CTPR 491: VIRAL COMEDY
Units: 2
Spring 2023—Tuesday—7:15 PM to 9:15 PM

Location: SCA 310 or ZOOM (In the event we have to revert to online instruction.)

Instructor: Christopher Guerrero
Office: Virtual
Office Hours: By appointment
Contact Info:
guerreca@usc.edu 213.282.8207
Emails and calls will be answered within 24 hours

Teaching Assistant: Adrienne Picciotto
Office: Virtual
Office Hours: By appointment
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IT Help: Group to contact for technological services, if applicable.
Hours of Service:
Contact Info: Email, phone number (office, cell), Skype, etc.

Course Description
Learn how to translate traditional storytelling tools into short-form comedy that will stand out online. While movies and TV are not a thing of the past, YouTube, IGTV, and Tiktok have become a part of our future. This class will encourage students to explore these newer avenues as outlets for their creative voices. They will be excepted to write, direct and perform in all assigned creative projects.

Learning Objectives
Through lectures, guest speakers, video assignments, and peer critique, students will leave the course with a better understanding of short-form media, a collection of tools to showcase their individual voice online, and strategies for adapting their short-form content into traditional media. Students will be equipped to jumpstart their comedy careers.

Course Notes
Letter grading will be based on completing assignments and participation in peer review. It will be an online course.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required
Students will submit links to their video assignments to be reviewed by the teachers and the class. If we have to revert to online instruction, the course will meet over Zoom.

Recommend Free Editing Software: Davinci Resolve
NOTE: This class will not teach you how to edit/use equipment or cameras.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials
Recommended Reading
Class Specific Reading:
- Vorhaus, John. *The Comic Toolbox How to Be Funny Even If You're Not*
- Anand, Bharat. *The Content Trap: A Strategist's Guide to Digital Change*
- Walsh, Matt. Roberts, Ian. and Besser, Matt. *Upright Citizens Brigade Comedy Improvisation Manual*
- Dewoney, Andrew and Ride, Peter. *The Digital Media Handbook (Media Practice) 2nd Edition*
- Pressfield, Steven. **The War of Art**

Extended Filmmaking Reading
- Arijon, Daniel. *Grammar of the Film Language*.
- Block, Bruce. *The Visual Story.*
- Katz, Steven D. *Film Directing Shot by Shot.*
- Murch, Walter. *In the Blink of an Eye.*

Description and Assessment of Assignments
Over the course, **SEVEN** projects will be due. Each Project will have a set of prompts and videos due. Each Project will have two class sessions dedicated to it. The first class, which we will refer to as CLASS A, will consist of students pitching projects, group brainstorms, and individual script/beats review. A reflection paper based on the topic and videos created for the Project will be due for every CLASS A on the previous VIDEO PROJECT(S). CLASS B will focus on the student's creative output – short video(s) or other creative assignments will be due for this class. CLASS B sessions will showcase students' work followed by peer review and brainstorming next PROJECTS.

Work will be assessed by effort and completion, not a subjective review of their comedic/creative talents.

<u>FIRST-CLASS</u>
1. Submit a link to your favorite piece of comedic internet content. **TEN LOGLINES -** Ten Logline/pitches for comedy videos. These can be for any format or platform. Don't overthink it. These are to help get you started and begin a dialogue. This class begins with quantity over quality.
2. **FIRST SCRIPT -** One script or beat sheet (a list of things that happens in the video, typically each 'beat' is a shot) for one of your ideas. Again don't overthink, just a jumping-off point.
3. A link to your favorite internet comedy video. We will be sharing these in class and discussing them. (You will share them in the chat on the first day)

<u>PROJECTS OVERVIEW</u>
Each student will write, direct, produce, and edit short projects. **The personal safety of cast, crew members, and the general public is ALWAYS the single most important consideration in any production, and each student in the USC SCA Filmmaking Workshop will, at all times, observe all professional, ethical, and safety standards that will protect everyone on the set.** The production elements essential to the success of this Workshop are:
- Careful, meticulous, and detailed pre-production
- Warm, open, and inspired collaboration among all classmates, colleagues, and faculty
- Punctuality, confidence, kindness, courage, and passion
- Compassion, gratitude, generosity, respect, humility, and absolute professionalism

<u>NOTES ON COMEDY</u>
This class is a safe place for everyone to explore comedy. While all comedy is subjective, this class will not tolerate hate speech or comedy created only to offend. In this class, we will learn to not be lazy with our comedy, but dig to find a deeper truth.

<u>PERSONAL EVALUATIONS OVERVIEW</u>
Due *the class after* the Project. In essay form of at least one page, you will write a brief synopsis, outline your intentions, and then evaluate the strengths and the weaknesses of your Project. You will also indicate things you want to improve and new ideas. Your Personal Evaluations will constitute 30% of your overall grade for each Project.

<u>THE PROJECTS</u>
These projects are not about perfection. They are exercises to force you to create the simplest and focused pieces of work possible. In this class, we will focus on quantity over quality. This allows us to not second guess our ideas and quickly learn from the mistakes we make. Every Project will be better and better.

NOTE: Though no specfic prompts are given, depending on the project the professor may modify and give specfic guidelines on projects.

<u>FINAL PROJECT: ADAPTING YOUR CONTENT</u>
Building off one of your projects throughout the semester or an idea you have been working on and pitching to the class. Students will create a longer-form piece of content. Students should be brainstorming and thinking about this Project from **DAY 1** and prepping to shoot this Project while shooting their other projects.

<u>PROJECTS</u>

> **PROJECT 1 - 4:**
> Using one of the videos ideas you pitched in class, create a 1-2 minute Internet Comedy Video. Do not overthink these projects. They aren't supposed to be perfect.

PROJECT 5- 6:
Using a concept, you pitched and/or based on a previous video from class. Create 3 (1 minute) Internet Comedy Videos that would work as a series.

PROJECT 7 FINAL:
Using a concept, you pitched and/or based on a previous video from class. Create the elevated and longer-form version of that concept (3-5 min MAX). The sky is the limit with this Project. All of these fast and quick Internet videos have prepared you to think fast and learn. Think of this video as a pilot for something that you might want to make longer form or as a "calling card" for projects you want to make in the future.

Seven distinct topics (or units) will be taught over the semester. Each unit will have two class sessions dedicated to it. The first class, which we will refer to as CLASS A, will consist of lecture and video examples. A reflection paper based on the topic covered in the unit will be due for every CLASS A. CLASS B will focus on the student's creative output -a video or another creative assignment will be due for this class. CLASS B sessions will showcase students' work followed by peer review.

All assignments should have at least 1 minute of content for review by the class. So if you choose to do TikToks or other short formats, make sure that they add up to at least one minute to show in class.

Work will be assessed by effort and completion, not a subjective review of their comedic/creative talents.

NOTE: Depending on the assignment, all assignments MUST be put in the proper location on the class Blackboard site AND on the class internet storage platform. More details will be given in class.

Grading Breakdown

Assessment Tool (assignments)	Points	% of grade
Participation and Collaboration	15	15
Project 1 Finished Video, including Personal Evaluation	10	10
Project 2 Finished Video, including Personal Evaluation	10	10
Project 3 Finished Video, including Personal Evaluation	10	10
Project 4 Finished Videos, including Personal Evaluation	10	10
Project 5 Finished Videos, including Personal Evaluation	10	10
Project 6 Finished Video, including Personal Evaluation	10	10
Project 7 (FINAL) Finished Video, including Personal Evaluation	25	25
TOTAL	100	100

Grading Scale
Course final grades will be determined using the following scale
A   95-100
A-   90-94
B+   87-89
B   83-86
B-   80-82
C+   77-79
C   73-76
C-   70-72
D+   67-69
D   63-66
D-   60-62
F   59 and below

Assignment Submission Policy

VIDEO PROJECTS - will be due at **11:59 PM** the day before Class A on Blackboard under Assignments. A video file of the Project should be uploaded to the proper location of the class storage drive.
PERSONAL EVALUATIONS - will be due at **11:59 PM** the day before Class B days as a post on Blackboard under Assignments.

NOTE: If you do not follow the proper naming and uploading guidelines your assignments will be considered LATE and will have points reduced.

1. All videos are **due the Monday before class at 11:59 pm**, if you are going to miss this deadline due to unforeseen issues please contact the professor of the SA immediately.
2. Please name your videos/persoanl evaluations like this:
   FirstName_LastName_AssignmentName_Date *EXAMPLE: Chris_Guerrero_Horror_09042021*
3. For video assignments please upload to the appropriate assignment Google Drive folder (link below).
4. https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1vhZ4jH6rcPcsoZK5Y9L36DyWIRF3pI_Y?usp=share_link
   NOTE: You must be logged into your USC e-mail for this link to work.
5. Once uploaded please create a google drive link from the uploaded video and submit it under the appropriate assignment on BlackBoard, this has a deadline of 11:59 pm.

Grading Timeline

Each assignment will be graded within a week of submission.

Additional Policies

No more than two absences will be allowed. If more than two absences occur, there will be a deduction of a full letter grade. If four or more absences occur, the student will automatically fail the course.

Production Numbers:
Production Numbers will be given to any class who normally receives numbers. Students will be instructed when it is possible for them to go onto SCAcommunity and create numbers where authorized for their class. Class SAs will aid students in making, or correcting, production numbers if needed. Note many classes work in teams where they share a production number. Ask your SA about the needs for your particular class.

This semester, the School of Cinematic Arts will be covering all student Insurance Premiums and Lab Fees which are normally charged to students. Students will be required to use approved "Fast Track" Insurance companies only for rentals and equipment. No other insurance requests will be honored. USC does not insure Sharegrid or companies not on the "Fast Track List."

Students may still make requests for location insurance verifications (or COIs) when requested by locations. Students are reminded that these requests can take 3-10 days from request to final approval.

All necessary forms and online request forms are available on SCAcommunity under the "Student Productions" heading. Contact your SA with any questions that you may have.

In terms of shooting plans, student are required to vet their plans with their faculty including discussing any Hazardous Shooting Conditions as defined by the SCA's Safety Book as posted on SCAcommunity. In the event we have to revert to online instruction students will also be required to vet their plans for remaining Covid-safe with our Covid Safety Monitor. Ask your SA if you are unclear about these protocols.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

	Topics/Daily Activities	Deliverables
Week 1 **1/10**	(CLASS A): Introduction to the course. Each student will share their favorite piece of comedic internet content and explain why it resonates with them? Discussion will focus on the move away from traditional media toward short-form content. Why is this type of content resonating so much with viewers?	4. Submit a link to your favorite piece of comedic internet content. **TEN LOGLINES -** Ten Logline/pitches for comedy videos. These can be for any format or platform. Don't overthink it. These are to help get you started and begin a dialogue. This class begins with quantity over quality. 5. **FIRST SCRIPT -** One script or beat sheet (a list of things that happens in the video, typically each 'beat' is a shot) for one of your ideas. Again don't overthink, just a jumping-off point. 6. A link to your favorite internet comedy video. We will be sharing these in class and discussing them. (You will share them in the chat on the first day)
Week 2 **1/17**	(CLASS B): Peer Review	Project 1
Week 3 **1/24**	FINDING YOUR VOICE (CLASS A): How can you ensure your specific POV is shining through? How do you identify your specific POV?	Personal Eval – Project 1
Week 4 **1/31**	(CLASS B): Peer Review	Project 2
Week 5 **2/7**	WHY IS TIKTOK SO POPULAR? (CLASS A): Exploration of escapism. How do we grab people's attention without having to dance?	Personal Eval – Project 2
Week 6 **2/14**	(CLASS B): Peer Review	Project 3
Week 7 **2/21**	EVERGREEN CONTENT (CLASS A): Why is some content still funny years later? How do we tap into fundamental human truths that stay relevant no matter the year?	Personal Eval – Project 3
Week 8 **2/28**	(CLASS B): Peer Review	Project 4

Week 9 3/7	TIME SENSITIVE CONTENT (CLASS A): How do you create content for a specific moment in time? How can you tell based on what's trending online what will do well and what people want to see at that moment?	Personal Eval – Project 4
Spring Break 3/14		
Week 10 3/21	(CLASS B): Peer Review	Project 5
Week 11 3/28	SERIALIZED CONTENT (CLASS A): How do you make your audience want more of the same idea? How do you get them to tune in week to week or day to day?	Personal Eval – Project 5
Week 12 4/4	(CLASS B): Peer Review	Project 6
Week 13 4/11	ADAPTING YOUR CONTENT (CLASS A): TBD Final Project Chat	Personal Eval – Project 6
Week 14 4/18	TBD - ADAPTING YOUR CONTENT (CLASS B): How do you translate a viral video or popular web series into a TV or movie?	Script/Pitch Final Project 7
Week 15 4/25	ADAPTING YOUR CONTENT (CLASS C): Peer Review	Final Project 7
FINAL 5/2	NO CLASS – FINAL PROJECT DUE	Final Personal Eval – Project 7 Refer to the final exam schedule in the USC *Schedule of Classes* at classes.usc.edu.

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.

Safety:
All students are expected to abide by USC School of Cinematic Arts Safety Guidelines. Violations of any of the safety guidelines may result in disciplinary action ranging from confiscation of footage to expulsion from the University.

Stressful Times:

These are stressful times in our country, and Graduate School in and of itself is stressful. I encourage you to take care of yourself and your fellow students. USC provides opportunities for Mindful Meditation http://mindful.usc.edu and Mental health counseling is available at the Engemann Student Health Center, 1031 W. 34th Street, 213-740-9355.

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.

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 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 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.