

USC SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS
The John Wells Division of Writing for Screen & Television

CTWR 521: Advanced Hour Long Drama
FALL 2023

Instructor: Alexa Alemanni
Class Schedule: Wednesdays, 1:00pm - 3:50pm
Class Location: SCA 345
Office Hours: By Appointment
Contact Information: alemanni@usc.edu

Course Objective:

Our goal is to write a polished hour-long spec script with a complete understanding of the process: How to mimic the world of the series. How to choose and pitch a spec story for that series. How to break and outline an hour-long episode. And finally, how to write the script.

Course Description:

This course is conducted with elements of a writers' room, with the operating principle that we are interdependent and that twelve brains are better than one. Everyone will be involved in the conception and realization of everyone else's script.

Course Reading:

Writing the TV Drama Series by Pamela Douglas, 4th edition - required for anyone who has not read this book in a previous class.

Script Format:

All scenes will be written in standard script format using professional screenwriting software such as "Final Draft."

Laptop and Cell Phone Policy:

Laptops are to be used solely for scene work being discussed in class, and only with the permission of the instructor. Cell phones will be turned off.

Grading Criteria:

Grades: 10% = Pitch / 2 pager / story cards
10% = Participation
40% = Outline
40% = Final draft of script

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%

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. **Spellcheck and proofread** 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 on the internet.

Recording Devices:

You may not record lectures or workshops without the consent of the instructor.

Laptop and Cell Phone Policy:

Laptops may be used for the purpose of taking notes during workshop. Cell phones should be turned off. Students using phones will be asked to leave class.

A.I. Policy

The uses of generative Artificial Intelligence to create narrative continue to evolve throughout the media workplace. However, it is vital that before relying on AI to assist in aspects of storytelling that we learn to source and execute our work via our own unique imagination.

Creating, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course. All assignments should be prepared by the student working individually or in groups. Students may not have another person or entity complete any substantive portion of the assignment. Developing strong competencies in these areas will prepare you for a competitive workplace. Therefore, using AI-generated tools is prohibited in this course, will be identified as plagiarism, and will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

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.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Week 1: August 23rd

- * Introductions and syllabus.
- * Introduction to the principles of writing episodic TV drama – structure and act breaks.
- * Watch Act 1 of *Homeland* / *Bel-Air* Turn into Scene Cards / Story Cards
- * Introduction to Miro
- * Strategize the best spec series, evaluate the WB fellowship list (With adjustments for 2023)

Assignment:

- * Prepare for voting next week
- * Practice scene cards & story cards for Act 1 of the pilot from a show you want to work on.

Week 2: August 30th

- * **Vote** on which three shows from the list we will write.
- * Discuss pitches, 2-pagers, outlines, story arcs.
- * Begin structure / thematic conversations on all three shows.

Assignment:

- * Watch the shows
- * Prepare a pitch for your episode and **prepare to pitch** either in story cards / or paragraph form (no more than 2)

Week 3: September 6th

- * Pitch ideas
- * Continued discussion structure / thematic conversations on all three shows.

Assignment:

- * Write OUTLINE of Teaser / Act 1.

Week 4: September 13th

- * Workshop OUTLINE of Teaser / Act 1.

Assignment:

- * Finish outline.
- * OUTLINES DUE ON EMAIL CHAIN SATURDAY END OF DAY

Week 5: September 20th

- * Workshop Outlines

Assignment:

- * Write Teaser / Act 1 (depending on structure module)

Week 6: September 27th

- * Workshop Teaser / Act 1 (depending on structure of your show)

Assignment:

- * Write Act 1 / Act 2 (depending on structure module)

Week 7: October 4th

- * Workshop Act 1 / Act 2 (depending on structure of your show)

Assignment:

- * Write Act 2 / Act 3

Week 8: October 11th

- * Workshop Act 2 / Act 3

Assignment:

- * Write Act 3 / Act 4

Week 9: October 18th

- * Workshop Act 3 / Act 4

Assignment:

- * Write Act Four / Act 5

Week 10: October 25th

- * Workshop Act 4 / 5

Assignment:

- * Road map of changes you want to make.
- * DUE ON EMAIL CHAIN SATURDAY END OF DAY

Week 11: November 1st

- * Workshop road map.

Assignment:

- * Begin revisions.

Week 12: November 8th

- * Workshop revisions.

Assignment:

- * Continue revisions
- * DUE ON EMAIL CHAIN SATURDAY END OF DAY

Week 13: November 15th

- * Workshop revisions
- * DUE ON EMAIL CHAIN SATURDAY NOV 26th END OF DAY

****THANKSGIVING BREAK****

Week 15: November 29th

- * Workshop Revisions
- * Wrap-up

Assignment:

- * Revise revise revise
- * Final draft due to Blackboard by **December 8th 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” <https://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, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Support Systems:

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

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

<https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. <https://equity.usc.edu/>

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. <http://dsp.usc.edu>

Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

Diversity at USC

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. <https://diversity.usc.edu/>

USC Emergency Information

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, [http://
emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

USC Department of Public Safety – 213-740-4321 (UPC) and 323-442-1000 (HSC) for 24-hour emergency assistance or to report a crime.

Provides overall safety to USC community. <http://dps.usc.edu>

PLEASE NOTE:

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