USC School of Cinematic Arts – CTPR 466 (The Art of the Pitch) – Spring 2024
Section: 18573 (2 Units)

Faculty:	**Tom Jacobson**	**Richard Shepard**	**SA:**	**Luna de Buretel**
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Day/Time: **Tuesdays 6:00pm - 8:50pm**   Room: **SCB 104**   Office Hours: **By Appt.**

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Learning how to present your ideas to buyers in a compelling and entertaining way is indispensable to success and survival in the entertainment industry. We will investigate what makes an idea pitchable, how to develop your pitch, how to assess and effectively target the marketplace, and whether or not to wear flip-flops to the meeting (the answer is not as obvious as you think). This is boot camp: you will be on the griddle pitching as often as time permits. Guest speakers will join to share their wisdom and war stories, and to hear your pitches. Some of the visitors will be friendly, some will be intimidating, just like real life.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Develop and distill compelling stories for film and TV series.
- Effectively present stories in a concise, professional, and captivating manner. This includes pitching to sell projects, and simply talking about your stories to garner enthusiasm in collaborators, friends, and others.

PROJECTS and ASSIGNMENTS

We will review requirements and further details in class for each assignment, to include:

- Miscellaneous assignments and in-class exercises
- Existing Pitch: Existing Feature (3 minutes)
- Midterm Pitch #1: Original Feature (5 minutes)
- Midterm Pitch #2: Original series (5 minutes)
- Final Pitch: Original Feature or Series (10 minutes)

WEEKLY LESSONS/TOPICS

Including, but not limited to:How to Talk About Story: The Logline and the Central Question

- The Elements of the Feature Pitch: Pitch Structure and Characters
- Skill Building: Performance and Presentation
- The Elements of the Series Pitch

- Pitching Yourself as a Director

REQUIRED MATERIALS

For one assignment you will be asked to use an existing movie to base a pitch. Otherwise, no textbooks or software purchases will be required for this course. Each student must maintain an ongoing effort to stay current with industry news. Supplementary and suggested readings, viewings, and listening material will be shared in class throughout the semester, and emailed or posted to Blackboard, Google Drive, or similar when appropriate.

GUEST SPEAKERS

Throughout the course, guest speakers will visit the class to share their knowledge and experiences, and to listen and provide feedback to your pitches. Examples of guests include working professionals such as studio executives, managers, agents, producers, writers, and directors. Confirmed speakers will be announced during class or via email on an ongoing basis, in advance when possible, and subject to change based on guest availability. Any relevant information about guest speakers, including readings/viewings/listens, will be posted to Blackboard, Google Drive or similar as appropriate, and in advance when possible.

ATTENDANCE

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 to help students stay current in their course work. *[Please note: This course will not be available synchronously via Zoom except in very rare pre-approved cases.]*

Students must contact the professor and SA via email with a minimum of 24 hours prior to class start time if they need to miss class (including arriving late and leaving early) for any reason. Excused tardy arrival and absences will be considered on a case-by-case basis. In the event of a last minute/emergency tardy or absence (less than 24 hours before class start time), students must contact the SA via email <u>and</u> text before class start time.

GRADES

This course is graded on a letter grade basis, using the following scale:

Letter grade	Corresponding numerical point range
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

Assignments and achievement will be evaluated on both subjective and objective judgments, weighted according to the following percentages:

Assignment/Assessment Tool	% of Grade
Pitch: Existing feature	15%
Midterm Pitch #1: Original Feature	20%
Midterm Pitch #2: Original series	20%
Final Pitch: Original Feature or Series	30%
Class Participation, additional assignments & in-class exercises	15%

Pitch-related grades will be based on how well you _develop_ the skill of pitching, including idea formulation, character and story development (irrespective of subject matter), and whether your story is presented (pitched) in an engaging and clear manner.

Additional assignments and in-class exercises will be graded according to understanding and integration of course teachings and cumulative improvement.

Class participation includes, but is not limited to participating in class discussions and Q&As with guests, collaborating with fellow students, etc.

It is expected that you will be ready to pitch at your scheduled date and time, that all written material will be submitted on time, that you will attend class, and that you will participate in the course as outlined above. If not, your grade will be impacted accordingly.

Negative grade impacts:

- **Late assignment (not including pitches):** -10% of assignment grade per day _(e.g., 1 day late -10%, 2 days late, -20%, etc.)_
- **Missed assignment or more than 5 days late (not including pitches):** Receive 0% on assignment grade.
- **Failure to pitch on scheduled date:** Receive 0% on project grade*
- **Unexcused tardy:** -5% of overall class grade per tardy
- **Unexcused absence:** -10% of overall class grade per absence

In the event of an illness/emergency/excused absence, contact professors to discuss.

ADDITIONAL CLASS POLICIES

Students may not record any class sessions, in any way, unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation.

Students may not use screens/devices (laptops, tablets, phones, watches, etc.) during class, unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation. Please be prepared to take notes on paper.

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

THE ART OF THE PITCH CTPR 466
COURSE SCHEDULE AND OUTLINE

Class 1:
CLASS INTRO: Course overview: _How to pitch in film/tv biz._ Class protocols. Syllabus review. Discuss how during course students will need to pitch various loglines (existing feature, original

feature, tv series), craft a three-minute pitch based off an existing movie, a five-minute original feature story pitch, and a five-minute original tv series pitch, and finally, students will need to present a ten-minute original pitch of either tv series or movie (expanding on what they've already done) as final assignment.

LECTURE: How to talk about story. Discuss 3-act structure, character, dramatic arc. Basic feature story-telling rules. Then discuss the logline and what it needs to do. And why.

ASSIGNMENT: Students to write logline of existing feature.

Class 2:

LECTURE: The elements of the feature pitch. Pitch structure and characters. What is expected from a pitch.

IN CLASS REVIEW: Students share their existing feature loglines. We discuss what works/doesn't.

ASSIGNMENT: Students to write logline of original feature, which will serve as the basis for the original feature pitch.

Class 3:

LECTURE: Skill building, performance and presentation for a pitch.

IN CLASS REVIEW: Students share their original feature loglines. We discuss what works/doesn't.

ASSIGNMENT: Using an existing feature film, craft a three-minute pitch. Class will be broken up into two groups for presentation.

Class 4:

GUEST SPEAKER TBA

IN CLASS REVIEW: "Group 1" students share their three-minute pitch of an existing movie. Teacher and students and guest speaker give notes.

Class 5:

GUEST SPEAKER TBA

IN CLASS REVIEW: "Group 2" students share their three-minute pitch of an existing movie. Teacher and students and guest speaker give notes.

ASSIGNMENT: Students to craft a five-minute pitch of an original feature film, based on their original logline. Students may use 4 "cards" as visuals to explain characters. Class will be broken up into three groups for presentation.

Class 6:

GUEST SPEAKER TBA

IN CLASS REVIEW: Midterm Pitch: "Group 1" students share five-minute original feature film pitch. Teacher and students and guest speaker give notes.

Class 7:
GUEST SPEAKER TBA
IN CLASS REVIEW: Midterm Pitch: "Group 2" students share five-minute Feature Film pitch. Teacher and students and guest speakers give notes.
ASSIGNMENT: Students to create a logline of original TV series, which will serve as the basis for the original series pitch.

Class 8:
GUEST SPEAKER TBA
IN CLASS REVIEW Midterm Pitch: "Group 3" students share five-minute feature film pitch. Teacher and students and guest speaker give notes.

Class 9:
GUEST SPEAKER TBA
LECTURE: Skill building. The elements of the series pitch. Discuss: Who series is intended for. What genre/length. What series is about. Importance of character.
IN CLASS REVIEW: Students share original tv series loglines. Teacher, students and guest speaker give notes.
ASSIGNMENT: Students to prepare five-minute original TV series pitch. Students may use four "cards" as visuals to explain characters. Class will be broken up into three groups for presentation.

Class 10:
GUEST SPEAKER TBA
IN CLASS REVIEW: "Group 1" students share five-minute TV Series pitch. Teacher and students and guest speaker give notes.

Class 11:
GUEST SPEAKER TBA
IN CLASS REVIEW: "Group 2" students share five-minute TV Series pitch. Teacher and guest speaker and students give notes.

Class 12:
GUEST SPEAKER TBA
LECTURE: Pitching yourself as a director.

IN CLASS REVIEW: "Group 3" students share five-minute TV Series pitch. Teacher and guest speaker and students give notes.
ASSIGNMENT: Prepare final ten-minute pitch of either movie or series.

Class 13:
GUEST SPEAKER TBA: Guest speaker shares actual TV pitch and/or movie pitch with class.
LECTURE: Review what is needed for successful pitch.

Class 14:
IN CLASS REVIEW: Final pitch practice session with student roundtables. (5 groups of 3 or 4)

FINAL:
Final Presentations to be individually scheduled with teachers.

When appropriate, course topics, class materials, and assignments will be announced in class and posted on Blackboard, Google Drive, or similar, and in advance when possible. Consultations and final assignment appointments will be scheduled and posted on Blackboard, Google Drive, or similar as well.
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.

Please note that recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation, is also a violation of academic integrity. Recording can inhibit free

discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor.

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.