricular programs and opportunities.