

**USC SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS
CTPR 409 – Unscripted Lab**

SYLLABUS

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

Semester: Spring 2024

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 3:00pm-5:20pm

SA: Kamran Allahverdy (kallahve@usc.edu)

Show Runner: Max Johnson

UNITS: 2 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 DESCRIPTION:

Get hands-on experience learning the skills needed to make competition shows, docu-series and reality TV. Taught by JD Roth (creator of The Biggest Loser, Bar Rescue, Endurance, Beauty and the Geek, and many others), this course blends self-contained lab experiences with guest lectures from industry professionals. From capturing challenges to learning “the art of the bite”, this course will deconstruct the elements that make compelling pieces of unscripted media stand apart.

HOW DO STUDENTS REGISTER FOR A SPECIFIC CLASS?

On the WebReg, students sign up for a 2-Unit section on a day/time that fits their schedule.

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 DOES THIS CLASS CONSIST OF?

Students will collaborate in groups to create five projects—a talk show, a “prisoner’s dilemma” game, a challenge, a development pitch, and a final project of their choice. All production will

take place within class hours, however, each student will be responsible for editing one of the class projects as homework.

Each project will consist of four phases: lecture, demonstration, production, and a screening. In the lecture, the instructor will explain best practices and provide examples of successful executions of the concepts being taught in class. During the demonstration, the instructor (in addition to guests from the industry) will show how to properly use the skills taught in the lecture through an example run-through of production. During production, students will assume all creative and technical roles to shoot the project during class hours. As homework, a group of students will edit the footage to be reviewed next class. The final phase, the screening, will consist of the instructor and students giving constructive feedback about the production and edit of the project.

The fourth project will be a development pitch. This project will have students work in groups to create a slide deck and sizzle reel detailing their idea for an original unscripted media property.

The final project will have students work in groups of 3-4 to produce an unscripted piece between 3-10 minutes in length following any format they choose. If they like, they can create a proof of concept based on what they pitched in the development project. While students will have some time in class to work on this final project, it is expected that some production will occur outside of class hours as well.

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

January 8:

- Watch introduction videos, go over the syllabus. Assign students to editing groups (A, B, or C). Discuss multicam production and editing in preparation for the talk show.
 - HOMEWORK: Groups develop creative for talk show.

January 15:

- Martin Luther King Jr. day, no class.

January 22:

- Students will work in groups to produce a mini-talk show using students in the class as subjects. Instructors will help demonstrate proper technique and best practices.
 - HOMEWORK: Group A will edit the talk shows. DUE January 29th.

January 29:

- Screen talk show edits, instructors and students will provide feedback. “Art of the Bite” lecture with good examples and some egregiously bad examples. Introduce the Prisoner’s Dilemma format with video examples.

February 5:

- Instructors and an industry guest will demonstrate how to produce the Prisoner’s Dilemma format, including in game footage and mid/post game interviews. Detailed explanation of how to get good bites.

February 12:

- Students will work in groups to produce the Prisoner’s Dilemma format.
 - HOMEWORK: Group B will edit the Prisoner’s Dilemma format. DUE February 26th.

February 19:

- Presidents’ Day, no class.

February 26:

- Screen Prisoner’s Dilemma edits, students and instructors will provide feedback. Introducing the next format: the challenge. Discuss the types of challenges (endurance, ready-set-go, skill), how to get good drama, how to ensure play-along, and how to cover it effectively. Watch challenges from Karma, Minute to Win It. Quarter on elbow pitch.
 - HOMEWORK: ALL STUDENTS will come up with 2 challenges to test next class, March 4th.

March 4:

- Students will test prototypes of the challenges in class, workshopping their mechanics and getting feedback as to how they could be made better. Instructors will demonstrate how to properly cover these challenges.

March 11:

- Spring recess, no class.

March 18:

- Students will work in groups to produce their Challenge formats.
 - HOMEWORK: Group C will edit this footage to be screened next class.

March 25:

- Screening of the Challenge edits with feedback from the class. Development project will be introduced with examples of successful industry sizzle reels and pitch decks.
 - HOMEWORK: ALL STUDENTS will come to class with three ideas of potential unscripted series.

April 1:

- Development workshop. Instructors will provide feedback on ideas and help students narrow down their favorite ideas to create pitch materials for.
 - HOMEWORK: ALL STUDENTS will work in groups to create pitch materials (at least a pitch deck, could include a sizzle and/or a playthrough) for next class.

April 8:

- Students will give their development pitches and receive feedback. Instructors will discuss the final project and give students an opportunity to sign up for in-class production time.

April 15:

- Final project workshop where students will work in groups on their final projects and produce it in class using the department's equipment if they so desire.
 - DUE NEXT CLASS: Final projects.

April 22:

- Final project watch party!!! Class post mortem discussion.

GRADES

Grades are based on the timely submission of assignments and the active participation and creative input class to class.

GRADING CRITERIA

Participation and collaboration	40%
Editing and other Homework	25%
Final Project	20%
Final Evaluation	15%

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.