

**CTPR 425 PRODUCTION PLANNING SYLLABUS**  
**SECTION: 18544**  
**UNITS: 2**  
**SPRING 2025, WEDNESDAYS, 7 PM TO 8:50 PM PACIFIC TIME**  
**SCA 356**

## USC Cinematic Arts

**Instructor:** *Robert L. Brown*  
**Office:** *SCA 410*  
**Office Hours:** *By Appointment*

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

How long will it take to shoot your movie? How much will it cost? What's the most efficient way to schedule the scenes? Who and what need to be there? This course will give you the tools to answer those questions by examining the process of production planning. By the end of the semester, each student should not only have a conceptual grasp of how to line, breakdown, schedule, and budget a screenplay, but also have the practical skill to actually do it. The goal of the course is not to make you into professional production managers, but rather to introduce you to the basic principles of production planning with an emphasis on scheduling and budgeting.

Although there are differences in scale and detail, the processes involved are essentially the same whether one is making a major studio feature, a low-budget feature, a streaming feature, an episodic television show, an educational film, or a student film.

Using a script from a one-hour episodic television show, each class member will line a script, develop a shooting schedule and create a day-out-of-days. We will use this foundation to construct a film budget for a low budget independent feature in order to reach an understanding of the various elements that go into the making of a film.

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

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

- ◆ Identify the shooting sequences in a script and mark them appropriately.
- ◆ Create a shooting schedule in a way that is efficient yet preserves a director's freedom as much as possible and fosters a comfortable and creative atmosphere to help the actors reach their best performances.
- ◆ Construct a film budget.
- ◆ Demonstrate a knowledge of best practices for film production in crew management, working with minors, and maintaining a supportive and creative on-set atmosphere.

As the course is open to students who are not Cinema majors, there are no prerequisite or corequisite courses. There is no concurrent enrollment in any other course required.

## COURSE NOTES

The course meets once a week on campus. I will use Brightspace to deliver course materials, give assignments, and post grades. Each week will be presented as a learning module on Brightspace and will require preparatory work.

## TECHNOLOGICAL PROFICIENCY AND HARDWARE/SOFTWARE REQUIRED

You will be issued a PDF of the script we will be using. You may line the digital script using an application such as *Adobe Acrobat Reader*. This software will allow you to mark up the script PDF. It's a free download [here](#). If you prefer to mark up a physical copy of the script, you may print it one sided on 3-hole paper.

We will be using both *Movie Magic Scheduling (MMS)* and *Movie Magic Budgeting (MMB)*, published by [Entertainment Partners](#), throughout the course. This software is the industry standard and is used by all the major studios and production companies. Both applications will be available in the classroom.

**Movie Magic Scheduling (MMS):** We will be using the legacy version of *MMS* on the classroom computers, however you are advised to procure a copy of the program to download onto your own computer. There will be work on your schedule that must be done outside of class. *MMS* is currently being offered by EP as a legacy one-time purchase (\$149 academic price) or as a web-based subscription (\$119.88 per year, academic price). A monthly subscription is also available. In addition, there is very limited access to MMS through Remote Lab. We will be providing more information on that and your other options as they become available.

**Movie Magic Budgeting (MMB):** You will be granted a temporary license through SCA to obtain a copy of *MMB* for your own computer. You will need to create an account with Entertainment Partners using your USC email after which your license will be activated. Please await further instructions in class before acting on this.

We will also be using *Microsoft Excel* for a custom Day-Out-Of-Days form. You have *Excel* available to you through USC's *Microsoft 365* suite. *Google Sheets* is not sufficient for the assignment.

## REQUIRED READING

The required reading is a necessary reference for the course work. It is closely tied to the course content and will cover in great detail the subjects we address in class. The book is available at the USC Bookstore and online at Amazon.

- ♦ [Planning the Low-Budget Film, 2nd edition](#) by Robert Latham Brown. Please be sure that you get the 2nd Edition.

## OPTIONAL READING

- ♦ [The Producer's Business Handbook, 4th edition](#) by John J. Lee, Jr. and Anne Marie Gillen. Offers a sound business model for independent film production.
- ♦ [Independent Film Finance: A Research-Based Guide To Funding Your Movie](#) by David Offenber. The clearest explanation of how independent films are financed I have come across.

## ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

Grades will be awarded based on six assignments and a final exam. The due dates of the projects are specified in the Course Outline. I will grade them based on rubrics which will be provided.

ASSIGNMENT	% OF GRADE
<b>LINED SCRIPT</b> Each student will line a one-hour episodic television script indicating shooting sequences, their length, and essential elements.	15%
<b>BREAKDOWN SHEETS</b> Each student will create a set of breakdown sheets from the lined script using Movie Magic Scheduling.	15%
<b>SCHEDULED PRODUCTION BOARD</b> Each student will create a production schedule for the script showing the order in which the sequences will be shot, using Movie Magic Scheduling and good scheduling practices.	20%
<b>SHORT ESSAY</b> After reviewing video clips and background material, each student will write a 1-page essay analyzing two specific production accidents.	10%
<b>DAY-OUT-OF-DAYS</b> Using the DOOD generated by Movie Magic Scheduling and an Excel spreadsheet which will be provided, each student will devise a plan to meet SAG's Diversity in Casting requirements.	10%
<b>BUDGET</b> The class will go through the process of setting up and building a film budget. Each student will submit their budget file which will be done in class.	15%
<b>FINAL EXAM</b> The exam will be drawn from the assigned reading, lectures, and in-class work.	15%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

## GRADING SCALE

Assignment grades and course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

A	94-100	B	83-86	C	73-76	D	63-66
A-	90-93	B-	80-82	C-	70-72	D-	60-62
B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69	F	59 and below

All assignments will be submitted through Brightspace except for lined physical scripts which should be handed to me at the end of the class period on which they are due.

Most assignments will be done asynchronously outside of class. Setting up the Movie Magic Scheduling and Budgeting files and all budgeting work will be done during class. The final exam is currently planned to be administered in the classroom as well.

## GRADING TIME LINE

Graded work will typically be returned 1 week after it is submitted.

## COURSE POLICIES

### ATTENDANCE AND CLASS PARTICIPATION

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 (i.e.: A becomes A-). Two absences may result in a student's grade being lowered by two notches (i.e.: A- becomes B). A third absence may result in a student's grade being lowered another full point (i.e.: B becomes C). Grades can be lowered by one full point for every additional absence.

If you must miss a session, please let me or the SA know in advance so that we can work out an accommodation for you. Missed classes can be made up via the Zoom recording as outlined below.

**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). Zoom Synchronous Sessions
- ◆ Students who become ill and need to self-isolate will be supported in their efforts to stay current with classwork and assignments.

#### **ZOOM SYNCHRONOUS SESSIONS**

Although each class session will be recorded and available on Zoom, students should attend in person unless unable to do so. If a class is missed, students should view the recording of the missed class. Zoom recordings will be available until the end of the grading period at the end of the semester.

As class dynamics are substantially compromised without the ability for us all to see each other, it is expected that students will have their cameras on when attending via Zoom. If there are privacy concerns, the Zoom software can substitute a virtual background behind your image. If it is not possible to have your camera on during the sessions due to bandwidth issues, please contact me so that I can accommodate you.

#### **OFFICE HOURS**

Office Hours will be by appointment on Zoom so that I can be more flexible to make the best use of time for all of us. I encourage you to request a session if you feel it would be helpful. I am also generally in the class room by 6 p.m. each Wednesday. When requesting an appointment, please indicate the desired possible times. I am also available anytime by email ([rlbrown@usc.edu](mailto:rlbrown@usc.edu)).

#### **LATE WORK**

Each of the steps in planning a production is based on the previous steps. Therefore is important to keep up with the assignments. If you are having difficulty in completing the work, please contact me. I am happy to help. Late assignments will be subject to a 5% grade reduction.

#### **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.

Academic dishonesty has a far-reaching impact and is considered a serious offense against the university. Violations will result in a grade penalty, such as a failing grade on the assignment or in the course, and disciplinary action from the university itself, such as suspension or even expulsion.

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 me if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

#### USE OF AI GENERATORS SUCH AS CHATGPT

Artificial intelligence (AI)-powered programs can be useful as tools when researching large amounts of data. You should 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. I am interested in *your* thoughts and *your* expressions, not those of an AI program. In this course, you should *not* use AI to generate what is supposed to be original thought. 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).

#### COURSE EVALUATIONS

You will be given a few minutes to complete a course evaluation at the end of the semester. This is done throughout the university. It's an important review of your experience in the class and is helpful to me as an instructor. In addition, you will have an opportunity to complete a mid-semester evaluation which only goes to me and the SA.

**COURSE SCHEDULE: A WEEKLY BREAKDOWN**

	TOPICS	PREPARATIONS	DELIVERABLES DUE
<i>Week 1</i> <i>Jan 15</i>	Intro to Production Planning. The shooting sequence. The Script. Lesson Objective: Students will be able to divide a script into shooting sequences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ View <i>1917</i> video (link is in Brightspace, Week 1 Module)</li> <li>♦ Read Brown, Chapter 3.</li> </ul>	
<i>Week 2</i> <i>Jan 22</i>	Production Problems. Lining the script. Adobe Reader. Lesson Obj: Students will be able to line a script.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Read and visualize the script.</li> <li>♦ Read Brown, Chapter 5.</li> </ul>	
<i>Week 3</i> <i>Jan 29</i>	What's not in the script. <i>Movie Magic Scheduling</i> . Lesson Obj: Students will set up their scheduling files.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Read Brown, Chapter 4.</li> <li>♦ View <i>Life Of A 1st AD On A Movie Set</i> by Joe Bohn.</li> <li>♦ Download and install <i>MM Scheduling</i>.</li> </ul>	Week 2 assignment due: Lined script.
<i>Week 4</i> <i>Feb 5</i>	MM Scheduling (continued). The breakdown sheet. Lesson Obj: Students will be able to create breakdown sheets for all shooting sequences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Brown, Chapter 6.</li> <li>♦ View the Movie Magic Training video if you wish.</li> </ul>	
<i>Week 5</i> <i>Feb 12</i>	Scheduling the board. Lesson Obj: Students will be able to create an efficient shooting schedule..	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Brown, Chapter 7.</li> </ul>	Week 4 assignment due: MMS file with completed breakdown sheets.
<i>Week 6</i> <i>Feb 19</i>	Location vs. Stage work. Lesson Obj: Students will know the advantages and drawbacks of each.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Brown, Chapter 8.</li> <li>♦ Think about which sets you would shoot on location and which on stage.</li> </ul>	
<i>Week 7</i> <i>Feb 26</i>	Management & ethics. Review scheduling. Shooting schedules. Day out of days. Lesson Obj: Students will know the best methods of film set management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Brown, Chapter 10, 11</li> </ul>	Week 5 Assignment due: Scheduled production boards.

	TOPICS	PREPARATIONS	DELIVERABLES DUE
<i>Week 8</i> <i>Mar 5</i>	SAG-AFTRA diversity in casting. Introduce <i>Movie Magic Budgeting</i> . Lesson Obj: Students will use the DOOD to determine if they can meet the diversity in casting requirements, and will set up their <i>MMB</i> files.	♦ Brown, Chapters 9, 12, 13.	Week 7 Assignment due: 1-page essay.
<i>Week 9</i> <i>Mar 12</i>	Finish setting up <i>MMB</i> files. Above-the-line: Writers, Producers, Director, and Travel. Lesson Obj: Students will begin the ATL accounts.	♦ Brown, Chapters 14, 15.	Week 8 Assignment due: Completed DOOD.
<i>Mar 16 thru 23</i>	<b>SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS</b>		
<i>Week 10</i> <i>Mar 26</i>	<i>Movie Magic Budgeting</i> . Cast. Lesson Obj: Students will be able to create a cast budget.	♦ Completed DOOD assignment.	
<i>Week 11</i> <i>Apr 2</i>	<i>Movie Magic Budgeting</i> . Shooting Period Part 1. Lesson Obj: Students will be able to fill in Below-the-Line accounts.	♦ Brown, Chapter 16, pp. 181–225.	
<i>Week 12</i> <i>Apr 9</i>	<i>Movie Magic Budgeting</i> . Shooting Period Part 2. Lesson Obj: BTL continued.	♦ Brown, Chapter 16, pp. 225–270.	
<i>Week 13</i> <i>Apr 16</i>	<i>Movie Magic Budgeting</i> . Post Production Lesson Obj: BTL continued.	♦ Brown, Chapter 17	
<i>Week 14</i> <i>Apr 23</i>	<i>Movie Magic Budgeting</i> . General Expense. Lesson Obj: BTL continued.	Brown, Chapter 18	
<i>Week 15</i> <i>Apr 30</i>	Methods of Control and Course Review Lesson Obj: Students will be introduced to tools to monitor production progress.	Brown, Chapter 19	Week 9 Assignment due: Cast & Camera accounts.

	TOPICS	PREPARATIONS	DELIVERABLES DUE
<i>Final May 7</i>	Final Exam	Refer to the final exam schedule in the USC Schedule of Classes at <a href="http://classes.usc.edu">classes.usc.edu</a> .	

## THE SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS SUPPORT SYSTEMS AND STATEMENTS

Diversity and Inclusion are foundational to the SCA community. We are committed to fostering a welcoming and supportive environment where students of all identities and backgrounds can flourish. The classroom should be a space for open discussion of ideas and self-expression; however, SCA will not tolerate verbal or written abuse, threats, harassment, intimidation, or violence against persons or property. If students are concerned about these matters in the classroom setting, they are encouraged to contact their SCA Diversity and Inclusion Liaison, <http://cinema.usc.edu/about/diversity.cfm>; e-mail [diversity@cinema.usc.edu](mailto:diversity@cinema.usc.edu) or anonymously submit a report on SCA Community: <https://scacommunity.usc.edu/secure/diversityEquity/>. You can also read more about how to report discrimination based on a protected class here: <https://eeotix.usc.edu/get-help/what-are-my-choices-text>.

### SCA OFFICE OF STUDENT SERVICES

213-740-8358 or [StudentAffairs@cinema.usc.edu](mailto:StudentAffairs@cinema.usc.edu)

### SCA EMBEDDED THERAPISTS

Students enrolled in an SCA major program can schedule an appointment with an embedded therapist for the School of Cinematic Arts through the student health portal [MySHR](#).

### SCA COMMUNITY

For additional SCA resources please visit [scacommunity.usc.edu](http://scacommunity.usc.edu)

### CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY AND SUPPORT

(213) 821-4571

[creativetech@cinema.usc.edu](mailto:creativetech@cinema.usc.edu)

Location: SCA 128

Support Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:30 AM - 8:30 PM

<https://knowledgebase.sca.usc.edu/>

<https://workstations.sca.usc.edu/>

### PHYSICAL PRODUCTION OFFICE

The Physical Production Office assists students and faculty with production-related matters including production numbers, locations, permits, insurance, gear and equipment vendors, safety issues, and crew and actor policies. More information can be found by visiting the online [Production Procedures and Safety Handbook](#). The Physical Production Office is located at SCA 304 and is open every weekday from 9 am - 5 pm (Fridays 9 am - 1 pm). You can also reach the Office by calling 213-740-1298 or by email at [spo@cinema.usc.edu](mailto:spo@cinema.usc.edu).

### OFFICE OF INDUSTRY RELATIONS

School of Cinematic Arts - SCA 235

(213) 740-4432

[ir@cinema.usc.edu](mailto:ir@cinema.usc.edu)

### CINEMATIC ARTS LIBRARY RESEARCH GUIDE

<https://libguides.usc.edu/cinema>



## STATEMENT ON UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

### 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](https://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 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) 740-2500

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 SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX