

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

**CTWR 519B: THESIS IN TELEVISION DRAMA
Spring 2023**

Instructor: Maria Jacquemetton
Class Schedule: Tuesdays 7PM – 10PM
Class Location: SCA 361
Office Hours: By appointment
Contact Information: email: mjacquem@usc.edu phone: (310) 614-8466

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This is the second half of a year-long class in creating an original television drama series. This semester, students will re-write the script for the original hour-long drama pilot written in the Fall semester. Additionally, they will write and revise a format for their television series, using the “pitch pages” written during 519A, as well as the finished pilot script itself, as a jumping off point for this document.

Class will follow a workshop form and will be run similar to a television writers’ room with the instructor acting as Showrunner and students as the writing staff. Students are expected to write their individual assignments while reading their fellow writers’/students’ work, giving and receiving feedback (aka “notes”), and revising their own work, simultaneously. Class discussion topics and our workshopping schedule will be adjusted by the instructor as needed.

Mimicking the development of a television series, students will experience what it is like to receive and address notes on their project, develop a comprehensive and professional pitch including format and visual “pitch deck,” for their original series, write to a deadline, give notes and receive them in a positive and constructive manner. The goal of the course is for each student to end the semester armed with their final pilot script and series format which they can take into the marketplace when seeking representation and/or employment on a television staff.

COURSE OBJECTIVE:

The objective of this course is to experience the rewrite process in the development cycle for a one-hour drama television pilot. In addition, each student will revise their initial pitch for the series (written during Fall Semester) to create a Series Format using the pilot script to platform the show. The script and the Series Format will be turned in at the end of the Semester, and will count as the final for this course.

As mentioned above, the end goal of the course is for each student to finish the Spring semester armed with their completed: final pilot script and Series Format. These documents ideally will be professionally written and ready for the student to use as a calling card when seeking representation, and take into the marketplace when seeking work.

Course Reading:

- *Writing the TV Drama Series*, 4th Edition, by Pamela Douglas
- *The Dreaded Curse, Screenplay Formatting for Film and Television* by Kat Montagu
- Various handouts, including sample Series Formats, pitch decks, and periodicals to be distributed by instructor via PDF or website link.

Grading Criteria:

Unless otherwise instructed, all written assignments are due to the instructor and your classmates via email by **midnight on the Sunday before our next class.**

PLEASE MAKE EVERY ATTEMPT TO MEET YOUR DEADLINES as turning work in on time is a vital part of succeeding as a television writer in the workplace.

Please write Script assignments in Final Draft.

Please send all assignments as a PDF document.

Participation and Professionalism (this includes coming to class prepared with verbal and written feedback of your fellow students' work)

10%

Series Pitch Pages (written)

10%

Final Draft Pilot Script

50%

Series Formatt

30%

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%

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:

Class will mimic the experience of a professional writers room as experienced by the instructor (myself), including rules, expected code of conduct, participation and professionalism. Cell phones will not be permitted to be used during class time for texting or any other purpose. Please keep them out of sight. If you have an emergency situation or personal reason for needing your phone during class, please speak to me or contact me via email and accommodations can be made. Laptops are permitted in class for the purposes of note taking. However, instructor reserves the right to ask that laptops be closed or put away at any time during the class period.

Writing Division Attendance Policy:

This class is a workshop and your participation in the discussion is important. Participation includes full involvement in, and contribution to, class discussion, as well as reading (in advance at times; see schedule) the assignments of your colleagues and offering thoughtful, constructive comments.

Class attendance is mandatory and students are expected to be on time and prepared for each class. Tardiness is unprofessional and disrespectful to the class. Two late arrivals equals 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 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.

IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY: As before mentioned, we will treat our classroom like a professional writers room. What happens in the writers room stays in the writers room. That means anything discussed in class — especially peers' ideas, writing, and personal information — is confidential and

should not be shared with anyone outside of the other members of the class verbally or otherwise. **Do not blog, tweet, Snapchat, or post about anything discussed during class online.** Please respect each other's privacy.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

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

Assignments and deadlines will be subject to change given the evolving pace of the students' rewrites. Instructor will adjust page count expectations week to week depending on how extensive notes were given to students by their Thesis Committee members.

WEEK 1: Friday, 01/13/2023 – Thesis Committee Session

- Information regarding your session time and location will be emailed to you by the Writing Office.

WEEK 2: 01/17/23 - Review of TV Pilot, Series Concepts, Processing Notes to begin your rewrite.

- Discussion will include any thoughts/intentions students have had about their pilot scripts during their time away from their projects and/or have come up after meeting with their Thesis Committee Members.
- Review of what makes a successful series pitch. The importance of character, world, and voice in the original pilot. Theme, relevance, and the "why now" of a series. Personal connection and the "why you?" element as writer-creator.
- IN CLASS EXERCISE: Thinking outside the box, prepare to pitch each other's pilots. Each student will be assigned to formulate a short "elevator pitch" of a fellow student's pilot script from last semester. We will use class time to prepare your elevator pitch, which must include logline, world, main character or characters, theme, tone, and why you are the person to write this series. The purpose of this is to familiarize yourselves with the process of coming at your work from a completely different viewpoint, which is often essential in the re-write process.
- WORKSHOP: Students will workshop the notes given to them by their Thesis Committee Members in an effort to decide which notes to implement and how best to move forward with their rewrite.
- VIEWING: Time Permitting, we will view some sample pitch decks to get you thinking about your series formats.

ASSIGNMENT: Start re-writing your pilot. This semester your page count deadlines will be more fluid than last semester. Instructor will adjust page count

expectations week to week depending on how extensive notes were given to students by their Thesis Committee members.

WEEKS 3 through 10 (01/24/2023 through 03/21/2023)

- Pilot scripts in the revision process are brought to class and workshopped each week. Scenes are discussed and students are continuously advised.

ASSIGNMENT: Rewrite the Pilot script.

SPRING RECESS – 03/14/2023

Weeks 11 – 03/28/2023 – Series Format - Discussion and workshop

- Using various industry resources as examples, we will discuss the components of a Series Format.
- WORKSHOP: Verbal pitches of format elements with feedback
- READING/HANDOUTS – Sample Series Formats TBD by instructor.

ASSIGNMENT: Finish rewrite of your Pilot Script and write your Series Format.

Week 12 – 04/04/2023 – Series Format

Workshop Series Formats.

Week 13 - 04/11/2023 – Complete Series Format, Deliver Final Pilot Script

FINAL PILOT SCRIPTS ARE DUE TO THESIS COMMITTEE ON FRIDAY OF THIS WEEK, APRIL 14th, NO LATER THAN 12:00PM NOON PACIFIC TIME.

- Final workshop of Series Formats.
- Students must **email their completed final draft pilot script as a PDF** to their thesis instructor, all of their thesis committee members, and Katie Sternberg.

Week 14 – No class on Tuesday, 04/18/2023.

YOUR FINAL THESIS COMMITTEE DAY IS FRIDAY, APRIL 21, 2023

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/sssa

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.

PLEASE NOTE:

FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX