

IMPORTANT:

Please refer to the [USC Center for Excellence in Teaching](#) for current best practices in syllabus and course design. This document is intended to be a customizable template that primarily includes the technical elements required for the Curriculum Office to forward your proposal to the UCOC.

**CTPR 491: VIRAL COMEDY****Units: 2****Spring 2024—Tuesday—7:15 PM to 9:15 PM**

Location: SCI 206 or ZOOM (In the event we have to revert to online instruction.)

Instructor: Christopher Guerrero

Office: Virtual

Office Hours: By appointment

Contact Info:

guerrec@usc.edu 213.282.8207

Emails and calls will be answered within 24 hours

Teaching Assistant: Misha Gankin

Office: Virtual

Office Hours: By appointment

Contact Info: gankin@usc.edu (617)-306-1366

IT Help: Group to contact for technological services, if applicable.

Hours of Service:

Contact Info: Email, phone number (office, cell), Skype, etc.

Course Description

Learn how to translate traditional storytelling tools into short-form comedy that will stand out online. While movies and TV are not a thing of the past, YouTube, IGTV, and Tiktok have become a part of our future. This class will encourage students to explore these newer avenues as outlets for their creative voices. They will be expected to write, direct and perform in all assigned creative projects.

Learning Objectives

Through lectures, guest speakers, video assignments, and peer critique, students will leave the course with a better understanding of short-form media, a collection of tools to showcase their individual voice online, and strategies for adapting their short-form content into traditional media. Students will be equipped to jumpstart their comedy careers.

Course Notes

Letter grading will be based on completing assignments and participation in peer review. It will be an online course.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Students will submit links to their video assignments to be reviewed by the teachers and the class. If we have to revert to online instruction, the course will meet over Zoom.

Recommend Free Editing Software: Davinci Resolve

NOTE: This class will not teach you how to edit/use equipment or cameras.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Recommended Reading

Class Specific Reading:

- Vorhaus, John. *The Comic Toolbox How to Be Funny Even If You're Not*
- Anand, Bharat. *The Content Trap: A Strategist's Guide to Digital Change*
- Walsh, Matt. Roberts, Ian. and Besser, Matt. *Upright Citizens Brigade Comedy Improvisation Manual*
- Dewoney, Andrew and Ride, Peter. *The Digital Media Handbook (Media Practice) 2nd Edition*
- Pressfield, Steven. *The War of Art*

Extended Filmmaking Reading

- Arijon, Daniel. *Grammar of the Film Language.*
- Block, Bruce. *The Visual Story.*
- Katz, Steven D. *Film Directing Shot by Shot.*
- Murch, Walter. *In the Blink of an Eye.*

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Over the course, **SEVEN** projects will be due. Each Project will have a set of prompts and videos due. Each Project will have two class sessions dedicated to it. The first class, which we will refer to as CLASS A, will consist of students pitching projects, group brainstorms, and individual script/beats review. A reflection paper based on the topic and videos created for the Project will be due for every CLASS A on the previous VIDEO PROJECT(S). CLASS B will focus on the student's creative output – short video(s) or other creative assignments will be due for this class. CLASS B sessions will showcase students' work followed by peer review and brainstorming next PROJECTS.

Work will be assessed by effort and completion, not a subjective review of their comedic/creative talents.

FIRST-CLASS

1. Submit a link to your favorite piece of comedic internet content. **TEN LOGLINES** - Ten Logline/pitches for comedy videos. These can be for any format or platform. Don't overthink it. These are to help get you started and begin a dialogue. This class begins with quantity over quality.
2. **FIRST SCRIPT** - One script or beat sheet (a list of things that happens in the video, typically each 'beat' is a shot) for one of your ideas. Again don't overthink, just a jumping-off point.
3. A link to your favorite internet comedy video. We will be sharing these in class and discussing them. (You will share them in the chat on the first day)

PROJECTS OVERVIEW

Each student will write, direct, produce, and edit short projects. **The personal safety of cast, crew members, and the general public is ALWAYS the single most important consideration in any production, and each student in the USC SCA Filmmaking Workshop will, at all times, observe all professional, ethical, and safety standards that will protect everyone on the set.** The production elements essential to the success of this Workshop are:

- Careful, meticulous, and detailed pre-production
- Warm, open, and inspired collaboration among all classmates, colleagues, and faculty
- Punctuality, confidence, kindness, courage, and passion
- Compassion, gratitude, generosity, respect, humility, and absolute professionalism

NOTES ON COMEDY

This class is a safe place for everyone to explore comedy. While all comedy is subjective, this class will not tolerate hate speech or comedy created only to offend. In this class, we will learn to not be lazy with our comedy, but dig to find a deeper truth.

PERSONAL EVALUATIONS OVERVIEW

Due *the class after* the Project. In essay form of at least one page, you will write a brief synopsis, outline your intentions, and then evaluate the strengths and the weaknesses of your Project. You will also indicate things you want to improve and new ideas. Your Personal Evaluations will constitute 30% of your overall grade for each Project.

THE PROJECTS

These projects are not about perfection. They are exercises to force you to create the simplest and focused pieces of work possible. In this class, we will focus on quantity over quality. This allows us to not second guess our ideas and quickly learn from the mistakes we make. Every Project will be better and better.

NOTE: Though no specific prompts are given, depending on the project the professor may modify and give specific guidelines on projects.

FINAL PROJECT: ADAPTING YOUR CONTENT

Building off one of your projects throughout the semester or an idea you have been working on and pitching to the class. Students will create a longer-form piece of content. Students should be brainstorming and thinking about this Project from **DAY 1** and prepping to shoot this Project while shooting their other projects.

PROJECTS

PROJECT 1 - 4:

Using one of the videos ideas you pitched in class, create a 1-2 minute Internet Comedy Video. Do not overthink these projects. They aren't supposed to be perfect.

PROJECT 5- 6:

Using a concept, you pitched and/or based on a previous video from class. Create 3 (1 minute) Internet Comedy Videos that would work as a series.

PROJECT 7 FINAL:

Using a concept, you pitched and/or based on a previous video from class. Create the elevated and longer-form version of that concept (3-5 min MAX). The sky is the limit with this Project. All of these fast and quick Internet videos have prepared you to think fast and learn. Think of this video as a pilot for something that you might want to make longer form or as a "calling card" for projects you want to make in the future.

Seven distinct topics (or units) will be taught over the semester. Each unit will have two class sessions dedicated to it. The first class, which we will refer to as CLASS A, will consist of lecture and video examples. A reflection paper based on the topic covered in the unit will be due for every CLASS A. CLASS B will focus on the student's creative output -a video or another creative assignment will be due for this class. CLASS B sessions will showcase students' work followed by peer review.

All assignments should have at least 1 minute of content for review by the class. So if you choose to do TikToks or other short formats, make sure that they add up to at least one minute to show in class.

Work will be assessed by effort and completion, not a subjective review of their comedic/creative talents.

NOTE: Depending on the assignment, all assignments MUST be put in the proper location on the class Blackboard site AND on the class internet storage platform. More details will be given in class.

Grading Breakdown

Assessment Tool (assignments)	Points	% of grade
Participation and Collaboration	15	15
Project 1 Finished Video, including Personal Evaluation	10	10
Project 2 Finished Video, including Personal Evaluation	10	10
Project 3 Finished Video, including Personal Evaluation	10	10
Project 4 Finished Videos, including Personal Evaluation	10	10
Project 5 Finished Videos, including Personal Evaluation	10	10
Project 6 Finished Video, including Personal Evaluation	10	10
Project 7 (FINAL) Finished Video, including Personal Evaluation	25	25
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

VIDEO PROJECTS - will be due at **11:59 PM** the day before Class A on Blackboard under Assignments. A video file of the Project should be uploaded to the proper location of the class storage drive.

PERSONAL EVALUATIONS - will be due at **11:59 PM** the day before Class B days as a post on Blackboard under Assignments.

NOTE: If you do not follow the proper naming and uploading guidelines, your assignments will be considered LATE and will have points reduced.

1. All videos are **due the Monday before class at 11:59 pm**, if you are going to miss this deadline due to unforeseen issues please contact the professor of the SA immediately.
2. Please name your videos/personal evaluations like this:
FirstName_LastName_AssignmentName_Date EXAMPLE: *Chris_Guerrero_Horror_09042021*
3. For video assignments please upload to the appropriate assignment Google Drive folder (link below).
4. <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1SDdTBetuixUo-KRkCixQM8JR1dtw4G0k>
NOTE: You must be logged into your USC e-mail for this link to work.
5. Once uploaded please create a google drive link from the uploaded video and submit it under the appropriate assignment on BlackBoard, this has a deadline of 11:59 pm.

Grading Timeline

Each assignment will be graded within a week of submission.

Additional Policies

Academic Integrity

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the USC Student Handbook. All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), 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 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.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy:

In this course, you are allowed to use artificial intelligence (AI)-powered programs to help you with assignments that indicate the permitted use of AI. You should also be aware that AI text generation tools may present incorrect information, biased responses, and incomplete analyses; thus, they are not yet prepared to produce text that meets the standards of this course. To adhere to our university values, you must cite any AI-generated material (e.g., text, images, etc.) included or referenced in your work and provide the prompts used to generate the content. Using an AI tool to generate content without proper attribution will be treated as plagiarism and reported to the Office of Academic Integrity. Please review the instructions in each assignment for more details on how and when to use AI Generators for your submissions.

Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

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. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. (Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook, page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. (Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook, page 13).

STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY

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 in an effort to help students stay current in their coursework. Students must contact the professor or SA 24 hours prior to class start time if they need to miss class for any reason.

No more than two absences will be allowed. If more than two absences occur, there will be a deduction of a full letter grade. If four or more absences occur, the student will automatically fail the course.

Tardiness: A student is deemed late 7 minutes after the class is scheduled to start. One late arrival may not affect your grade. Two late arrivals equate to one full unexcused absence. (IE: A becomes A-). Three late arrivals may result in your grade being dropped by two portions (IE: A- becomes B). Four late arrivals may result in your grade being dropped three portions (one full point: B becomes C). Lateness of more than 30 minutes will count as an absence.

Production Numbers:

Production Numbers will be given to any class who normally receives numbers. Students will be instructed when it is possible for them to go onto SCACommunity and create numbers where authorized for their class. Class SAs will aid students in making, or correcting, production numbers if needed. Note many classes

work in teams where they share a production number. Ask your SA about the needs for your particular class.

This semester, the School of Cinematic Arts will be covering all student Insurance Premiums and Lab Fees which are normally charged to students. Students will be required to use approved "Fast Track" Insurance companies only for rentals and equipment. No other insurance requests will be honored. USC does not insure Sharegrid or companies not on the "Fast Track List."

Students may still make requests for location insurance verifications (or COIs) when requested by locations. Students are reminded that these requests can take 3-10 days from request to final approval.

All necessary forms and online request forms are available on SCACommunity under the "Student Productions" heading. Contact your SA with any questions that you may have.

In terms of shooting plans, student are required to vet their plans with their faculty including discussing any Hazardous Shooting Conditions as defined by the SCA's Safety Book as posted on SCACommunity. In the event we have to revert to online instruction students will also be required to vet their plans for remaining Covid-safe with our Covid Safety Monitor. Ask your SA if you are unclear about these protocols.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

	Topics/Daily Activities	Deliverables
Week 1 01/09	(CLASS A): Introduction to the course. Each student will share their favorite piece of comedic internet content and explain why it resonates with them? Discussion will focus on the move away from traditional media toward short-form content. Why is this type of content resonating so much with viewers?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Submit a link to your favorite piece of comedic internet content. TEN LOGLINES - Ten Logline/pitches for comedy videos. These can be for any format or platform. Don't overthink it. These are to help get you started and begin a dialogue. This class begins with quantity over quality. 5. FIRST SCRIPT - One script or beat sheet (a list of things that happens in the video, typically each 'beat' is a shot) for one of your ideas. Again don't overthink, just a jumping-off point. 6. A link to your favorite internet comedy video. We will be sharing these in class and discussing them. (You will share them in the chat on the first day)
Week 2 01/16	(CLASS B): Peer Review	Project 1
Week 3 01/23	FINDING YOUR VOICE (CLASS A): How can you ensure your specific POV is shining through? How do you identify your specific POV?	Personal Eval – Project 1
Week 4 01/30	(CLASS B): Peer Review	Project 2

Week 5 02/06	WHY IS TIKTOK SO POPULAR? (CLASS A): Exploration of escapism. How do we grab people's attention without having to dance?	Personal Eval – Project 2
Week 6 02/13	(CLASS B): Peer Review	Project 3
Week 7 02/20	EVERGREEN CONTENT (CLASS A): Why is some content still funny years later? How do we tap into fundamental human truths that stay relevant no matter the year?	Personal Eval – Project 3
Week 8 02/27	(CLASS B): Peer Review	Project 4
Week 9 03/05	TIME SENSITIVE CONTENT (CLASS A): How do you create content for a specific moment in time? How can you tell based on what's trending online what will do well and what people want to see at that moment?	Personal Eval – Project 4
03/12	Spring Break	
Week 10 03/19	(CLASS B): Peer Review	Project 5
Week 11 03/26	SERIALIZED CONTENT (CLASS A): How do you make your audience want more of the same idea? How do you get them to tune in week to week or day to day?	Personal Eval – Project 5
Week 12 04/02	(CLASS B): Peer Review	Project 6
Week 13 04/09	ADAPTING YOUR CONTENT (CLASS A): TBD Final Project Chat. How do you translate a viral video or popular web series into a TV or movie?	Personal Eval – Project 6
Week 14 04/16	TBD	Script/Pitch Final Project 7
Week 15 04/23	ADAPTING YOUR CONTENT (CLASS C): Peer Review	Final Video Project 7 DUE
Week 16 FINAL 04/30	NO CLASS PERSONAL EVAL DUE	Final Personal Eval – Project 7 Refer to the final exam schedule in the USC <i>Schedule of Classes</i> at classes.usc.edu .

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.

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