

**USC School of Cinematic Arts  
John Wells Division of Writing for Screen & Television**

**CTWR 549: REWRITING THE HOUR-LONG DRAMA SERIES  
Section #19355D  
4 Units**

**PROFESSOR:** Alexa Alemanni

**CLASS SCHEDULE:** Tuesdays, 7-10pm PST

**CLASS LOCATION:** In-Person (SCA 259)

**OFFICE HOURS:** By appointment [alemanni@usc.edu](mailto:alemanni@usc.edu)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Over the course of the semester, students will expand their screenwriting and storytelling chops by rewriting a character-driven original hour-long drama or dramedy pilot that serves as a launching pad for a limited or ongoing television series. As students rebreak, write, and revise their pilots and series bibles, they will provide and incorporate feedback to/from their peers in a writers' room setting.

By the end of the course, students will have:

- Rewritten and revised an original hour-long drama or dramedy pilot by completing the steps required for writing pilots professionally — including pitching new direction, rebreaking character arcs and beats, outlining, writing the first draft, and workshopping pages for revision.
- Written and revised a series pitch document for their original hour-long drama or dramedy that showcases the unique world and characters of the series and why it's an idea that is marketable and compelling in today's TV landscape.
- Strengthened their understanding of the core components of emotional and effective character-driven storytelling — including character, world, voice, tone, story, structure, action, dialogue, stakes, and conflict.
- Further honed their strengths and voice as a writer and storyteller write the pilot that.

**COURSE READINGS:**

- *Writing the TV Drama Series* (3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> Edition) by Pamela Douglas
- *Screenwriting is Rewriting* by Jack Epps, Jr.

- *The TV Writers' Workbook* by Ellen Sandler
- *Other texts (to be provided by instructor)*

### **GRADING CRITERIA:**

Final grades will be tallied accordingly:

Attendance & Participation: 10%

Road Map: 15%

Outline: 15%

Revised Draft: 40%

Series Pitch Document: 20%

**TOTAL: 100%**

As per Writing Division policy, the following is a breakdown of numeric grade to letter grade:

A 100% to 94%

A- 93% to 90%

B+ 89% to 87%

B 86% to 83%

B- 82% to 80%

C+ 79% to 77%

C 76% to 73%

C- 72% to 70%

D+ 69% to 67%

D 66% to 63%

D- 62% to 60%

F 59% to 0%

**ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION: Attendance and in-class participation is mandatory.** All students are expected to show up to each Zoom or in-person class meeting on time and prepared to discuss both their own work and the work of their peers. Simply showing up isn't enough. If you want an A in this class, you will need to participate.

As per the Writing Division's attendance policy: **You are allowed two absences per semester without it negatively impacting your grade.** Two late arrivals equate to one full absence. Two unexcused absences will result in your final grade being lowered by a half grade point (EX A to A-). Any further unexcused absences will result in your final grade being lowered another two thirds of a point (ex: B to a C+) for each absence. 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.

If you find you must miss class due to personal emergency or personal crisis, please contact me prior to class or contact the Writing Division at (213) 740-3303 as soon as possible so we 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.

Please note that if you are a Writing for Screen and Television major or minor, you must receive a grade of a C or better in order to receive degree credit. If you have any questions about the minimum grade required for credit, please check with your home department.

**PROFESSIONALISM:** Writing workshops are incredible training for what it is like to work in a writers' room. Thus, it is expected that everyone show up to all class sessions on time and prepared to contribute to all class discussions — including completing and responding to class readings or viewings and offering thoughtful, constructive feedback on each other's work.

**SUBMITTING ASSIGNMENTS:** Unless otherwise instructed, all written assignments are due to me and your classmates via e-mail by 12PM NOON on the Saturday BEFORE our next class. Please PROOFREAD your assignments before sending them in.

Non-script assignments should be written in Microsoft Word. Scripts should be written in Final Draft. We will be using Revision Mode in Final Draft. Please send assignments as both Word/Final Draft AND PDF documents.

### **ADDITIONAL EXPECTATIONS & CLASSROOM POLICIES:**

**INCLUSION, EQUITY & RESPECT:** It is my responsibility to ensure that our classroom is an open, welcoming, and safe environment for every student regardless of race, ethnicity, cultural background, citizenship status, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, ability, body size, socioeconomic background, and/or political affiliation. Thus, I promise to do my best to make sure all students feel supported, respected, and validated when it comes to the many intersections of their identities and lived experiences. I will refer to students by their preferred names and pronouns. Students can choose to share preferred name and pronouns in class, after class, or privately via e-mail. If there are additional ways you identify that you would like me to be aware of, please feel free to share. If I make mistakes or assumptions, feel free to call me out and correct me, so I have the opportunity to do better. And I will expect and encourage everyone to offer each other this same level of support, respect, and validation.

**CONFIDENTIALITY/INTERNET POLICY:** What happens in the writers' room stays in the writers' room. Anything discussed in class — especially peers' ideas, writing,

and personal information — is confidential and should not be blogged, tweeted, or posted about online. Please be kind and respect each other's privacy.

**LAPTOPS, TABLETS & CELL PHONES:** Because of the online nature of our class, electronic devices are now a requirement. But the expectations remain the same: Texting, e-mailing, or other use of the Internet and social media during class time is not acceptable. If it becomes a noticeable problem or disruption, I will ask you to dismiss you from class.

**RECORDING DEVICES:** You may not record lectures or workshops without the consent of the instructor.

**FOOD & DRINK:** Eating and drinking in all SCA classrooms are strictly prohibited. Eating and drinking during Zoom sessions will be allowed, but please be respectful. If it becomes disruptive or distracting, I'll ask that no one eat during class time.

## **CLASS SCHEDULE & ASSIGNMENTS**

### **WEEK 4 — 9/13/22: Catching Up**

- \* **DISCUSSION:** Introductions. COMPONENTS OF A PITCH. What we've missed, what we need to catch up on.
- \* **WORKSHOP:** Pitch your pilot story. What's the engine. Broader conversation about your pilots.
- \* **ASSIGNMENT:** Work on the two intro parts of the pitch: why you, why now & world.

### **WEEK 5 — 9/20/22: Road Map**

- \* **DISCUSSION:** Road Maps and how it will lead to your outline changes.
- \* **WORKSHOP:** Why you / Why now / World, begin character conversations.
- \* **ASSIGNMENT:** Create a road map of the changes you want to make, break them into categories: story, character, theme, and ultimately plot. Work on the Character portion of the pitch. Due via email the SATURDAY before class.

### **WEEK 6 — 9/27/22: Road Map**

- \* **DISCUSSION:** Outlines, pilot / season arc pitch components.
- \* **WORKSHOP:** Road map / character part of the pitch.
- \* **ASSIGNMENT:** Outlines, DUE via email the SATURDAY before class.

### **WEEK 7 – 10/04/22: Outlines**

\* **WORKSHOP:** Outlines.

\* **ASSIGNMENT:** Break into TWO groups. Group A Write Teaser & Act 1. Teaser DUE via email the SATURDAY before class.

### **WEEK 8 - 10/11/22: Teaser & Act 1 Group A**

\* **WORKSHOP:** Teaser & Act 1 Group A

\* **ASSIGNMENT:** Group B turns in Teaser & Act 1 via email the SATURDAY before class. Group A starts work on Act 2.

### **WEEK 9: 10/18/22: Teaser & Act 1 Group B**

\* **WORKSHOP:** Teaser & Act 1 Group B

\* **ASSIGNMENT:** Group A will turn in Act II & pilot / season arc component of pitch via email the SATURDAY before class. Group B starts on Act II.

### **WEEK 10 - 10/25/22 - Group A Act II**

\* **WORKSHOP:** Group A, Act II

\* **ASSIGNMENT:** Group B turns in Act II & pilot / season arc component of pitch by SATURDAY via email before class. Group A begins work on Act III.

### **WEEK 11 - 11/01/22: Group B Act II**

\* **WORKSHOP:** Group B Act II

\* **ASSIGNMENT:** Group A turns in Act III by SATURDAY via email before class. Group B begins work on Act III.

### **WEEK 12 - 11/08/22: Group A Act III**

\* **WORKSHOP:** Group A Act III

\* **ASSIGNMENT:** Group B turns in Act III by SATURDAY via email before class. Group A begins work on Act IV.

### **WEEK 13 - 11/15/22: Group B Act III**

\* **WORKSHOP:** Group B Act III

\* **ASSIGNMENT:** Group A & Group B turn in Act IV by SATURDAY via email before class.

#### **WEEK 14 - 11/22/22 - Group A & B Act IV**

\* **WORKSHOP:** Group A & B Act IV

\* **ASSIGNMENT:** Assemble pitch doc, with adjustments you've made throughout the journey.

#### **WEEK 15 - 11/29/22 - Group A & B Pitch Workshop**

\* **WORKSHOP:** Full pitch.

\* **ASSIGNMENT:** Revised pilot & pitch documents due Sunday 12/11/22 at 11:59pm.

### **STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC CONDUCT & STUDENT 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](https://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](https://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

#### **SUPPORT SYSTEMS:**

***Student Health Counseling Services: (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call***

[engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling](https://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***

<https://policy.usc.edu/student-health-leave-absence/>

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.

***National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call***

[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day and 7 days a week.

***Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP): (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call***

[engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp](https://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](https://equity.usc.edu) | [titleix.usc.edu](https://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](https://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](https://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.

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***USC Support and Advocacy: (213) 821-4710***

[studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa](http://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](http://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 Numbers – UPC: (213) 740-4321 / HSC: (323) 442-1000 – Both 24/7 on call***

[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://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 – Both 24/7 on call***

[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

**DIVERSITY & 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](mailto: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.