REALITY TV - FROM PITCH TO PILOT

Scott A. Stone

Tuesday, 6:00 pm - 8:50 pm

Units: 2

Contact Info: E-mail: sstone@stonetv.com
Scott’s Office: 323-860-8435 - (see scott for cell info)
Office Hours: 5-6:00 PM Tuesday - before class booked in advance (or after class)

Course Description:

This course provides a comprehensive overview of the world of non-scripted or so called “reality” television closely following the real process of show development from creation and production to delivery of video presentations and sales material. It is project-based, consisting of multiple pitches of original ideas from students, in class development of those ideas, class discussion with prominent guest speakers currently working in the Industry, and production of sizzle reels for the projects.

Course Requirement:

Students pick or are assigned a partner to work together to create and pitch original concepts for non-scripted TV shows. The team will pitch one project for each student to a panel of working agents along with a one-page treatment for the mid term. The panel picks which of the team’s two projects are the most viable. The team then further develops the project and produces a “sizzle reel” along with a written presentation that is used to present their show idea to a major network buyer as the final. Samples will be shown in the first class.

Grading:

Attendance 15%: Attendance will be taken every week. You may miss up to 2 classes over the semester. Showing up is key!

Participation: 15%: Abundant class participation is required from all students. Your grade will be affected accordingly. Articles may be distributed before guest lectures with questions solicited beforehand.
Mid Term 30%: The mid-term consists of a verbal pitch of your idea to a panel of non-scripted packaging agents. A one-page treatment must accompany your pitch.

Final Project 35%: The final will be a pitch of your teams’ project presented to a network buyer. The presentation will include a verbal pitch, sizzle reel, and PowerPoint. It will take place on the last regularly scheduled class night (April 28th).

WEEK ONE - HOW DID WE GET HERE?

• The history of non-scripted - from radio’s Candid Microphone to PBS’s An American Family, and from The Real World to Survivor, American Idol, and The Real Housewives…, and The Kardashians.

• The current reality/docu landscape
  o Docu-Soap (Housewives)
  o Docu-Series – (Deadliest Catch, Celebrity Rehab)
  o Adventure Competition (Survivor, Amazing Race, Naked and Afraid)
  o Process (Project Runway, Master Chef)
  o Performance (The Voice, Dancing with the Stars)
  o Game (Wheel, Jeopardy, Family Feud)
  o Relationship -(The Bachelor)
  o Make Over/Lifestyle (Millionaire Matchmaker/Say Yes to the Dress)
  o Re-enactment - (Cops, Locked up Abroad)
  o Hidden Camera/Comedy - (Punk’d, Mystery Diner)

• Drawing the line - the moral compass of non-scripted TV

SHOW PITCHES - your ideas

WEEK TWO - Format Breakdown

• Breaking down a show - act structure and creative flow - cliff hangers

SHOW PITCHES - your ideas
WEEK THREE - Casting

- What does a reality casting director do? How to find your cast?
- What makes a good reality TV personality? Putting together an ensemble cast

SHOW PITCHES - your ideas

ASSIGNMENT - Interview someone VERY interesting

WEEK FOUR

SHOW AND TELL - Your Interviews

ASSIGNMENT - lock in your choice of midterm project and beat it out act by act

WEEK FIVE

SHOW AND TELL - pre pitch - present your project and act breakdown to the class

WEEK SIX - MIDTERM - PITCH FEST - (long class - we go until it is done)
Each student pitches their best idea to panel of agents

- The agents review the ideas while the class waits for the results
- 1 project from each team is chosen for the final presentation

WEEK SEVEN

- Fleshing out the shows
- Writing a sizzle script
- What is a “leave-behind”

ASSIGNMENT - Write a first draft script for the video and leave behind

WEEK EIGHT

- Review the scripts in class and work on re-writes
WEEK NINE

• Break out groups go through shooting plan and finalize script

WEEK TEN

• Review material shot
• Review leave behind rough draft

WEEK ELEVEN - guest - Network Development Executive

• What does a development exec do?
• How do they decide which projects to take on?
• How does a pitch work?
• Practice pitch

WEEK TWELVE - ASSEMBLIES AND ROUGH CUTS

• Screen an assembly of the video and get notes

WEEK THIRTEEN - FINE CUT

• Screen the fine cut
• Guest showrunner gives notes

WEEK FOURTEEN - NO CLASS - FINALIZE PITCHES

WEEK FIFTEEN - FINAL PITCH

• Screen final projects for network executive(s) - Final
Students with Disabilities:

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure that the letter is delivered to the instructor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and open from 8:30AM - 5:00PM, Monday through Friday. You may contact DSP at (213) 740-0776.

Statement on Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. Scampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/.

Attendance Policy

Attendance for ALL classes is mandatory. Students are expected to attend all classes. Students who are absent for more than twice the number of hours a class meets in one week (maximum absence limit), will normally receive a grade of "No Credit". For example, if a class meets four hours per week, a student who has more than 8 hours of total absences during the semester would receive a grade of "No Credit".

A student may be marked as absent for that hour at the discretion of the teacher if he or she arrives 15 minutes or later after the beginning of a class.

Students who go over the maximum absence limit may appeal their case to the Student Advisor. Such students should be prepared to show evidence of a legitimate excuse for every time they missed class (court documents, doctor's notes, etc.). Legitimate excuses include: medical emergencies, personal emergencies, family emergencies, and required courtroom appearances. Picking up a relative at the airport or not being able to find a parking space are not considered emergencies.

Although students may receive "No Credit" for a course due to absences, they may still be released from their ALI class at the end of the semester if they have been able to demonstrate that they can fulfill the objectives of the course.

Any student who receives a grade of "No Credit" in two ALI courses will not be permitted to enroll in ALI classes in the future. This usually means that the student will have to leave USC due to the fact that he/she cannot fulfill the English requirement which is a condition of admission.