

SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS
CTPR 409 – Reality-Unscripted Development Class

SYLLABUS

Visit: <https://trojanvision.usc.edu>

Semester: Fall 2023

Location: Robert Zemeckis Center for Digital Arts, Studios B

Instructors: JD Roth (jroth@usc.edu)

Course Coordinator: Harrison Merkt

Office Hours: Monday-Friday by appointment

Meeting Times: Classes meet on Weds 3pm-5:20pm

SA: Kamran Allahverdy (kallahve@usc.edu)

UNITS: 2 or 4 Units



This class is open to all students from any school or department in the university.

Students enrolling in CTPR 409 do not require any television production experience.

All of the skills needed to successfully complete this course are taught in class.

Course Title: Unscripted TV Show Development and Production

Course Overview:

This college-level course provides a comprehensive exploration of the process of creating and producing unscripted television shows, also known as reality TV. Students will gain practical skills and knowledge in developing engaging show concepts, crafting persuasive verbal pitches, creating sizzle reels and creative decks, and overseeing the production of unscripted content.

Through a mix of theoretical lessons, hands-on exercises, guest lectures, and real-world case studies, students will be well-equipped to pursue careers in the dynamic world of unscripted TV.

HOW DO STUDENTS REGISTER FOR A SPECIFIC CLASS?

Enrollment is easy. On the WebReg, students sign up for a 2-Unit section on a day/time that fits their schedule. Before classes begin, Trojan Vision assigns an original Trojan Vision show to each of the 409 sections, depending on showrunner, faculty, SA and staff schedules.

WHAT ARE TROJAN VISION SHOWS?

Each semester, Trojan Vision produces a selection of its original shows for live broadcast. These shows are modeled on the popular classics of live television and their formats include morning news, talk shows & interviews, game shows, cooking shows, music performance, sports talk, sketch comedies and entertainment news.

WHAT WILL STUDENTS DO IN CLASS?

This college-level course, titled "Unscripted TV Show Development and Production," offers an immersive exploration of the entire process involved in creating and producing unscripted television shows, commonly known as reality TV. Students will be equipped with practical skills and comprehensive knowledge to develop captivating show concepts, refine persuasive verbal pitches, construct attention-grabbing sizzle reels and creative decks, and effectively oversee the production of unscripted content.

Furthermore, the course emphasizes the paramount importance of storytelling as an indispensable tool for thriving in the real world. Recognizing that the ability to convey compelling narratives is crucial not just for business success – including securing raises and funding – but also for personal growth, building relationships, and achieving life goals. Through a combination of theoretical teachings, interactive exercises, insightful guest lectures, and real-world case studies, students will be well-prepared to enter the dynamic realm of unscripted TV and to excel in various aspects of life.

ARE THERE ANY PREREQUISITES?

No. This class is open to all students from any school or department in the university. It's assumed that students enrolling in CTPR 409 have no television production experience. All of the skills needed to successfully complete the course are taught in class.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

AUGUST 21 – introductions. syllabus review. Talk unscripted and genres of reality.

- Deep dive into how reality tv started with visual examples of the shows I created
- Defining unscripted TV genres and sub-genres
- Historical evolution and impact on the entertainment industry

- Ethical considerations in reality TV production
- 3 original reality show pitches over 14 weeks.
- pitch #1 groups of 4
- pitch #2 groups of 2
- pitch #3 individual

AUGUST 28 – Discuss what pitch materials are and how the creative process works.

Group selection process for pitch #1 – 5 groups of 4 people in each

In detail, I will introduce students to 3 different pitches, dissect the materials, and then show how they ended up as television shows. I will also demonstrate how a real pitch works.

FIRST BLUE SKY MEETING

SEPTEMBER 4 - OFF

SEPTEMBER 11 – THE PITCH. Guest speaker BRANT PINDIVIC teaching the “3 minute rule” to pitching

Homework: Send 3 log lines for your Pitch #1 idea prior to next class

SEPTEMBER 18 – Each team will pitch their spring board one liner and I will give each group approval to move forward on materials
Ideation, Conceptualization, and Pitches

- Identifying target audiences
- Generating creative show concepts and formats
- Crafting compelling loglines and elevator pitches
- Developing storytelling techniques for verbal pitches

Homework: Writing first draft of deck treatment and show outline

SEPTEMBER 24 – Full season episodic breakdowns and plan for what your pitch materials will be. Also hear each student pitch just the concept out loud – class discussion on each idea and collaboration on how to improve

Using studio B we will begin to shoot and capture sizzle material if needed for students ideas. Tech demo and begin shooting

- Producing Techniques and Filming

- Camera techniques and visual storytelling
- Directing unscripted scenes and interactions
- Capturing authentic moments and emotions

OCTOBER 2 – The BIG pitch #1 to class with full materials sizzle and decks

All 5 groups will pitch deck and show sizzle reels as if pitching a network executive
Feedback given

OCTOBER 9 – Select smaller groups for pitch #2

10 groups of 2 students each

Ideation begins to create new show in any genre of unscripted

Homework: log lines due prior to next class

OCTOBER 16- All 10 groups to Pitch concept to class

- Creating Persuasive Materials
- Designing creative decks for presentations
- Tailoring materials to specific networks/platforms

OCTOBER 23 -The BIG pitch #2 to class with full materials sizzle and decks

- Post-production, Editing, and Storytelling
- Editing principles and storytelling through editing
- Assembling scenes and constructing narratives
- Incorporating music, sound design, and graphics

OCTOBER 30 – All students will now develop their OWN concept for Pitch #3

Open to the collaboration with other students. Ideation on concepts in class, with log lines pitched and approved to move forward

NOVEMBER 6 - continue to work in class on materials in class, and use of Studio B for shooting also available.

Development executives in class to help work on ideas and development concepts further

NOVEMBER 13 – The BIG FINAL pitch #3 to class with full materials sizzle and decks

NOVEMBER 20 - Thanksgiving Week. FINAL pitch to real TV buyers

- Student presentations of final unscripted TV show concepts
- Pitch your best work from the semester
- Pitching to agents, network executives, and streamers

NOVEMBER 27 – final class

- Peer feedback and evaluation
- Reflection on the course and future career prospects
- how can I be helpful to get you to where you want to go with pitching and story telling

Note: This syllabus focuses on practical skills such as creating sizzle reels, crafting creative decks, and perfecting storytelling techniques for verbal pitches. It condenses the course into 14 weeks while still providing a well-rounded understanding of unscripted TV development and production.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

Throughout the course, students will receive assignments that are directly related to the instructions provided in class or specific components of producing materials for their show ideas. The class will guide students through a step-by-step process, starting from a basic log line, and progressively leading them through the creation of all the necessary materials to pitch their ideas to real networks or platforms. Grading will be based on the quality of assignments completed, active participation, the development of show materials, and the final presentation of their concept. This approach ensures students gain hands-on experience and practical insights into the unscripted TV development and production process.

GRADES

Grades are based on the timely submission of assignments and the active participation and creative input class to class. Instructors also evaluate students' preparation for class, engagement in discussions, professional behavior and team collaboration.

Assessment and Grading:

- Class participation and engagement: 25%
- Assignments and exercises: 25%
- Sizzle reel and creative deck project: 25%
- Final project Verbal pitch and storytelling technique (developed show concept and pitch): 25%

ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to be on time and prepared for each class. This class is performance-based and attendance is extremely important. Two unexcused absences will result in a grade being lowered by one full letter (example: A becomes B). A third unexcused absence will result in a grade being lowered by one additional, full letter grade (B becomes C). Grades will be lowered by one full letter for each additional absence. Two unexcused late class arrivals equal one full absence. Students must report an absence to the instructor and SA before class begins.

CELL PHONE & SAFETY POLICY

Cell phones, laptops, tablets and other personal devices may be used in class only if needed for course and show related work. Sandals and open-toe shoes are not permitted in the studios. Students should dress appropriately for crew jobs in the facility.

CREDITS - 2 or 4 UNITS

CTPR 409 can be taken for 2 units (one class per week) and may be repeated up to four times.

CTPR 409 can be taken for 4 units (two classes per week) and may be repeated twice. CTPR 409 can be taken for a total maximum of 8 units.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – when a student presents someone else’s ideas as their own, either verbatim or recast in their own words – it is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please review 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:

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, nonconsensual 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 USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with students to explore options or paths to manage their concern.

PLEASE NOTE:

FOOD AND DRINKS ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX.