

**School of Cinematic Arts
The John Wells Division of
Writing for Screen and Television**

**CTWR 321: introduction to Hour-Long Television writing
Spring 2022**

Instructor: Alexa Alemanni
Class Schedule: Fridays 10-1pm
Class Location: **SCA 363 / Zoom**
Office Hours: By request
Contact Information: alemanni@usc.edu

Course Objective:

Our objective is to understand the structure of television drama, to understand the inner workings of a writers room, to understand how to break story for a season and for an individual episode, and how to take story to completion via notes and classroom (studio) feedback, and to replicate the experience of an actual writing staff.

Course Description:

We will accomplish this by writing scenes from various existing TV 1 hour Drama Series and we will culminate by writing TWO complete original episodes of a current TV 1 hour drama. This will serve as the final course project.

Course Reading:

Writing the TV Drama Series – Fourth Edition By Pamela Douglas
Pilot scripts provided throughout the class.

Grading Criteria:

All work will be turned in via blackboard, and workshoped in class.

THE TOPICS LISTED BELOW ARE MERELY AN EXAMPLE. **(PARTICIPATION CANNOT EXCEED 10%)**

Participation:	10%
Assigned Scene Work 1 & 2:	10%
Writers Assistant Notes	10%
Two Pager for Episode 1:	10%
Two Pager for Episode 2 :	10%
Act Outline	15%
Completed Act First Draft	15%
Completed Act Final Draft	20%

	100%

As 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%

Expectation of Professionalism:

All material is expected to be turned in on time and in the proper format. Assignments will be penalized for grammatical mistakes, spelling errors, format mistakes, and typos. Please proof your assignment prior to submission.

Internet Policy:

Material discussed in the room is considered private and should not be blogged, tweeted, posted, snapchatted, or be posted anywhere else on the internet.

Recording Devices:

You may not record lectures or workshops without the consent of the instructor.

Laptop and Cell Phone Policy:

Laptops are permissible when we are workshoping material, lectures & notes. During writers room sessions laptops are only permissible during breaks, or unless you are the writers assistant for the week.

Writing Division Attendance Policy:

Class attendance is mandatory and students are expected to be on time and prepared for each class. Tardiness is unprofessional and will hold up the business of the class. Please make your best effort to be on time.

If you have a conflict that will cause you to miss class, you need to secure the instructor's approval of that absence in advance of the class. 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. In addition, due to current Covid protocols, if you are feeling ill, without time to test before class, please notify your instructor, do not attend class and get a test. If you test positive, inform your instructor and quarantine for the Health Department's designated period of time.

If you miss class without informing your instructor, it will be considered an unexcused absence. Unexcused absences can lower your final grade for the course. If you find you must miss class due to personal emergency or personal crisis, please contact your professor as soon as possible 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.

Class Schedule:

Please note that all dates are subject to change at the discretion of the professor.

CLASS SCHEDULE & ASSIGNMENTS**1. Week One - January 14th**

- * Overview of syllabus
- * Discussion of pilot structure & series structure.
- * Differences with one hour network vs. cable, the effect of streaming, how it changes storylines. How a writers room runs, and what the structure of the semester will be.

Assignment:

- * Watch the pilot episode of *Homeland*.

2. Week Two - January 21st

- * Break the story backwards, we will take the pilot of *Homeland* and reduce it down to story cards, and a thematic POV for the season and the episode.
- * Read / discuss a few pages from each show in preparation.

Assignment:

- * Watch / read, do your research on the series we will vote to work on:
 - * *Swagger* (Apple TV+) *Yellowjackets* (Showtime) *Mayor of Kingston* (Paramount +) *La Brea* (NBC) *Kevin Can Do It Himself* (AMC) *CSI: Vegas* (CBS) *Only Murders in the Building* (Hulu)
- * Write two scenes from a show you personally most want to work on. Expectations for the scene will be discussed in class. Due on **Wednesday January 26th** uploaded to Blackboard and emailed to your classmates.

3. Week Three - January 28th

- * Workshop scenes.
- * Talk about A, B & C storylines, thematic POV, acts out and more.
- * Assign writers assistants. Vote on a show.

Assignment:

- * Watch / read do your research on the series we selected. You are expected to be as knowledgeable about the show we have chosen as possible. Do your homework.
- * Write one scene from the show we have selected. Expectations for the scene will be discussed in class. Due on **February 2nd** uploaded to Blackboard and emailed to your classmates.

4. Week Four - February 4

- * Workshop scenes & analyze the show we have selected.

Assignment:

Make sure you're all caught up on the show we are working on!

5. Weeks 5 & 6 & 7 - February 11 & 18 & 25

- * Start Writers Room: Season arc, theme story ideas
- * Start breaking episode 1

Assignment:

- * Writers Assistant shares notes every week with class no later than the following Saturday at midnight

5. Weeks 8 & 9 - March 4 & 11

- * Writers Room: Finish the break of episode 1
- * (possibly start episode 2)

Assignment:

- * Writers Assistant shares notes every week with class no later than the following Saturday at midnight.
- * Two Pager for Episode One due on **Friday March 25th** uploaded to blackboard ONLY.

6. Week 10 - March 25

- * Writers Room: Finish Breaking Episode 2.

Assignment:

- * Writers Assistant shares notes every week with class no later than the following Saturday at midnight.
- * Two Pager for Episode 2 due on **Friday April 1st** uploaded to Blackboard and shared with your classmates.
- * Outline for Episode One due on **Friday April 1st** before the start of class

7. Week 11 - April 1

- * Workshop Outline for Episode 1

Assignment:

- * Outline for Episode 2 due on **Monday April 8th** before the start of class.

8. Week 12 - April 8th

- * Workshop Outline for Episode 2

Assignment:

- * Writers Assistant shares notes every week with class no later than the following Saturday at midnight.
- * Script Pages Episode 1 due on **Monday April 15th** before the start of class.

9. Week 13 - April 15th

- * Workshop Script Pages for Episode 1

Assignment:

- * Writers Assistant shares notes every week with class no later than the following Saturday at midnight.
- * Script Pages Episode 2 due on **Monday April 22nd** before the start of class

10. Week 14 - April 22nd

- * Workshop Script Pages for Episode 2

11. Week 15 - April 29th

- * Special Guest Speaker
- * Final thoughts on writers room, staffing & more

Assignment:

- * Episode 1 & 2. Final draft pages uploaded to blackboard by **May 6th** by end of day.

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.

<p style="text-align: center;">PLEASE NOTE: FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX</p>
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