UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS – WRITING DIVISION

Course: CTWR 415B
Semester: Spring 2024

INSTRUCTOR: David Ross
CLASS SCHEDULE: Mondays, 4:00 PM to 6:50 PM
SCA 342

OFFICE HOURS: Before or after class, or email for appointment CONTACT:
Rossi8000@mac.com

COURSE OBJECTIVE:
Students refine their existing outline and write a feature screenplay in a constructive, workshop environment. Each student will be expected to complete a first draft of the screenplay and a polish of Act 1. A good page range to keep in mind is 95 to 110 pages for the final submitted draft.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
Students will review and analyze their outlines, focusing on creating original, complex characters while developing a strong story and scene structure. After any necessary revisions students will write their screenplays with a focus on visual storytelling, act breaks, character needs and wants, set-ups and payoffs, subplots, original dialogue and subtext. Throughout, from outline to script, pages will be discussed via workshop in class.

<u>**READING:**</u>
Students will be required to read and annotate (per instructions) at least two scripts that they select. Students are encouraged to choose a script within the genre or style they are working with-- here for suggestions and help finding scripts if you need.

<u>**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**</u>
1) Completion of a revised outline, a feature screenplay, and a polish of Act 1. Proper grammar, spelling and format are expected.

2) Your outlines and scripts will be discussed in class so you will need to email the assignment to the instructor and your classmates before class (Fridays by 12 noon), as a PDF. (Points will be deducted for late delivery.)

3) Group Interaction: Students will be required to read each other's work, make notes on the PDFs of the outlines/scripts, and provide constructive feedback to their classmates. Because this class is a workshop, students must contribute to all class discussions, read their classmates' work, and email notes by the start of class. (Points

will be deducted for failure to deliver notes.) Being prepared, meeting deadlines and participating with enthusiasm is expected at all times

4) Assignments are to be completed in proper format, and submitted by specified due dates and times as discussed in class. Consistently late work will cost you a grade.

5) Read one published screenplay and annotate per instructions. The goal is for students to learn to read like a writer. Ideally, you should be reading scripts and watching films as often as possible. **This assignment will be due for presenting in class on Week 11, Monday March 31.**

The assignments can be delivered early if you wish. I recommend that you plan ahead and complete them early so you can focus on writing your pages.

Online resources for reading screenplays:

https://www.scriptreaderpro.com/best-screenplays-to-read/

https://gointothestory.blcklst.com/download-2020-oscar-nominated-screenplays-a5a5c5c9dc17

http://www.screenplaydb.com/film/all/

https://www.simplyscripts.com/movie-scripts.html

http://www.awesomefilm.com/

https://sfy.ru/

http://www.dailyscript.com/movie.html

<u>GRADING CRITERIA:</u>
Annotated Script:	**10%**
Participation:	**10%**
Revised Outline:	**20%**
Screenplay:	**50%**
First Act Revised:	**10%**

As per Writing Division policy the following is a breakdown of numeric grade to letter grade:

A 100% to 94%
A- 93% to 90%
B+ 89% to 87%
B 86% to 83%
B- 82% to 80%
C+ 79% to 77%

C 76% to 73%
C- 72% to 70%
D+ 69% to 67%
D 66% to 63%
D- 62% to 60%
F 59% to 0%

Expectation of Professionalism:
All material is expected to be turned in on time and in the proper format. Assignments will be penalized for grammatical mistakes, spelling errors, format mistakes, and typos. Please proof your assignment prior to submission.

Internet Policy:
Material discussed in the room is considered private and should not be blogged, tweeted, posted, snapchatted, or be posted anywhere else on the internet.

Laptop and Cell Phone Policy:
Laptops will be used in class for note taking only. Cell phones should be turned off except during breaks.

Writing Division Attendance Policy:
This class is a workshop and your participation in the discussion is important. Participation includes full involvement in, and contribution to, class discussion, as well as reading (in advance at times; see schedule) the assignments of your colleagues and offering thoughtful, constructive comments.

Class attendance is mandatory, and students are expected to be on time and prepared for each class. Tardiness is unprofessional and disrespectful to the class. Two late arrivals equal one full absence. Two unexcused absences will result in your final grade being lowered by a half grade point (Ex. A to A-) Any further unexcused absences will result in your final grade being lowered another two thirds of a point (ex: B to a C+) for each absence .

Excused absences can include, but are not limited to: illness, both physical and mental; death of a loved one; personal emergency; sporting events (for Student-Athletes) or other university-sponsored activities; religious holidays, and so on.

If you find you must miss class due to personal emergency or personal crisis, please contact your professor as soon as possible so they can assist you in finding the appropriate University care and guidance. Your health and well-being are of utmost importance to the Wells Writing Division and to your Faculty.

If you have an emergency and must miss class please contact your professor prior to class or contact the Writing Division at 213-740-3303.

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 conflict with 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.

<u>Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence:</u>
The uses of generative Artificial Intelligence to create narrative continue to evolve throughout the media workplace. However, it is vital that before relying on AI to assist in aspects of storytelling that we learn to source and execute our work via our own unique imagination.

Creating, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course. All assignments should be prepared by the student working individually or in groups. Students may not have another person or entity complete any substantive portion of the assignment. Developing strong competencies in these areas will prepare you for a competitive workplace. Therefore, using AI-generated tools is prohibited in this course, will be identified as plagiarism, and will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

<u>Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies:</u>
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).

OFFICE HOURS & CONFERENCES:
Individual conferences will be available by appointment. Upon the end of this class, I do encourage students to stay in touch, and you are always welcome to reach out to visit me again during the office hours I keep each semester.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

WEEK 1, January 13:

Introduction to the course and the collaborative workshop process. Students will introduce their outlines and what inspired them, and discuss their goals for the screenplay and the class. Reading assignment instructions will be covered. Discuss Act structure. Divide into groups A and B. Re-evaluate log lines and theme.

ASSIGNMENT: 1. Read Group A's outlines. Prepare notes on each and be ready to discuss them in class, focusing on: 1) Is the script on track thematically? Is each scene moving the story forward as well as setting up character development? 2) Does the protagonist drive the story? 3) Are the characters active enough? 4) Are there enough subplots? 5) Is there a clear-cut three act structure leading to a strong finish? ALL: Re-visit and re-write log lines if needed.

2. Reading Assignment. Read a script of a produced film that interests you. You might choose one that relates to what you're working on. Annotate per reading assignment instructions given out in class.

Group A's outlines to be emailed by *next* Friday at noon.

WEEK 2 OFF FOR MLK DAY

WEEK 3, January 27

Workshop **Group A's** outlines. Continued structure review + opening scenes and character set-up. Log Lines and character development. Your logline is your screenplay roadmap. Review log lines from classic films. Work on refining your own log line. Share new, revised log lines in class. What question will this film answer thematically? Protagonist study. Completion of protagonist profile.

Assignment 2: Complete protagonist profiles. Write log lines for a handful of famous scripts. Compare your log lines to the actual log line.

WEEK 4, February 3

Workshop **Group B's** outlines. Discuss your character profiles. Review internal and external conflicts. Do we need a "save the cat moment" aka likeable vs unlikeable protagonists in famous films. Review first act structure. Review of strong famous first acts of screenplays.

ASSIGNMENT: Group A and B revisit outlines if needed. If Group A is ready to write they may begin Act I. Prepare notes and be ready to discuss them in class. Group B continue with outline revisions. All outlines and first acts to be emailed by Friday at noon.

WEEK 5, February 10

Workshop any outstanding outlines from Group A and B. Discuss Dialogue and subtext (case studies in some classic films). Discuss genre structure from applicable genre films for class.

ASSIGNMENT: Group A and B continue to First Act. Read Group A's First Acts. Prepare notes and be ready to discuss in class. Group A's pages to be emailed by Friday at noon.

WEEK 6, OFF FOR PRESIDENTS' DAY

WEEK 7, February 24

Workshop Group A's First Acts. At this point in the script is the first act working? Are the protagonist's goals set up? What are the obstacles for the protagonist in the second act? Second Act structure review if needed.

ASSIGNMENT: Read Group B's First Acts. Prepare notes and be ready to discuss in class. Group B's pages to be emailed by Friday at noon.

WEEK 8, March 3

Workshop Group B's First Acts. At this point in the script is the first act working? Are the protagonist's goals set up? What are the obstacles for the protagonist in the second act? Does this act support the original thematic question you laid out? Are there extraneous scenes not driving your main characters goals? Where are the lags? Where can you cut or re-write.

ASSIGNMENT: Read Group A's Second Acts. Prepare notes and be ready to discuss in class. Group A's pages to be emailed by Friday at noon.

WEEK 9, March 10

Workshop Group A's Second Acts. What's working and what's not? Is the story effectively set up? Is the dialogue effective? Are your characters supporting your theme and vice versa? Are you delivering on the promise of the premise delivered in Act I?

ASSIGNMENT 1: Group B drafts Second Acts to midpoint. Prepare notes and be ready to discuss in class. Pages to be emailed by Friday at noon.

ASSIGNMENT 2 Reminder. Read a script and annotate per instructions. Email to your instructor by October 28th.

SPRING RECESS, MARCH 17

WEEK 10, March 24

Workshop Group B's Second Acts to midpoint. Is the protagonist developing/ learning/changing? Where is the plot? What are the subplots? Where are we leaving our protagonist at the act break? A high point or a low point?

ASSIGNMENT: Group A drafts Third Acts. Read Group B's screenplay pages. Prepare notes and be ready to discuss in class. Pages to be emailed by Friday at noon.

WEEK 11, March 31

Deliver reading assignment. (Worth 5 points.)

Workshop Group A's Third Acts Are you tracking the set ups? Is the character facing obstacles? Genre structure review/ possible guest.

ASSIGNMENT: Group B drafts 3rd Act. Read Group A's screenplay pages. Prepare notes and be ready to discuss in class. Pages to be emailed by Friday at noon.

WEEK 12, April 7
Workshop Group B's Third Acts How is the pacing? Are setups and payoffs working?

Genre structure review/ possible guest.

ASSIGNMENT: Read any revised pages or new outlines submitted by Group A and B. Chance to submit re-written scenes or acts for notes.

WEEK 13, April 14

Review pages and scenes that have been re-written from both Group A and B. Provide feedback. Polish guidelines and pitch docs handed out. Genre breakdowns of student choice. Study of specific film genre structure most applicable to student scripts

Workshop Group A and B's Polish Drafts/ revisions
Is the conflict resolved satisfactorily? How has the protagonist changed/ grown since first encountering the obstacles? What is the new tension building to the third act climax? What is the resolution?

ASSIGNMENT: Group A polish draft due for staged reading next week. Print pages for actors.

WEEK 14, April 21

Staged reading on Group A's final draft with working actors visiting class to read.

ASSIGNMENT: If you missed turning in an annotated script, now is the time. :) Group B polish draft due for staged reading next week. Print pages for actors.

WEEK 15, April 28

Staged reading on Group B's final draft with working actors visiting class to read.

ASSIGNMENT: If you missed turning in an annotated script, now is the time. :)

FINALS WEEK: All work due. Any final meetings schedule with Professor in advance.

<u>Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems Academic Conduct:</u>
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, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

<u>Course Evaluations:</u>
Course evaluation occurs at the end of the semester university wide. It is an important review of students' experience in the class. In addition, a mid-semester evaluation may be provided for early course correction.

<u>Diversity and Inclusion:</u>
 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 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/

<u>Support Services:</u>
SCA Office of Student Services 213-740-8358 or 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

Creative Technology and Support
(213) 821-4571
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/

Office of Industry Relations:
School of Cinematic Arts - SCA 235
(213) 740-4432
ir@cinema.usc.edu

Cinematic Arts Library Research Guide
 https://libguides.usc.edu/cinema

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 accommodation is 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.

COVID-19 Resource Center - https://coronavirus.usc.edu/what-should-i-do/

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.

Support Systems:
Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

Student Health Leave Coordinator – 213-821-4710
Located in the USC Support and Advocacy office, the Health Leave Coordinator processes requests for health leaves of absence and advocates for students taking such leaves when needed. https://policy.usc.edu/student-health-leave-absence/

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) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp*

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) | Title IX - *(213) 740-5086*

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu
Information about how to get help or help a survivor of harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations.

Bias Assessment Response and Support - *(213) 740-2421 studentaffairs.usc.edu/ bias-assessment-response-support*

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions for appropriate investigation and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - *(213) 740-0776*

dsp.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 Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710

studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa

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.

Diversity and Inclusion

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 person 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. You can also report discrimination based on a protected class here https://equity.usc.edu/harassment-or-discrimination/

Disruptive Student Behavior:
Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.

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

<u>**Land Acknowledgement**</u>
USC acknowledges that we are on the traditional land of the Tongva People. For thousands of years, the Tongva people lived on this land we occupy today and were considered the most powerful indigenous peoples to inhabit the Los Angeles basin. Along with the Tongva, we also recognize the Chumash, Tataviam, Serrano, Cahuilla, Juaneño, and Luiseño People, for the land that USC also occupies around Southern California. To learn about the Indigenous land on which your learning location resides, please visit Native-Land.ca to discover the Original People of your home.