



USC

CTAN 511: Special Topics Demystifying the TV Animation Pipeline

Units: 2

Spring 2024, Wednesdays

Time: 7:00p – 8:50p Location: SCB 207

Instructor: Monica Mitchell

Office Hours: email to arrange a time

Contact Info: monicam0@usc.edu

Student Assistant: Grayson Abdalla

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IT Help: (213) 841-4571

Contact Info: creativetech@cinema.usc.edu

This is an in-person class.

In accordance with university recommendations, all meetings of this class will be held in person. Students who become ill and need to self-isolate will be supported in their efforts to stay current with classwork and assignments, to the extent possible. Please contact Prof. Monica Mitchell and your SA Grayson Abdalla

at least one hour prior to class start time if you become ill and need to self-isolate. Do not come to class if you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 or other illnesses. Requests for longer-term exemptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis and must be supported by a written accommodation request from the USC Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS).

Course Description

An in-depth explanation of how animated TV Shows are managed and produced. Removing the mystery of how things are budgeted and scheduled.

This class will be a combination of discussion and understanding of how each part of the animation production process gets executed. I will share my experience and knowledge of what it takes to produce animated content today. We will break down and explore each department and talk about each position in various animated productions. Learn about the various applicable unions like IATSE, 839 Animation Guild WGA, SAG, and the various labor laws and rules. We will cover the basics behind production insurance, and legal requirements to run a production company. You'll learn how to hire an employee. Will they be exempt or non-exempt hires? What's the difference? How does payroll work? NDAs, legal clearances, standards and practices, trademark and copyright concerns. Ethics in every part of the job. Relationships and how they are golden and need to be protected at all costs. Negotiating talent deals, casting, and music. Working for a big company vs a small company. How to start a small business. Ways to improve crew morale and why it's so important. Suggestions on networking and industry affiliations. Overall discussion of the nature of animation production in the world today.

You will be required to create a production schedule, budget, and assumptions page as the semester project based on a current animated TV show. You will present a 1st draft of your production schedule during the mid-term. Final Presentation of your completed assignments will take place during the last class of the semester. You will be graded on the meticulousness of the schedule, budget, and assumptions page, along with how well you present your materials.

I will bring in several guest speakers, which are current working professionals to help support and explain further the various topics. I've included some recommended resources for reading below.

Learning Objectives

You will have access to insider knowledge of the animation production process. We'll learn how to set up a serialized production from the ground up. Learn how to work with vendors and how to handle the bidding process. Understanding the basics behind human resources, recruiting, training or firing someone. You will create your own TV animation budget and schedule which can be used as a template for anything you decide to produce in the future or have as a reference.

Prerequisite(s): None

Co-Requisite(s): None

Concurrent Enrollment: None

Recommended Preparation: Knowledge of Microsoft Excel or similar programs.

Resources for Reading:

SAG

<https://www.sagaftra.org/>

WIA

<https://womeninanimation.org/>

TAG

<https://animationguild.org/contracts-wages/>

Editors Guild

<https://www.editorsguild.com/>

California Labor Laws – Department of Industrial Relations

Description and Assessment of Assignments

You will be required to create (1) a TV production schedule based on an existing animated TV show, (2) a series budget from the schedule you created, and (3) an assumption pages document that summarizes the schedule and series budget, as the semester project. TV show selection will need to be emailed and approved in advance. Templates and handouts to use to create the required assignments will be provided. Rates and costs will also be discussed during class. Presentation of student projects will take place twice (1) during week 10 and (2) during the last class of the semester.

Grading Breakdown

Assessment Tool (assignments)	Points	% of Grade
Mid Term – 1 st Draft of Production Schedule Only – Week 10	25	25%
Production Schedule	15	15%
Production Budget	20	20%
Assumptions pages	20	20%
Presentation of Series Schedule/Budget – Week 15	15	15%
Homework/Prep Materials	5	5%
TOTAL	100	100%

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

Assignment Submission Policy

1st draft of the production schedule is due on week 10 of class. All final assignments are due during class day of finals week. Attachments will need to be emailed to my USC address for official submission.

Grading Timeline

You will received feedback the following week after submission.

Additional Policies

Please be on time and present without outside distractions during class. Be respectful of everyone in the classroom. You can gain 5 extra credit points by attending an industry event. Event must be approved in advance and in writing. You will be required to do a 1-page write up of what you learned.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings/Preparation	Deliverables
Week#1 1/10/2024	Intro. Class overview, about me, class expectations, discuss the syllabus. Get to know you.		
Week #2 1/17/2024	Discussion of the various types of animation production, nature of animation creation today	Please select 2 unique animated TV shows to discuss in class	
Week #3 1/24/2024	Script writing, writers' room, dealing with agents and lawyers, legal script process – S&P (Standards and Practices) copyright		

	infringement and protection		
Week #4 2/1/2023	Casting, voice recording	Review SAG agreements prior to class. These will be emailed to you in advance.	
Week #5 1/31/2024	Understanding every position on an animated production and at the Network/Buyer and their function. Understanding salary bands for each role. *Discuss Assignment for Storyboarding topic next week.	Review salary scale handbook for 839 artists. Be prepared to look up rates. Rate handbook can be found here: https://animationguild.org/	
Week #6 2/14/2024	Storyboarding process, thumbnails, board driven vs. script driven projects, timeframes for storyboarding	*Please email 2 examples of animated TV shows to discuss in class regarding storyboarding style.	Email your 2 shows to my USC email address in advance of class
Week #7 2/21/2024	Design department processes, hierarchy and creative kick offs, timelines	Final Project - TV Show Selection Due	TV series selection and submission to my USC email address. This will be the show you will create a schedule, budget and assumptions for the final grade.
Week #8 2/28/2024	Animatics, purpose of the animatic, various ways to approach the animatic		Work on TV Series Production Schedule
Week #9 3/6/2024	Post-Production - Sound design, various spotting sessions licensed music, originally composed music, songs, composers, retakes, visual effects, compositing, final picture, final mix, delivery, QC Process		Work on TV Series Production Schedule
No Class 3/11-15	No Class	SPRING BREAK March 11-15	
Week #10 3/20/2024	Mid Term – Review 1 st draft of the production	1st Draft of your Production Schedule is due	Present in Class the first draft of your production schedule

	schedule in class/Critique		
Week #11 3/27/2024	Budgeting overview		Work on TV Series Production Schedule and Budget
Week #12 4/3/2024	Back end of the business – operations, facilities, human resources, recruiting, office space, payroll – W2 employees vs. loan outs, independent contractors. Understanding payroll fringe rates.		Work on TV Series Production Schedule and Budget
Week #13 4/10/2024	Back-end part 2 - Insurance - Errors and Omissions, workers comp, big company vs. small companies to work for. Benefits to both.		Work on TV Series Production Schedule and Budget, Assumptions Page
Week #14 4/17/2024	Student presentation and critique of budget and schedules	1st draft of Budget/Assumptions pages are due	Work on TV Series Production Schedule and Budget, Assumptions Pages
Week #15 4/24/2024	Student presentation and final critique prior to final project submission	2nd Draft of your Production Schedule and Budget/Assumptions pages are due	Present in Class the 2 nd Draft of your Production Schedule and 2 st draft of Budget/Assumptions Pages
4/27-30, 2024	Study Days		
FINAL EXAM 5/1/2024	FINAL EXAM	Final Production Schedule, Budget and Assumptions Pages Due	Due: Wed. May 1th 9:00p

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, comprises 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