Course Description and Overview
Extensive examination of playwriting, dramaturgical development process, and readings of work toward the completion of professionally promising plays.

Learning Objectives
This course is designed for 1st-year students in the USC School of Dramatic Arts’ Master of Fine Arts in Dramatic Writing program, but may include graduate students from other writing-related programs at USC at the discretion of the instructor. The ultimate goal is for the student to write a promising first draft enriched with the explorations that he or she conducts via the course curriculum. This is the first master class in dramatic writing as a USC graduate student in the Master of Fine Arts in Dramatic Writing program. Development and execution of character and story are foundationally important to the work ahead of each student. Knowing the parameters of the world that he or she seeks to explore and represent is critical. Playwriting is not merely the seduction of a brilliant idea, a provocative character, or an interesting theme brought to life randomly and without consideration. It demands deeper and broader contemplation and investigation beyond these ingredients. Students must think of their course work as artistic research: observing humanity, reading, asking and finding answers to questions, listening to music, viewing visual art, witnessing and engaging in other art forms, thinking, reflecting, and imagining.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials
The books are available from via the hyperlinks provided.

*Letters to a Young Poet* by Rainer Maria Rilke - [http://www.amazon.com/Letters-Young-Rainer-Maria-Rilke/dp/0393310396/ref=sr_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1404459337&sr=1-3&keywords=rainer+maria+rilke](http://www.amazon.com/Letters-Young-Rainer-Maria-Rilke/dp/0393310396/ref=sr_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1404459337&sr=1-3&keywords=rainer+maria+rilke)


"Writer’s Block" Busters 101 Exercises to Clear the Deadwood and Make Room for Flights of Fancy


Blackboard [https://blackboard.usc.edu/](https://blackboard.usc.edu/) (Means of communication and continuation of curriculum in the event of an emergency) (If you do not know how to use Blackboard, visit the site and follow links to USC Blackboard Help.)
Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments

Academic integrity is important to the University. The student is urged to remember that professors do not “give” grades; students earn grades. Thus, a final grade is entirely up to the student with regards to the effort he or she chooses to expend to meet course requirements. Please note that late work is given a ten percent (20%) penalty and is accepted only within one week of its due date (see “Grading Breakdown”). The only exception is illness or personal crisis. Here are USC’s definitions of grades: “A” for work of excellent quality, “B” for work of good quality, “C” for work of fair quality for undergraduate credit and minimum passing for graduate credit, “C-” as a failing grade for graduate credit, “D-” for work of minimum passing quality for undergraduate credit, “F” for failure, “IN” for incomplete work, student-initiated after 12th week and only awarded under exceptional circumstances. There will be three categories of grading:

30% - Weekly Grade. This evaluates your engagement in reading and writing assignments, writing exercises, and evaluative discussions in class. This grade will include your Critical Analysis Presentation of your assigned play.

20% - Professional Development and Constructive Criticism. This evaluates professional behavior as a writer in class including behavior toward peers as well as the quality of your giving/receiving of constructive criticism.

50% - Completed Project/Final Exam. Your final project will be a full-length play typed in standard manuscript format (consult the current Dramatists’ Guild Resource Directory or Samuel French: http://www.samuelfrench.com/content/files/upload/General%20SF%20Formatting%20Guidelines%20Complete.pdf); suggested length 45-85 pages. The manuscript will be professionally presented with card stock covers and genuine brass brads or silver rings. Note that lack of adherence to these guidelines will lower your grade, as they are professional standards to learn. Please do not plagiarize. [Many of you have trouble locating professional brass brads. Here is a link: http://www.amazon.com/Solid-Brass-Fasteners-Capacity-A7071505/dp/B00061BK1; you will need 1¼ inch or 1½ inch depending on the thickness of your manuscript.]

Grading is determined on the following scale:

| 96-100% = A | 88-90% = B+ |
| 85-87% = B  | 78-80% = C+ |
| 74-77% = C  | 71-74% = C- |
| 61-63% = D- |

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 has been good, but will be weighted toward the negative end of the scale for those with poor attendance and participation.

The final project grade is evaluated on a percentage scale with the grade breaking down as follows: 20% Quality of structure/through-line/plotting, 20% Quality of character development, 20% Quality of dialogue development, 20% Quality of overall creative achievement, and 20% professionalism of project (i.e. editing, presentation, length, etc.).

Grading Breakdown

30% Weekly Grade
20% Professional Development and Constructive Criticism
50% Final Project

In keeping with SDA guidelines on grading:

• There shall be no unexcused absences.
• No late assignments, projects, exams, papers, or exercised shall be accepted unless advance extensions have been arranged between the student and the teacher or unless exceptional circumstances occur.
Assignment Submission Policy
Assignments are to be submitted in class for weekly assignments and in hard copy, professional format as noted above, for the final projects.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown
9/1 – Holiday. No class.
9/8 – Writing workshop: Vogler. Hothouse @ The Pasadena Playhouse on 9/11, Thursday.
9/15 – Writing workshop. Archaeology of the world of the play, exercises.
9/29 – Writing workshop. Explorations of story and character; exercises.
10/6 – Writing workshop, exercises. Readings.
10/13 – Critical Analysis Presentations and discussions.
10/20 – Writing workshop, exercises. Visions and Voices Event, 10/21, 6:30 pm, Doheny 240.
11/10 – Writing workshop, exercises.
11/17 – Writing workshop, exercises.
11/24 – Business affairs issues: copyrights, letters, networking, marketing, etc.

[11/27-30 Thanksgiving Holiday]

12/1 – Last day of class. Guest artist(s) on director-playwright relations.
12/15 – 2-4 pm, FINAL EXAMINATION DATE*

[12/18-1/11 Winter Break]

*Final Examination Date:
Please note that the Final Exam is mandatory on a day and time set by the University. Site TBD.

Statement for Students with Disabilities
Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a 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 the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website and contact information for DSP: http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html, (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

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, (www.usc.edu/scampus or http://scampus.usc.edu) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

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.