

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

**CTWR 549: Rewriting the Hour Long Drama Series**

Instructor: Alexa Alemanni  
Class Schedule: Tuesdays 7-10pm  
Class Location: SCA 363  
Office Hours: By request  
Contact Information: alemanni@usc.edu

**Course Objective:**

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 hone their strengths and voice as a writer and storyteller.

**Course Reading:**

*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

**Grading Criteria:**

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%	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%

### **Attendance & Participation:**

**Attendance and in-class participation is mandatory.** All students are expected to show up to each 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 end of day Saturday BEFORE our next class. Please PROOFREAD your assignments before sending them in.

### **Confidentiality/Privacy 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 / Phones:**

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.

## **CLASS SCHEDULE & ASSIGNMENTS**

### **WEEK 1: January 10**

\* **DISCUSSION:** Introductions. Syllabus, Expectations for the class. Components of a pitch for your revisions.

\* **ASSIGNMENT:** Read one and another pilots, come in with prepared notes as discussed in class.

### **WEEK 2: January 17th**

\* **DISCUSSION:** Notes on each pilot. More detailed work on why you / why now / world of your story.

\* **ASSIGNMENT:** Work on the two intro portions of your pitch: Why you, why now & World

### **WEEK 3: January 24th**

\* **WORKSHOP:** Why you, why now & World portions.

\* **ASSIGNMENT:** Character portion of pitch, paragraph arc of the pilot.

### **WEEK 4: January 31st**

\* **WORKSHOP:** Character, paragraph arc of the pilot.

\* **DISCUSSION:** Road maps and how it will lead to your upcoming changes

\* **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 5: February 7th**

- \* **WORKSHOP:** Road maps
- \* **DISCUSSION:** Two-pager or cards, requirements for next week
- \* **ASSIGNMENT:** Turn in either story cards or a two pager of your revised episode. Due via email the SATURDAY before class.

#### **WEEK 6: February 14th**

- \* **WORKSHOP:** Two-pager or story cards.
- \* **ASSIGNMENT:** Outlines. Due via email the Saturday before class.

#### **WEEK 7: February 21st**

- \* **WORKSHOP:** Outlines.
- \* **ASSIGNMENT:** Split into two groups. Group A turns in Act 1 (Or Act 1 & 2) Due via email the Saturday before class.

#### **WEEK 8: February 28th**

- \* **WORKSHOP:** Group A Act 1
- \* **ASSIGNMENT:** Group B prepares Act 1 (Or Act 1 & 2) Due via email the Saturday before class.

#### **WEEK 9: March 6th**

- \* **WORKSHOP:** Group B Act 1
- \* **ASSIGNMENT:** Group A prepares Act 2 (or 3) Due via email the Saturday before class.

#### **WEEK 10: March 13th**

- \* **WORKSHOP:** Group A Act 2 (or 3)
- \* **ASSIGNMENT:** Group B prepares Act 2 (or 3) Due via email the Saturday before class.

**\*\* SPRING BREAK \*\***

#### **WEEK 10: March 20th**

- \* **WORKSHOP:** Group B Act 2 (or 3)
- \* **ASSIGNMENT:** Group A Act 3 (or 4) Due via email the Saturday before class.

#### **WEEK 11: March 20th**

- \* **WORKSHOP** Group A Act 3 (or 4)
- \* **ASSIGNMENT:** Group B Act 3 (or 4) Due via email the Saturday before class.

#### **WEEK 12: March 27th**

\* **WORKSHOP: Group B Act 3 (or 4)**

\* **ASSIGNMENT: Group A Act 4 (or 5)** Due via email the Saturday before class.

**WEEK 13: April 4th**

\* **WORKSHOP:** Group A Act 4 (or 5)

\* **ASSIGNMENT:** Group B Act 4 (or 5) Due via email the Saturday before class.

**WEEK 14: April 11th**

\* **WORKSHOP:** Group B Act 4 (or 5)

\* **ASSIGNMENT:** Revised Pitch, due in class.

**WEEK 15: April 19th**

\* **WORKSHOP:** FULL PITCHES, including season arc. Wrap up of class.

\* **ASSIGNMENT:** Revised pilot & pitch documents due May 5th 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](http://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](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

**Support Systems:**

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

[engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://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](http://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](http://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](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 - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 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 – 24/7 on call*

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

**PLEASE NOTE:**

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