



**CTPR 438 – PRACTICUM IN PRODUCING
USC SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS**

Units: 2
SPRING 2022 – Thursdays, 6:00 – 9:00 PM

IMPORTANT:

Pre-Requisite: CTPR 310 – Intermediate Production or
CTPR 425 – Production Planning

Classroom: SCB 304

Instructors: Carol Baum and Samantha Hagemeyer

Office Hours: by appointment

Contact Info: carolbau@usc.edu, cbaumprods@gmail.com

Carol's cell: 310-365-3357

shagemey@usc.edu, assistcbp@gmail.com

Sam's cell: 714-615-2312

Student Asst: Emily Kim

Contact Info: emilyjk@usc.edu

Course Description

This course will provide a comprehensive overview of the world of producing. It is designed to provide the skills for producing a CTPR 480 project, other advanced USC projects, and projects produced outside of USC. We will look at how projects are conceived, developed, packaged, financed, and marketed. Who are you as a producer? What kind of projects do you want to make? How do you get them made?

The course will consist of lecture, discussion, audiovisual presentation, and guest speakers from different disciplines who will discuss their areas of expertise, i.e. agents, writers, directors, etc. You will be given the guests' resumes and will be expected to research them and prepare questions in advance.

Weekly, we will look at how culture shapes films, box office, and criticism. Become acquainted with different reviewers to see how they capture the zeitgeist.

Learning Objectives and Outcomes

We'll cover the nuts and bolts of short and long-form projects. By the end of the semester, each student should have the practical skills to pitch a project and package the talent.

Supplemental Suggested Reading

A Long Time Ago in a Cutting Room Far, Far Away: My Fifty Years Editing Hollywood Hits – Star Wars, Carrie, Ferris Bueller's Day Off, Mission: Impossible, and More by Paul Hirsch (Chicago Review Press)

Adventures in the Screen Trade by William Goldman (Grand Central Publishing)

Shooting to Kill by Christine Vachon (William Morrow)

So You Want to be a Producer by Larry Turman (Three Rivers Press)

But What I Really Want to Do Is Direct: Lessons from a Life Behind the Camera by Ken Kwapis (St. Martin's Griffin)

GRADING:

Class Participation	20%
- Discussion, Q&A (including prepared questions for guests), collaboration	
Pitch (3-5 minute pitch of an original feature)	15%
Coverage/Notes (coverage or notes on a script to be handed out)	10%
Packaging Exercise (cast and package your pitch project)	10%
Submission Letter (covering/submission letter for your pitch project)	10%
IP Pitch (verbal presentation of a property from a true story or book)	10%
Final Project (producing plan, etc. for pitch project)	25%

COURSE SCHEDULE: A WEEKLY BREAKDOWN

NOTE: This schedule is approximate. It may be adjusted as required.

WEEK 1 – Thursday, January 13: COURSE OVERVIEW. WHAT IS A PRODUCER and WHERE DOES MATERIAL COME FROM?

- Introductions. Each student will discuss their favorite movies, why they've come to USC, etc.
- Course Overview. Individual meetings will be scheduled over the course of the semester (one-on-one with the professor).
- Review Syllabus, projects, and grading. Course goals and assignments will be discussed.
- What is a producer?
- Producer titles and definitions – various types of producers
 - Define Creative Producer vs. Line Producer
 - Packagers and developers
 - Who are you? How do you define yourself as a producer? What kinds of film & TV do you want to make?
- What does a producer do?
 - Discussion of many styles of producing and how to keep the approach personal.
 - The producer temperament – are you a line producer or a creative producer?
- Work Ethic
- Where does material come from?
 - Where do ideas come from? What stories do you want to tell?
- What will work in the market place? How do you know? Current trends?
- What's the right medium for the idea?
 - How we determine the right medium – half-hour or hour TV, feature, limited series?
- What is source material? Intellectual Property (IP) and how to get it.
 - Own ideas vs. acquiring material? Originals vs. adaptations?
- What's the difference between a studio project and an indie?
 - Who are the buyers?
- Partnering – the viability of taking on a partner who compliments you
- Fantasy vs. naturalistic genre? Comedy vs. drama?

ASSIGNMENT:

Students will come up with a name for their production company and a logo. Email logo to SA and be prepared to present next class. Prepare initial pitch to present to next week's guest.

WEEK 2 – Thursday, January 20: THE ART OF THE PITCH

- Present production company logos
- Structure – what are the 3 acts that tell the story in movies?
- How to present your idea in a concise, coherent fashion.
- Rehearsal – work with each other before pitching in class
- The relevance of trailers, one sheets, movie stars, sizzle reels, look books and/or pitch decks.
- Who is your audience? Whom are you pitching to?
 - Pitch character to an actor; themes to a director
- What is a formula and what is fresh?
- What is a pitchable story?
- The high concept movie vs. the execution piece
- How do TV and film pitches differ?
- Television is all about the characters; movies tend to be plot driven
- The logline
- Personal style
- The leave behind
- Accepting a Pass on your project

ASSIGNMENT: Continue preparing and practicing your pitch to present to the class next week. Pitches should be 3-5 minutes for a feature film or limited series. Students will be divided into groups with two or three executives responsible for giving notes. Execs will comment as if they work at a studio.

WEEK 3 – Thursday, January 27: PITCHING

PRESENTATION: Students will pitch. Each group of executives will respond and give notes. Comments from the rest of the class are also welcome.

ASSIGNMENT: Read script (to be provided) in preparation for coverage/notes lecture and assignment.

WEEK 4 – Thursday, February 3: COVERAGE/NOTES

- Premise vs Concept vs Logline vs Idea
- Writer’s Strengths & Challenges – story/plot/structure
- Theme
- Genre
- Setting/Milieu
- Characters
- Market – who is the audience?
- Conclusion

ASSIGNMENT: Write coverage or notes for a script (provided).

WEEK 5 – Thursday, February 10: HOW TO GET A JOB – PART 1

- Cover letters, resumes
- The interview (mock interview activity)
- Value of having sample coverage when job hunting
- Graduate school
- Covering/submission letters for your projects

ASSIGNMENT: Write a covering/submission letter for your original pitch project and submit via email.

WEEK 6 – Thursday, February 17: REPRESENTATION

- Difference between an agent and a manager
- When do you attach yourself as a producer?
- Do you negotiate as manager, get jobs?

ASSIGNMENT: Read material provided by next week's guest.

Package your pitch project with actors, writer, and director. Write up your choices with brief explanations and submit via email.

WEEK 7 – Thursday, February 24: WORKING WITH WRITERS

- Adaptations vs. Originals
- Writing steps – drafts and polishes
- How does the producer work with the writer?
- How to do Notes
- How to give script notes
 - How to talk to a writer so that the writer will listen
- What if the writer won't do the notes?
- When to replace the writer
- WGA vs. non-WGA
- What is development hell?

WEEK 8 – Thursday, March 3: HOW TO GET A JOB – PART 2

- How to utilize your networks/contacts to find that first opportunity
- Career group discussions
- Panel of recent graduates

WEEK 9 – Thursday, March 10: TELEVISION & DIGITAL

- How the producer works in television
- How the producer works in streaming series
- Web-based entertainment
- How can you turn your feature film project into a series?

ASSIGNMENT: Revise your pitch and prepare to present to guest next class (after Spring Recess).

Thursday, March 17: SPRING RECESS

WEEK 10 – Thursday, March 24: PITCH PRACTICE

PRESENTATION: Students will pitch. Billy Ray will give feedback.

WEEK 11 – Thursday, March 31: THE DIRECTOR

- How to think about directing / reminders for the director
- How does the producer work with the director?
- How to give notes to a director
 - How to talk to a director so that the director will listen
- Working with a director in Pre-Production, Production, and Post-Production

ASSIGNMENT: Pick a book or an article from a magazine, newspaper, etc. and be prepared to pitch it to the guest speaker/book agent at next week's class.

WEEK 12 – Thursday, April 7: INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY (IP)

- How to get rights
- How to get a free option on a book or article
- The value of old books
- Why the studios buy bestsellers
- Life rights
- Present IP pitches

ASSIGNMENT: Start working on your Final Pitch Project: From your original pitch you will put together a game plan to produce it, including packaging with actors, writer, director, budget, log line, poster, marketing and distribution plan, and two other projects that form a slate. You will have up to 10 minutes to pitch to the class.

WEEK 13 – Thursday, April 14: THE BUSINESS / DISTRIBUTION

- The current state of the entertainment industry
- How do you know what kind of project you have and how to best get it made?
- Identifying and distinguishing between projects that are right for the studio system, the independent marketplace, streaming platforms, or the international production or co-production structures

ASSIGNMENT: Final Pitch Project: From your original pitch you will put together a game plan to produce it, including packaging with actors, writer, director, budget, log line, poster, marketing and distribution plan, and two other projects that form a slate. You will have up to 10 minutes to pitch to the class. Pitching order will be randomly assigned in advance and students will again be divided into groups of executives to give feedback.

WEEK 14 – Thursday, April 21: FINAL PROJECT PITCHES – PART 1

- Half of the class will pitch their final projects.

WEEK 15 – Thursday, April 28: FINAL PROJECT PITCHES – PART 2

- Continuation of final project pitches from second half of the class.

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:

USC COVID-19 Resource Center

<https://coronavirus.usc.edu/covid-19-vaccine-information-center/covid-19-vaccine-faq/>

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 Student Accessibility Services - (213) 740-0776

osas.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.

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.

PLEASE NOTE:
FOOD AND DRINKS ARE NOT PERMITTED INDOORS IN THE SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS
COMPLEX DURING COVID