

THTR 416: Creating Content for the Actor

Units: 2

Spring 2024 – Mon - 7-8:50pm

Location: SOSB2

Instructor: James Morosini

Office Hours By Appointment : Appointments held via Zoom

Contact Info: morosini@usc.edu

Timeline for replying to emails/calls: within 48 hours

Teaching Assistant:

Office: Physical or virtual address

Office Hours:

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

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

Contact Info: consult@usc.edu

Course Description

From the 2022 SXSW Grand Jury + Audience Award winning filmmaker and actor behind the Patton Oswalt film I LOVE MY DAD, James Morosini (SDA Alum) -- Over the course of this semester class, each student will be writing, directing, and starring in their own short film. The class will aim to help students discover their own unique voice while helping to provide the tools necessary to begin creating one's own material. By learning how to create your own unique stories, you will never be in a position where you as an actor or creative are waiting for the phone to ring. Each week we will focus on a different part of the process, from ideation, to writing, to rewriting, to producing, to directing, to marketing, and every step in between. Some classes we'll be using as case studies to focus on successful writer/director/actor driven material and James will be inviting various guest lecturers behind this work to come in and speak and work with students. The goal of the semester will be walking away with at least one finished piece that represents your voice as a multi-hyphenate creative.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify and define the structure within a screenplay.
- Write, direct, and produce their own short film
- Create and develop a portfolio of writings along with consistent writing habits.
- Evaluate and critique work written by your fellow writers.

Course Notes

Please check Blackboard often for any class announcements or updates on assignments. Lecture slides may occasionally be used and will always be posted on Blackboard following class. Some multimedia including videos may be provided throughout semester and will also be posted on Blackboard or Google Drive.

Recommended Preparation:

Feedback and constructive criticism is essential to the process of creating content in any form. Students are expected to come prepared to each class with any work due from the previous week for feedback from their classmates.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Save The Cat, by Blake Snyder

Suggested Readings

In addition to the required reading, it is highly recommended that students accompany their reading with this text.

The Idea, by Erik Bork

Artists Way, by Julia Cameron

Coffee Break Screenwriter, by Pilar Alessandra

Description and Assessment of Assignments

- **PARTICIPATION (10%)**
- **CLASS EXERCISES (40%)**: Individual and group exercises will be given throughout the semester.
- **MIDTERM (25%)**: Delivery of short film.
- **FINAL (25%)**: Delivery of short film.

Grading Scale (Example)

“Excellent” indicates that the student couples clear understanding of the class material with original and creative insight. “Good” means that the student demonstrates a clear understanding of the material. “Average” indicates that the student demonstrates a general understanding of the material but with some gaps. “Poor” indicates that there are identifiable gaps in the student’s understanding of the material. “Failure” is the result of the student not having completed his or her assignments coupled with poor understanding of the material. Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

Excellent: A (4) = 100-94; A- (3.7) = 93-90

Good: B+ (3.3) = 89-86; B (3) = 85-84; B- (2.7) = 83-80

Average: C+ (2.3) = 79-76; C (2) = 75-74; C- (1.7) = 73-70

Poor: the D range (.7-1.7) = 60s; F (0) = 59 and below

Assignment Submission Policy

No late work will be accepted. If illness or emergency interferes with the completion of assignments, contact Mr. Morosini at least 24 hours before the due date.

Grading Timeline

Grading and feedback to be given within 48-72 hours after hand-in date.

Additional Grading Criteria

When the average falls between two grades, the final grade will be weighted toward the positive end of the scale for students whose attendance and participation in class have been good but will be weighted toward the negative end of the scale for those with poor attendance and participation.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown (Subject to Change)

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/ Due Dates
Week 1	Intro	Write a paragraph about your dream role and dream project	
Week 2	Concepts + Loglines	Generate concepts	
Week 3	Picking The Right Sized Project	Shoot a short film	
Week 4	Finding Your Voice// Screening of shorts + q+a with filmmakers	Pick three concepts and have three different people review them/ give you feedback on each	
Week 5	Building Conflict+ Tension// Workshopping scenes that focus on conflict and tension	Write a scene that utilizes subtext and reveals character emotions	
Week 6	Developing your story // Dialogue + Outlining+ Structuring your story	Write an outline for your short film - get feedback	
Week 7	Directing For Performance	Write short film	
Week 8	MIDTERM	Deliver script for final short film	
Week 9 (NO CLASS)	Crowdfunding and Financing // Crowdfunding platforms + building network	TBD	
Week 10	Preparing for Production	TBD	
Week 11	Production// Cinematography + Viewpoint	TBD	
Week 12	Editing Performance	TBD	
Week 13	Post-Production	TBD	
Week 14	Marketing and Distribution	Prep for final short	
Week 15	FINAL	Prep for final short	

FINAL	Short film or project		Date: For the date and time of the final for this class, consult the USC <i>Schedule of Classes</i> at classes.usc.edu .
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SDA PRODUCTIONS, ISPS, AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

SDA productions, ISPs and Extracurricular Activities* will not excuse you from any class work. There will be no exceptions made for absences in class, missed or delayed assignments, homework or lack of class participation resulting from your involvement in any of the above. Your grade will reflect your work in this class, independent from work in any other class or activity.

*Activities that have been officially sanctioned by the larger university (such as marching band, song girls, or varsity sports) are exempt. You must submit official documentation to your professor regarding your participation in an event prior to your absence.

Sharing of course materials outside of the learning environment

USC policy prohibits sharing of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Course evaluation

Course evaluation occurs at the end of the semester university-wide. It is an important review of students' experience in the class. You should expect to receive an email update once the system has launched to provide your feedback on this course. In addition, you are always welcome to connect with with me as the instructor to offer any feedback on the course.

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" 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>.

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from OSAS. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. OSAS is located in GFS 120 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website for OSAS and contact information: (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 814-4618 (Vidoe Phone), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies. See the university's site on Campus Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

Health and Participation in Class

You are expected to complete your Trojan Check screener daily and, as your instructor, I may ask you to show your daily screening in class. Your health and safety, and the health and safety of your peers, are my top priorities. If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19, or if you discover that you have been in close contact with others who have symptoms or who have tested positive, you must follow the instructions on Trojan Check. My hope is that if you are feeling ill or if you have been exposed to someone with the virus, you will stay home to protect others. I will ensure that you can continue to participate in class remotely so that your education is not disrupted.

To reduce the spread of COVID-19, USC requires that face coverings (masks) be worn indoors including in classrooms. Face coverings must cover your nose and mouth and be worn throughout the class session. A mask with a valve is not considered an adequate face covering and should not be used, as it can expel exhaled air, increasing the risk to others. Eating or drinking during class is prohibited because of the risk posed by removing your mask for these activities. Failure to comply with these requirements will result in your being asked to leave the classroom immediately. Requests for accommodations related to the face covering and eating/drinking policies should be directed to the Office for Student Accessibility Services (<https://osas.usc.edu/>).

SDA Student Support & Reporting Form:

To facilitate a supportive environment of accountability, SDA has created an internal system of reporting for students to address issues/concerns and to offer feedback or suggestions for improvement. This mechanism provides a pathway for reporting and offering feedback without fear of retaliation or judgment. Any submission filed through this form will be reviewed and processed accordingly through SDA Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

To file a report, please visit: <https://bit.ly/SDAstudentreporting>

Campus Section 11.12(B)

Distribution or use of notes or recordings based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study is a violation of the USC Student Conduct Code. This includes, but is not limited to, providing materials for distribution by services publishing class notes. 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. (See Section C.1 Class Notes Policy).

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.

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 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.

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 Student Accessibility Services - (213) 740-0776

<https://osas.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 and 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) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.