CMGT 552: Visual Storytelling: Production, Management and Culture

Spring 2022 – Thursdays – 6:30-9:30 pm PST
Section: 21767D
Location: Los Angeles

Adam Fratto
Office: Remote, via ZOOM
Office Hours: viz Zoom; send an e-mail at least one day in advance with reason for meeting. On the day of the meeting, send email to confirm.
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Course Description

We identify the creative and critical media management strategies in the making of scripted entertainment, such as feature films, television series, short ('web') series, and other media.

Media management refers to the progress from conception to development, financing, packaging, 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 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 film or TV series, write and produce an original scripted short series, and generate reflective creative and critical media management case studies. There is reading and an assignment due every week**.**

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 transferable skills, e.g., crafting visual presentations and conducting research.

Prerequisites/Preparation

- Prior screenwriting or production experience is NOT required.

Course Notes

As noted, we will be holding the class using Zoom, and it is highly recommended that you attend live and participate as much as possible. Every effort will be made to post relevant materials from lectures on Blackboard.

Given the current global pandemic conditions, and the remote nature of this course, you will be expected to best navigate solutions to your challenges by communicating with me 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 and behave as you would if this were your profession.

Policies and Procedures

a. **Additional Policies**

* **Due dates:** Unless otherwise specified, all assignments are due on Class Day (Thursday) by noon PST. Late assignments are not accepted, and no points will be given for late assignments, unless arrangements have been made and approved in advance with the professor.

* **Synchronous session recording notice**: Live class sessions will be recorded and made available to students through Blackboard. Please remember that USC policy prohibits sharing of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment. As a student, you are responsible for the appropriate use and handling of these recordings under existing policies regarding class notes (hVps:// policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-c/). These rules will be strictly enforced, and violations will be met with the appropriate disciplinary sanctions.

* **Attendance policy**: Students are strongly encouraged to attend live sessions via Zoom, and to participate in online discussion and activities. This is the best way to engage with the course and keep up to date with class activities and assignments. Students who miss occasional live sessions – after informing the professor in advance - will be able to keep up with the class by reviewing class recordings.

* **Participation:** Participation is important, and it contributes to your final grade. This may include talking, when appropriate, during a zoom meeting, or using the chat function to generate or participate in discussions. Blackboard offers different types of participation, including participating in forums and completing asynchronous assignments. The distant nature of these learning environments may prompt us to forget that we are a community and that each of us and our ideas deserve respect. For this reason, it is imperative that you remember to **respect the opinion of others**, regardless of how much you disagree.

* **Zoom etiquette**: Although it is understood that you may need to turn your camera off from time to time, the rule of thumb is that it should be on.   This shows respect for your classmates,

professor and guest speakers; and it fosters community and shared purpose. A good rule of thumb is to keep your **microphone off** during zoom class, except when we are in active discussions and when you're asked to unmute. Please wear appropriate clothing and use appropriate backgrounds.

* Important Notes:

It is the intent of this class 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.

Students are encouraged to create from what they know, and sometimes to tell their own personal stories. Given the personal nature of what may be discussed in class, and the importance of an open dialogue on creative feedback within the process, it is expected that some of the conversaAons 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. Communicati**on**

When in doubt, communicate! You are encouraged to contact me outside of class for any reason. If there is a challenge in scheduling office hours, we will find another way. As a general rule, emails and calls should be returned within 48 hours (by both students and professor).

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

- Industry-standard creaAve production software will be referenced - e.g., Adobe Creative Suite, Final Draft and/or open source software such as Blender
- If you intend to shoot and edit on equipment you already own (eg iPhone camera, laptop with Premiere), it's suggested that you take time before class to familiarize yourself with the software's capabilities, because...
- Minimal production skills will be taught. If your series team lacks production skills,
  o You should take outside classes, e.g., Annenberg Digital Lab or CreatorUp.com,
  o You are encouraged to consult with outside production experts. However, the work should be your own. Remember, the goal is understanding of process, not perfect outcomes.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

(NB: These are to be ordered online; they were not ordered for the bookstore.)

- [Byte Sized TV: Create Your Own TV Series for the Internet - Kindle edition by Brown, Ross. Humor & Entertainment Kindle eBooks @ Amazon.com.](#) (9781932907866)

- [Television Development: How Hollywood Creates New TV Series - Kindle edition by Levy, Bob. Humor & Entertainment Kindle eBooks @ Amazon.com.](#) (9781138584231)

- [Amazon.com: The Business of Film: A Practical Introduction (American Film Market Presents) (9781138571419): Landry, Paula, Greenwald, Stephen: Books](#)

- [Open TV: Innovation beyond Hollywood and the Rise of Web Television (Postmillennial Pop, 20): Christian, Aymar Jean: 9781479815975: Amazon.com: Books](#)

- Additional reading will be posted on Blackboard and/or otherwise conveyed.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

READING BLOGS:

- o Compose a one-paragraph summary of the reading with a link to the reading.
- o Find a related industry news item from the past month that ties in with the reading.
- o Describe the relationship to the reading in 2-3 sentences and post the link.
- o A blog is due most weeks <u>by noon PST on class day</u>. You cannot make up for missing blogs.
- o Use reputable sources, e.g., Deadline, Variety, New York Times, Wired, Vox, etc.
- Grading will be based on clear summaries, working news links, and posting on time.
- Check your classmates' postings on Blackboard: you should be sure not to duplicate the work of others.
- FINAL BLOG POST: Due April 28, at noon PST on class day. This will be a final, longer blog post addressing Creative Media Management and referencing the assignments and activities from the class. You will be assigned the question the week before.

MAKING OF FILM/SERIES CASE STUDY (small group):

- Students will conduct a media management case study of the making of a US-made, scripted feature film or TV series. You may be able to choose a non-US based case study, or another mass-market, visually-oriented medium, upon approval of the Professor.
- The case study traces the conception, development, financing, production, marketing, distribution, and reception of the film or TV series.
- The series or film must have been released or distributed in the US in 2019, 2020 or 2021.
- I will prompt you with instructions in class for your choice of topics. Wait for detailed instructions, including group size (likely groups of 2).
- You must conduct exhaustive research. Seek out trade and reputable sources.
- Your presentation must be visual. Creativity is encouraged, as is use of varied media including video, audio, and charts/graphs. You must also present it verbally, live in class. Your presentation style should be dynamic and engaging; simply reading text off a card that everyone can see is NOT dynamic and engaging. You are encouraged to use video in your presentation; however, showing a series of publicly available video clips is NOT a substitute for research.
- You must upload your presentation to Blackboard.
- Grading will be based on your research, design, and performance.

MAKING OF INTERVIEWS (individual):

- FOR EXTRA CREDIT: secure an interview for "making of" case study project with someone either involved in writing, development, 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. I will provide interview strategies in class.

ORIGINAL SHORT SERIES PITCH (individual):

- Every student must conceive, rehearse, and record an edited 1-minute video pitch for a short series.
- Everyone must be able to successfully upload on their own YouTube account.
- You will vote for the best pitches in class, and winning pitches will be produced.
- Pitches should include title, setting, 3 main characters, their relationship, and 3-episode arc.
- Grading will be based on following instructions and not voting outcomes.

ORIGINAL SHORT SERIES AND CREATIVE MEDIA MANAGEMENT CASE STUDY (group):

- The winning pitches will be assigned a team and produced to last from 8-10 minutes (for all three episodes total).
- SCRIPT: Each team will deliver an outline and multiple drafts for review.
- PRODUCTION BREAKDOWN (call sheet plus): Once script is approved, each team must provide a breakdown that includes details about your crew, resources, casting, and production schedule. I will post samples.
- PRODUCTION: Once the script and production breakdown is approved, you may proceed with pre-production, including casting, production, 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. Along with your project, you'll be asked to submit a list of assets to be cleared ("clearance document").
- PRESENTATION: Design and present a creative media management case study that lists the strategies used and challenges encountered during the writing and production of your series. You should also be sure to mention whether/how you have included issues around diversity, inclusion and representation in your series.
- GRADE: Will depend on completion of the series and comprehensive case study analysis.

INTERVIEW STRATEGIES (for extra credit assignment):

- You should not rely on the interview for your research and analysis; rather, the goal of the interview is to extend your network of relationships in the industry. If you make a good impression, this interview may lead to a future career opportunity. This happens often.
- Through your research, prepare a list of viable candidates in production and marketing (at least 3 each). Make certain you can prove their direct and creative involvement.
- Find contact information for them, including their representatives, companies, etc.
- Sign up for a free trial of either IMDB PRO and/or LINKEDIN to find contact info.

- Request an interview using every means possible, e.g., DMs, emails, and phone calls
- Find a USC alum working in the company to help (and join the MCM group on LinkedIn).
- Beware/Court the gatekeepers, e.g., assistants, interns: be incredibly considerate; if willing to assist you, send a thank you note, coffee cards, gift card.
- Be creative, persistent, clever, and ethical. Any ethical violations will lead to repercussions.
- YOU MAY NOT ASK THE PROFESSOR or other Professors for assistance!
- Because this class is remote, it may be best to do the interview online (eg Zoom, FaceTime etc). You can also use phone or email.
- Do not record the interview or show clips of it to the class. This is to ensure privacy.

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
series pitch	5	5
short series creation and case study (group)	27	27
'making of' case study (small group)	27	27
Reading blogs (10 x 3 points each)	30	30
final blog post	5	5
Participation	6	6
TOTAL	100	**100%**

* ALSO: 5 points extra credit to each member of the team for adding an interview to your "making of" case study.

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

(The formal grades will be issued in the above +/- format, but this may prove helpful in understanding the benchmarks for progress.)

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

Every effort will be made to grade assignments and post grades within two weeks. Scores for all assignments are regularly updated on Blackboard. You are responsible for notifying the instructor within one 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. If you fail to inquire/notify me 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

Blog posts will be written and submitted in Blackboard. Regardless of whether they are also presented in class, all presentations must be submitted in Blackboard. Video assignments must be uploaded to the student's personal YouTube page, and a link provided in Blackboard.

No late assignments will be accepted. Lacking prior discussion and agreement with the professor, late assignments will automatically be given a grade of F. If you have a legitimate and verifiable emergency that makes it impossible to turn in your assignment you must:
- Email me asap and at least one day prior to the due date to notify me of your emergency,
- You may be asked to provide official proof (doctor's note or other evidence), and
- Arrange to email or upload the assignment at a later time to be determined.

Course Schedule: Weekly Breakdown (this is subject to change)

WK	DATE	TOPIC	READING DUE	ASSIGNMENT	MAKING OF	SHORT SERIES
1	1/13	Intros, survey, goals of class, video resume assignment,"coverage"				
2	1/20	Show video resumes, Visual storytelling, TV writing basics, intro to blogging with sample and instructions	Article TBD	Coverage due; video resumes due, Start writing first blog (BLOG 1) in class		
3	1/27	Making Short Series, pitching basics, sample pitches		BLOG 1		Create video pitches
4	2/3	Programming and green lights	BYTE-SIZED TV 1-10	BLOG 2		PITCHFEST: review video pitches, vote, teams announced
5	2/10	'Making Of' case studies - discussion and assignment	BYTE SIZED TV 11-epilogue	BLOG 3	Divide into teams, choose topics	outlines due by noon, review in class
6	2/17	Making Movies - how the movie business works, movie producing – review outlines	BUSINESS OF FILM 1-5	BLOG 4		1st drafts due by noon, review in class
7	2/24	GUEST LECTURE TBD	BUSINESS OF FILM 6-10	BLOG 5		2nd drafts due by noon, review in class
8	3/3	Making TV – GUEST LECTURE TBD	TV DEVELOPMENT (1st half)	BLOG 6		3rd drafts due by noon
9	3/10	Transmedia and multi-platform storytelling – GUEST LECTURE TBD	TV DEVELOPMENT (2nd half)	BLOG 7	Submit draft presentations	production breakdown due by noon, review in class
10	3/17	NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK				pre-production
11	3/24	DEI lecture, check in on production	OPEN TV Intro-3	BLOG 8		pre-pro/production
12	3/31	Basic sound and editing	OPEN TV 4-epilogue	BLOG 9	in-class presentations	pre-pro/production
13	4/7		articles TBD	BLOG 10	in-class presentations	post
14	4/14				in-class presentations	post
15	4/21			assign final blog post		SERIES FEST: show eps in class, present process, submit clearance doc
16	4/28	NO CLASS; FINAL POST		Final blog post due		

<u>All reading and assignments due at noon PST on class day unless otherwise specified.</u>

Key Dates

- **First day of classes:** Monday, January 10, 2022
- **Last day to add:** Friday, January 28, 2022
- **Last day to drop without a mark of "W" and receive a refund:** Friday, January 28, 2022
- **Last day to withdraw without a "W" on transcript or change P/NP to letter grade:** Friday, February 25, 2022
- **Last day to drop with a mark of "W":** Friday, April 8, 2022
- **Last day of classes:** Friday, April 29, 2022
- **End of session:** Wednesday, May 11, 2022

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 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.

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.