



USC School of Cinematic Arts, Spring 2024  
CTPR 335 Intro to Motion Picture Editing, Section 18498  
Class Meetings: Tuesdays, 7pm-10pm in SCA 258

Instructor: Yvette M. Amirian, ACE – [mangassa@usc.edu](mailto:mangassa@usc.edu)

Student Assistant: Aden Bertisch – [bertisch@usc.edu](mailto:bertisch@usc.edu)

Zoom info – <https://usc.zoom.us/j/98305070196>

Meeting ID – 983 0507 0196

Office Hours by appointment

\*\*\*Syllabus subject to change\*\*\*

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Picture Editors are story tellers. Unlike writers who use text, or lyricists who use words, we use visual images, dialogue, sound, special effects and music to tell our stories. How we use these elements and why we use them is important. *Why* should I cut at this frame as opposed to this one? *Why* is it more important to use off-camera dialog as opposed to playing dialogue on-camera? *Why* should a music cue start at this point in a scene as opposed to that point? *When* to cut, *when not* to cut, *when* to stylize, *when not* to and *why*. This class is about the “hows” (using the AVID, editing techniques, the grammar and language of editing), and the “whys” (editing aesthetics, basic theory and concepts behind film editing.)

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The class will partly be a hands-on course where you will learn the basics of how to use Avid Media Composer, the leading software in the motion picture post-production industry. Even though picture editing is fundamentally about storytelling, it is also a technical medium needing great organizational skills. Therefore, you will also learn how to organize a project, set up bins, manage media (footage, sound effects, music), create custom settings, and make basic picture and sound edits.

Learning the basic concepts of editing is useful for all facets of filmmaking, especially if you want to be a writer, director, producer, or even a cinematographer — for after the shooting stops, it all comes down to the editor to put the pieces together to make a story. At the end of the semester, you should not only be able to analyze any piece of media from an editing perspective and understand *why* the editor made the choices they did, but you will also be able to cut your own stories using your own choices.

**\*\*\*PLEASE - do not hesitate to ask me for help, or to discuss conceptual ideas you have for your assignments.** Editing, in the beginning, can be confusing... So please, do not let concerns over the buttons keep you from a rewarding and fun experience.

## **COURSE NOTES:**

Each week will be a mixture of lecture, screenings, class discussion/presentations or hands-on training with Avid Media Composer software.

Once you begin your editing assignments (later in the semester), a portion of class time will be devoted to sharing individual editing assignments. An editor's work is scrutinized every day in the real world, so in this class you will be expected to show your work to everyone and get their notes. We will plan to break into smaller groups for editing instruction/check-ins, and I will also have office hours, by appointment. Remember, the Avid Genius Bar and Avid Media Composer Guide are available and a vital resources for quick help!

We will also have guest speakers and, dependent on their availability, our schedule in the syllabus may shift. All handouts for any relevant lessons or techniques, assignments, Zoom links, grading, etc. will be done exclusively through Blackboard in this. Therefore, you must make sure you know how to log in and access our class. Any questions or technical issues regarding Blackboard use may be directed to their support department, contact information and help can be found here: <https://studentblackboardhelp.usc.edu>

## **TECHNOLOGICAL PROFICIENCY / HARDWARE, SOFTWARE, MATERIALS REQUIRED:**

As you prepare to start the semester, I need to remind you that we edit only on AVID Media Composer and that The School of Cinematic Arts Production Division has Mandatory Editing Requirements.

Editing is done on campus, using SCA's Avid Labs. You will need to purchase a hard drive, and bring **Headphones** (a 1/4-inch phone jack adapter is needed to work in the labs) with you to each edit session.

**All specifications for hard drives, laptops, and any other necessary materials are outlined on our class [Knowledgebase](#). Please read this information CAREFULLY before making any major purchases.**

**\*\*\* In fact, I recommend waiting on any purchases until AFTER our first day of class \*\*\***

If you choose to purchase an Apple computer or other Apple products, an educational discount is available online through the [Apple Education Store](#) or at the USC Bookstore. AppleCare extended warranty is recommended. **The Office of Financial Aid is available to discuss additional funding regarding these mandatory purchases.**

**If you experience technical difficulties or have questions about laptop requirements, please email our Creative Technology & Support team at [creativetech@cinema.usc.edu](mailto:creativetech@cinema.usc.edu).**

## **AVID MEDIA COMPOSER GUIDE:**

<http://knowledgebase.sca.usc.edu/SCA%20Knowledgebase/Avid%20Media%20Composer.aspx>

Link information for the [USC Computing Center Laptop Loaner Program](#).

Link information for software support and availability.

USC Technology Support Links [Zoom information for students](#), [Blackboard help for students](#), [Software available to USC Campus.](#)]

Throughout the semester we also have an AVID Genius Bar to help with any technical editing questions.



Monday 12PM-5PM  
Tuesday 2PM-9PM  
Thursday 12PM-5PM  
Friday 11AM-4PM

Please make an appointment with:  
Toi Juan Shannon  
TSHANNON@USC.EDU

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### RULES FOR USING SCA COMPUTER LABS

**PLEASE NOTE: FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX**

- 1) No food, drinks (including bottled water), gum, or skateboards in the labs, Edit or Sound Edit Suites. Violation of this rule will result in suspension of Lab or Edit Room privileges. Locker area is available for food and drink storage.
- 2) You must sign in at Front Desk with your Student ID and use station assigned. Any change must be done through Front Desk.
- 3) If you are having technical problems with your workstation, contact a Tech through the Front Desk or Help Desk.
- 4) Closing time is strictly enforced. Techs will give warnings when to begin saving. Please do not argue with them.
- 5) Lab Hours and Supported Hard Drive documents can be found at the Front Desk, Help Desk, and SCA Community.
- 6) Headphones with 1/4 inch adapters are required at each workstation. SCA does not supply headphones or adapters.
- 7) Users may be bumped after their station has been vacant for a period of 30 minutes.
- 8) For locker checkout, fill out locker form in B144. Lock must be approved before locker is assigned.
- 9) SCA Help Documents are located on each workstation desktop.
- 10) Please handle all equipment and computers professionally.

**OPTIONAL READINGS/SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS:**

*Don't Miss Out on Any Avocado Milkshakes: The Art and Joy of Being a Film Editor* by Troy Takaki

*Cutting It in Hollywood*  
by Mitchell Danton

*In the Blink of an Eye*  
by Walter Murch

*"The Lean Forward Moment: Create Compelling Stories for Film, TV, and The Web"*  
by Norman Hollyn; New Riders Press (mainly chapters: 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11)

*Foundations of Video: The Art of Editing with Norman Hollyn* on [www.lynda.com](http://www.lynda.com)

**PARTICIPATION:**

Participation is an important part of your grade. I expect everyone to be an active participant every week. Filmmaking and editing requires teamwork, collaboration, and the sharing of opinions on a daily basis, so your contributions to the work of others are crucial to the learning process. This means critiquing each other's work during screenings, analyzing scenes and examples we view in class, and asking questions when we have guest speakers.

Project organization is also a large portion of your grade. Once we start cutting, I will inspect your drives and projects upon viewing your assignments. I expect all projects to be organized in the same format I teach you in class. Failure to do so WILL affect your grade.

**GRADING BREAKDOWN:**

Assessment Tool (assignments)	Points	Approximate % of Grade
Scene Analysis assignment	50	8.5
Questions for guest speakers	50	8.5
Editing Assignment # 1	175	28.5
Editing Assignment # 2	175	28.5
Project Organization	25	4.5
Participation	25	4.5
Final Exam	100	17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>600</b>	

**GRADING SCALE**

Grading will be done on a standard scale with no curve:

- A 600 pts.
- A- 550 pts. B  
500 pts.
- B- 450 pts C  
400 pts.
- C- 350 pts

## **CLASS ASSIGNMENTS / ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION POLICY /COURSE SPECIFIC POLICIES:**

You will have various written scene or film analysis assignments. I will ask you to watch films or series as part of your assignments. And these may coincide with films and series edited by our guest speakers.

There will be two editing projects that deal with different editing theories and techniques. You will be cutting raw footage (called "Dailies"). You will be asked to cut scenes together, show your first cuts to the class and get their feedback, then hand in revisions based on your notes.

Part of this process will also be learning the technical skills necessary to work with Avid Media Composer more creatively and efficiently. Editing assignments will be assigned and explained during live class time. All editing work will be presented in class from your hard drive. QuickTimes will not be accepted, unless I request them.

Written assignments like scene analyses, questions, etc. will be assigned and explained during live in class, and subsequently posted in Blackboard for reference. All written assignments will be put up on Blackboard and MUST be submitted on Blackboard. No emails or printed assignments will be accepted.

**\*\*\*On edit project due dates, make sure your hard drive is present so you can show work during class time\*\*\***

## **GRADING TIMELINE:**

Grades for written assignments will be posted to Blackboard, shortly after their due dates (usually within a week). However, editing projects will be graded in pieces, as will be detailed in class.

Failure to present assignments by the due date will impact your grade. Due dates will be given in class.

## **STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY (Per SCA):**

Students are expected to be on time and prepared for each class. One absence may result in a student's grade being lowered by one notch (IE: A becomes A-). Two absences may result in a student's grade being lowered by two notches (IE: A- becomes B). A third absence may result in a student's grade being lowered another full point (IE: B becomes C). Grades can be lowered by one full point for every additional absence.

Tardiness: A student is deemed late 15 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.

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 course work.

**Students must contact the professor or SA 24 hours prior to class start time if they need to miss class for any reason.**

### **CLASSROOM NORMS (Per SCA):**

- Respect everyone in the classroom.
- Listen actively and attentively.
- Listen respectfully, without interrupting.
- Comments that you make (asking for clarification, sharing critiques, expanding on a point, etc.) should reflect that you have paid attention to the speaker's comments.
- Listen carefully to what others are saying.
- Listen carefully to what others are saying even when you disagree with what is being said.
- Respect each other's views.
- Challenge one another, but do so respectfully.
- Be respectful of what others are saying.
- Always use a respectful tone.
- Avoid inflammatory language.
- Avoid put-downs (even humorous ones).
- No name-calling or other character attacks.
- No interrupting or yelling.
- Do not interrupt when someone else is speaking.
- Be aware of the fact that tone of voice and body language are powerful communicators. Some postures or facial expressions (e.g., crossed arms, eye rolls, loud sighs) can silence, provoke, intimidate, or hurt others. Others (e.g., facing and looking at the speaker, staying quiet, nodding) can show you are listening respectfully - Refrain from responding to others' statements by applause, groans, or other noise.

### **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 (*I will specify this in class – written assignments ONLY – absolutely not allowed for editing*). 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 EVALUATIONS:**

Course evaluation occurs at the end of the semester university-wide. It is an important review of students' experience in the class. Please take the time to submit this when the university sends the information your way.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE:**

The following is a rough outline of how the semester will progress. All material below is subject to change, dependent upon guest speaker availability, and any changes that the university may choose to implement. All classes will be held in-person, in SCA 356, unless otherwise noted, and details will always be given ahead of time. Please check your emails each week for any changes in location. And also check Blackboard **REGULARLY** for updates and links.

### **Week 1 (January 14)**

#### **LECTURE:**

- Take care of registration
- Review the syllabus
- Discussion about the course/format/what to expect
- Answer questions
- Class introductions
- Watch "The Cutting Edge" doc – a brief introduction, overview and history of film editing

#### **ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):**

- Complete and send back questionnaire  
(assignment on Blackboard – worth zero points but **MUST** be completed).

### **Week 2 (January 21)**

#### **LECTURE:**

- Compare a scene in script form vs. completed form

#### **ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):**

- Complete a scene analysis (I will provide script of scene)
- Write a log line for movie of your choice (will be explained in class)

### **Week 3 (January 28)**

#### **LECTURE:**

- Review scene analysis assignment
- The 180 degree rule
- The Kuleshov effect
- The Lined Script – how to read it/why we use it

#### **ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):**

- Purchase hard drive – **bring to class next week!!!**

### **Week 4 (February 4) – in SCA B134 (Basement/Labs)**

#### **LECTURE:**

- How to organize formatted hard drive
- How to launch Avid and create your project
- Overview of Avid interface
- Create Folders and Bins together
- Create Dailies and Cuts bins/sequence together
- Bring in 500 Days Footage

#### **ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class and 2/18):**

- Finish organizing your project (must come down to labs to finish any additional work – **due on 2/18**)



Week 5 (February 11)

**LECTURE:**

Guest Speaker TBD (or documentary class)

**ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):**

-Guest Speaker or Documentary assignment (TBD)

Week 6 (February 18) – in SCA B134 (Basement/Labs)

**LECTURE:**

-Prepare for cutting/frame view setup

-How to use markers and notes tabs for reference

-Approaching dailies: how to watch and organize raw footage, and understand the thought process of the editor, using the scene analysis

-Time to start watching dailies in class

**ASSIGNMENT:**

-Finish watching all dailies and make notes (must come down to labs to do this)

Week 7 (February 25) – in SCA B134 (Basement/Labs)

**LECTURE:**

-Cutting a basic scene – why am I doing what I'm doing, what is my process, how do I make my early decisions

-Walk through cutting a scene start to finish in Avid, to give a very broad introductory overview

-Source/Record

-Cutting in the timeline

-Working with splice, lift vs. extract

-Segment mode

-Basic trimming

-Time to start cutting in class

**ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):**

-Start editing scene 18 from "500 Days" (must come down to labs to do this)

Week 8 (March 4)

**LECTURE:**

-Review everything from last week and answer questions

-Possible movie viewing/genre discussion

**ASSIGNMENT (to complete for after break):**

-Continue editing scene 18 (must come down to labs to do this)

Week 9 (March 11)

**LECTURE:**

-Watch all cuts so far and give notes

**ASSIGNMENT (to complete for after break):**

-Guest Speaker assignment (TBD)

**Week 10 (March 18) – No Class/School – SPRING BREAK**

Week 11 (March 25)

**Lecture:**

-Guest Speaker (Sean Robert Olson)

**ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):**

-Bring addressed notes for scene 18 completed to labs next week (this counts as "Assignment 1" and you must come down to the labs to complete it)

Week 12 (April 1) – in SCA B134 (Basement/Labs)

**Lecture:**

-More editing techniques: trim mode, scrolling, match cut

-Introduction to sound and music editing

-L-cuts, checker boarding, dialogue editing

-Time to work in class

**ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):**

-Refine cuts for pacing/start checkerboarding (this is the beginning of "Assignment 2" – must come down to labs to do this)

Week 13 (April 8) – in SCA B134 (Basement/Labs)

**LECTURE:**

-Working with Sound and Music/Creating a sound design

-Audio levels and audio FX

-VFX use in Avid – basic use of effects palette, effects mode, title tool, motion control functions, Sapphire, audio effects

-Time to work in class

**ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):**

-Continue checkerboarding and cleaning up audio for scene 18, add sound and music design, add VFX (must come down to the labs to do this)

Week 14 (April 15) – in SCA B134 (Basement/Labs)

**LECTURE:**

-Reviews on everything

-Time to work in class

**ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):**

-Finish cutting scene 18 (final version due next week – must come down to labs for additional work)

Week 15 (April 22)

**LECTURE:**

-Watch all final cuts in class

**ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):**

-Work on any last changes and bring to class next week

Week 16 (April 29)

**LECTURE:**

-Final exam (will be explained in class)

-Review any remaining assignments

**ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):**

-Study for Final Exam

Week 17 (May 6):

**\*\*\*STUDY WEEK – NO CLASS\*\*\***

Week 18 (May 13)

**FINAL EXAM – this is the exam date – PERIOD!!!**

**Per the university, you MUST be present on this date to take your exam – NO exceptions**

**Please do not ask to reschedule – the answer will be NO**

**\*\*\*Please make your travel plans accordingly!!!\*\*\***

For questions about the date and time of the final for this class, please refer to the final exam schedule in the USC *Schedule of Classes* at [classes.usc.edu](http://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](http://osas.usc.edu). You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto: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 powerbased 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](mailto: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
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