CTPR 438 – PRACTICUM IN PRODUCING
USC SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS

Units: 2
FALL 2023 – Thursdays, 6:00 – 8:50 PM

IMPORTANT:
Pre-Requisite: CTPR 310 – Intermediate Production or
CTPR 425 – Production Planning
Classroom: RZC 111
Instructors: Carol Baum and Samantha Hagemeyer
Office Hours: by appointment
Contact Info: carolbau@usc.edu, cbaumprods@gmail.com
Carol's cell: 310-365-3357
shagemey@usc.edu, assistcbp@gmail.com
Sam's cell: 714-615-2312
Student Asst: Caroline McDonald
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Course Description

This course will provide a comprehensive overview of the world of producing. It is designed to provide the skills for producing a CTPR 480 project, other advanced USC projects, and projects produced outside of USC. We will look at how projects are conceived, developed, packaged, financed, and marketed. Who are you as a producer? What kind of projects do you want to make? How do you get them made?

The course will consist of lecture, discussion, audiovisual presentation, and guest speakers from different disciplines who will discuss their areas of expertise, i.e. agents, writers, directors, etc. You will be given the guests' resumes and will be expected to research them and prepare questions in advance.

Weekly, we will look at how culture shapes films, box office, and criticism. Become aquainted with different reviewers to see how they capture the zeitgeist.

Learning Objectives and Outcomes

We'll cover the nuts and bolts of getting a feature or television series made. By the end of the semester, each student should have the practical skills to pitch a project and package the talent.

Supplemental Suggested Reading

A Long Time Ago in a Cutting Room Far, Far Away: My Fifty Years Editing Hollywood Hits – Star Wars, Carrie, Ferris Bueller's Day Off, Mission: Impossible, and More by Paul Hirsch (Chicago Review Press)
But What I Really Want to Do Is Direct: Lessons from a Life Behind the Camera by Ken Kwapis (St. Martin's Griffin)
Bulletproof: Writing Scripts that Don't Get Shot Down by Diamond & Weissman (Michael Wiese Prods.)
Cinema Speculation by Quentin Tarantino (Harper)
CREATIVE PRODUCING: A Pitch-to-Picture Guide to Movie Development by Carol Baum (Allworth) – pre-order on Amazon, book available in October

GRADING:

Class Participation   25%
- Discussion, Q&A (including prepared questions for guests), collaboration

Pitch   20%
(3-5 minute pitch)

Packaging Exercise   10%
(cast/package a provided script)

IP Assignment   20%
(from a true story or novel)

Final Project: Coverage/Notes   25%
(coverage or notes on a script to be handed out)

COURSE SCHEDULE: A WEEKLY BREAKDOWN

NOTE: This schedule is approximate. It may be adjusted as required.

WEEK 1 – Thursday, August 24: COURSE OVERVIEW. WHAT IS A PRODUCER and WHERE DOES MATERIAL COME FROM?

- Introductions. Each student will discuss their favorite movies, why they've come to USC, etc.
- Course Overview. Individual meetings will be scheduled over the course of the semester (one-on-one with the professors).
- Review Syllabus, projects, and grading. Course goals and assignments will be discussed.
- What is a producer?
- Producer titles and definitions – various types of producers
  - Define Creative Producer vs. Line Producer
  - Packagers and developers
  - Who are you? How do you define yourself as a producer? What kinds of film & TV do you want to make?
- What does a producer do?
  - Discussion of many styles of producing and how to keep the approach personal.
  - The producer temperament – are you a line producer or a creative producer?
- Work Ethic
- Where does material come from?
  - Where do ideas come from? What stories do you want to tell?
- What will work in the market place? How do you know? Current trends?
- What's the right medium for the idea?
  - How we determine the right medium – half-hour or hour TV, feature, limited series?
- What is source material? Intellectual Property (IP) and how to get it.
  - Own ideas vs. acquiring material? Originals vs. adaptations?
- What's the difference between a studio/streaming project and an indie?
  - Who are the buyers?
- Partnering – the viability of taking on a partner who compliments you

ASSIGNMENT: Students will come up with a name for their production company and a logo. Email logo to SA and be prepared to present next class.

WEEK 2 – Thursday, August 31: WORKING WITH WRITERS
- Present production company logos
- Adaptations vs. Originals
- Writing steps – drafts and polishes
- How does the producer work with the writer?
- How to do Notes
- How to give script notes
    - How to talk to a writer so that the writer will listen
- What if the writer won't do the notes?
- When to replace the writer
- WGA vs. non-WGA
- What is development hell?

WEEK 3 – Thursday, September 7: THE ART OF THE PITCH
- Structure – what are the 3 acts that tell the story in movies?
- How to present your idea in a concise, coherent fashion.
- Rehearsal – work with each other before pitching in class
- The relevance of trailers, one sheets, movie stars, sizzle reels, look books and/or pitch decks.
- Who is your audience? Whom are you pitching to?
    - Pitch character to an actor; themes to a director
- What is a formula and what is fresh?
- What is a pitchable story?
- The high concept movie vs. the execution piece
- How do TV and film pitches differ?
- Television is all about the characters; movies tend to be plot driven
- The logline
- Personal style
- The leave behind
- Accepting a Pass on your project

ASSIGNMENT: Begin preparing your pitch project. Pitches should be 3-5 minutes for an original feature film or limited series. Send your pitch idea to Carol and Sam for approval (a paragraph will suffice).

WEEK 4 – Thursday, September 14: PITCHING PRACTICE
- Group activity: From a list of existing films, students will select one and then work in groups to develop a pitch.
- Students will first simplify the story into a logline, and then expand to an elevator pitch.
- Pitches will be presented to the class.

ASSIGNMENT: Prepare and practice your individual pitch to present to the class next week. Pitches should be 3-5 minutes for an original feature film or limited series. Students will be divided into groups of executives responsible for giving notes. Execs will comment as if they work at a studio.

WEEK 5 – Thursday, September 21: PITCHING

PRESENTATION: Students will pitch and get feedback from professor. Each group of executives will respond and give notes. Comments from the rest of the class are also welcome.

WEEK 6 – Thursday, September 28: THE DIRECTOR
- How to think about directing / reminders for the director
- How does the producer work with the direcctor?
- How to give notes to a director
  - How to talk to a director so that the director will listen
- Working with a director in Pre-Production, Production, and Post-Production

WEEK 7 – Thursday, October 5: REMAKES
- What makes a good remake?
- Movies that revive a genre
- Foreign movies
- Star-driven vehicles
- Avoid classics
- Has enough time gone by?
- Why remake it? Why is this story relevant today?
- Compare/contrast and discuss clips from original films and remakes
- Group activity: Working in groups, come up with an existing movie to remake, and present your take to the class. How would you remake it? Do you have a new angle? Why now?

Thursday, October 12: FALL RECESS

WEEK 8 – Thursday, October 19: TELEVISION & DIGITAL
- What is going on in the television/streaming landscape?
- How do you work with your clients as a manager?
- How to negotiate
- Web-based entertainment
- How can you turn your feature film project into a series?

ASSIGNMENT: Pick a book or an article from a magazine, newspaper, etc. and write it up in a page or less. Describe the story and why you think it is worth adapting to film or television. Submit via email and be prepared to pitch it to the guest speaker/book agent at next week's class if time allows.

WEEK 9 – Thursday, October 26: INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY (IP)

- How to get rights
- How to get a free option on a book or article
- The value of old books
- Why the studios buy bestsellers
- Life rights
- Present IP pitches if there is time

ASSIGNMENT: Read script (to be provided) in preparation for coverage/notes and packaging assignments.

WEEK 10 – Thursday, November 2: BUSINESS AFFAIRS/REPRESENTATION

- Difference between an agent and a manager
- When do you attach yourself as a producer?
- What is it like working in business affairs at a major studio?
- When do you need a lawyer?
- Negotiating deals

ASSIGNMENT: Package a script (to be provided) with actors, writer, and director. Write up your choices with brief explanations and submit via email.

WEEK 11 – Thursday, November 9: HOW TO GET A JOB

- Cover letters, resumes
- The interview (mock interview activity if time allows)
- Value of having sample coverage when job hunting
- Entry-level jobs, working at an agency, being an assistant, etc.
- Networking, resources, etc.
- Graduate school
- Covering/submission letters for your projects
- Panel of recent graduates

WEEK 12 – Thursday, November 16: COVERAGE/NOTES

- Premise vs Concept vs Logline vs Idea
- Writer's Strengths & Challenges – story/plot/structure
- Theme
- Genre
- Setting/Milieu
- Characters
- Market – who is the audience?
- Conclusion

ASSIGNMENT: Final Assignment: Write coverage or notes for the provided script. Due last class.

Thursday, November 23: THANKSGIVING

WEEK 13 – Thursday, November 30: THE LANDSCAPE OF HOLLYWOOD
- Guest will discuss the landscape of Hollywood, zeitgeist, etc.
- Divide students into groups to research production companies/buyers
- Groups will research and present on the following topics/questions:
    - Background/history on the company
    - Past significant projects
    - Are they doing movies and TV?
    - Who is head of development? Are there multiple execs in different divisions? (movies vs. TV, drama vs. comedy, etc.)
    - Do they have any overall or first look deals? Where?
    - Has their image changed over the years?
    - How involved are the stars? (for example, Reese Witherspoon at Hello Sunshine)
    - Where does the money come from?
    - Do they like/require IP?
    - What's their current or recent slate of projects? What are they looking for?
    - Pitch a logline for something appropriate that you would bring them
- Other groups will role-play as their company to provide feedback on pitches

STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students are expected to be on time and prepared for each class. One absence may result in a student's grade being lowered by one notch (IE: A becomes A-). Two absences may result in a student's grade being lowered by two notches (IE: A- becomes B). A third absence may result in a student's grade being lowered another full point (IE: B becomes C). Grades can be lowered by one full point for every additional absence.

Tardiness**:** A student is deemed late 7 minutes after the class is scheduled to start. One late arrival may not affect your grade. Two late arrivals equate to one full unexcused absence. (IE: A becomes A-). Three late arrivals may result in your grade being dropped by two portions (IE: A- becomes B). Four late arrivals may result in your grade being dropped three portions (one full point: B becomes C). Lateness of more than 30 minutes will count as an absence.

Timely attendance is mandatory and failure to attend all class sections from beginning to end may affect grades.

- Exemptions will be allowed on a case-by-case basis, and must be supported by a written accommodation request from the USC Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS).

- Students who become ill and need to self-isolate will be supported in their efforts to stay current with classwork and assignments. Faculty are no longer required to provide an option for students to zoom into class. However, faculty may choose to use zoom at their discretion in an effort to help students stay current in their course work. **Students must contact the professor or SA 24 hours prior to class start time if they need to miss class for any reason.**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy:
In this course, you are allowed to use artificial intelligence (AI)-powered programs to help you with assignments that indicate the permitted use of AI. You should also be aware that AI text generation tools may present incorrect information, biased responses, and incomplete analyses; thus, they are not yet prepared to produce text that meets the standards of this course. To adhere to our university values, you must cite any AI-generated material (e.g., text, images, etc.) included or referenced in your work and provide the prompts used to generate the content. Using an AI tool to generate content without proper attribution will be treated as plagiarism and reported to the Office of Academic Integrity. Please review the instructions in each assignment for more details on how and when to use AI Generators for your submissions.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Integrity:
The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, compromises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university's mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see the student handbook or the Office of Academic Integrity's website, and university policies on Research and Scholarship Misconduct.

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call
The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX) - (213) 740-5086
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.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298
Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - *(213) 740-0411*
Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion - *(213) 740-2101*
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*
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*
Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - *(213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)*
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.

Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice - *(323) 442-2850 or* otfp@med.usc.edu
Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

PLEASE NOTE:
FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACE
IN THE SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX