THTR 576 Creative Process for Dramatic Writers 63273D
Spring 2015—Thursdays—7:00-9:50 pm

Location: McClintock 112 (MCC 112)
Instructor: Supervising Instructor, Velma Hasu Houston; Co-Faculty
Oliver Mayer and Luis Alfaro

Offices: Massman Drama Center, 1029 Childs Way; CWT, 1014 Childs Way
Office Hours: Each instructor offers 2-plus hours a week in office hours (VHH
M 10-12, TH 1-3; OM TH 2-4; LA TBD); all office hours must be scheduled via
appointment utilizing email (see contact information).

Contact Info: VHH, greentea@usc.edu, OM, omayer@usc.edu, LA
luisalfaro@mac.com.

Course Description and Overview
This course is designed for third-year students in the USC School of Dramatic Arts’ Master of Fine Arts in
Dramatic Writing program. Creative Process for Dramatic Writers functions as an advanced writing
workshop that focuses on critical and deep development of plays that are students’ thesis projects.

Learning Objectives
The course objective is reconsideration, reflection, and refinement of thesis plays in preparation for their
presentation in the USC School of Dramatic Art’s New Works Festival Year III in May 2015, which will be
presented at The Carrie Hamilton Theatre at The Pasadena Playhouse. In concert with intensive
dramaturgy and (in specific presentations) interaction with actors that students must engage in the process,
students will be expected to enhance and cultivate their plays toward greater professional promise.
Students are expected to challenge themselves and their work vigorously in order to explore and discover in
ways that will produce meaningful, if not electrifying, results. Please note that this course is taught by a
team of instructors, but the entire team of instructors will not always all be present in the classroom.
Prerequisite and co-requisite courses consist of all required classes in the MFADW program.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials
The Director’s Craft: A Handbook for the Theatre by Katie Mitchell (USC Bookstore)
MFADW Production Guidelines (sent to you via e-mail in September 2014)

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 this course provides a framework for development of one of the most important, if not the
most important, script in your USC career. In working on this play, you are deepening your education about
the art and craft of dramatic writing. As such, it is our hope that you invest in the process as fully as you
can by not only working on your script with brilliant discipline and determination, but also by being present
for your peers, reading the texts and plays required of you for the course, attending NWF Year I and II
productions and other plays, and engaging in life in ways that enrich your overall perspective as an artist.

For this course to deliver its learning outcomes, you must engage in the process with vigor.

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:
Grading is determined on the following scale:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>96-100%</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88-90%</td>
<td>A+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81-84%</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-77%</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67-70%</td>
<td>D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-63%</td>
<td>D</td>
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(Failing Grade for Graduate Credit = C-)

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.

**Grading Breakdown**

50% Weekly Peer Dramaturgy, Writing Exercises, Interactive Discussion, Mid-term Evaluation, NWF Participation

50% Final Project (A reconsidered, full revision of the student’s thesis play; graded on the basis of character execution, story execution, crafting of dialogue, overall quality of the play) *(PLEASE NOTE: Each student is required to turn in a refined draft of their play at the end of THTR 576; however, this is SEPARATE FROM your thesis play that must be turned in for THTR 593b on the date of the University’s thesis submission deadline: April 1, 2015, 12 pm PST.)*

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, for the final projects. Professional presentation is always important, but never more so than at this time of transition from academia to the profession. This is part of your grade. The final projects will be submitted to each instructor per the preference of the instructor, i.e. hard copy double-sided or electronically.

**Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown**

1/11 – Scripts due to all three faculty members via email. These are the drafts that the instructors will utilize in your deep dramaturgy. Please note actor workshops for 2/26, 3/5, 3/12, 4/16, 4/23, and 4/30 below* as you have responsibilities tied to these workshop.

1/15 – Deep, one-on-one dramaturgy. Each student will meet individually with the mentor assigned below to work on her thesis play. The student should present a point-of-departure script to her mentor on 01/11/2015 via email as noted above. The objective is to arrive on 01/29 with scripts that have been advanced dramaturgically based on one-on-one mentoring. Team assignments: (1) Oliver Mayer and Victoria Moy, (2) Luis Alfaro and Lena Ford, and (3) Velina Hasu Houston and Tylar Pendgraft. (All instructors)

1/22 – Deep, one-on-one dramaturgy continues. (All instructors)

1/29 – Table reading of Lena Ford’s play. (Director can be invited to attend if student chooses to do so.) Peer and mentor dramaturgy. Student is expected to refine play toward 2/19 workshop. Discovery on each play using dramaturgical methods that each student utilized in her HOTHOUSE at The Pasadena Playhouse experience in fall 2014. (All instructors)

2/5 – Table reading of Victoria Moy’s play. (Director can be invited to attend if student chooses to do so.) Peer and mentor dramaturgy. Student is expected to refine play toward 2/19 workshop. Discovery on each play using dramaturgical methods that each student utilized in her HOTHOUSE at The Pasadena Playhouse experience in fall 2014. (All instructors)
2/12 – Table reading of Tylar Pendgraft’s play. (Director can be invited to attend if student chooses to do so.) Peer and mentor dramaturgy. Student is expected to refine play toward 2/19 workshop. Discovery on each play using dramaturgical methods that each student utilized in her HOTHOUSE at The Pasadena Playhouse experience in fall 2014. (All instructors)

2/19 – Process focus. Workshop emphasis on all three plays. Discussion will concentrate on geography of play, character and story execution, and dialogue crafting. The objective: to continue to address strengths and weaknesses in the context of constructive criticism toward the student continuing to be productive and refine his or her play. Lead instructor: Oliver Mayer

2/26 – Process focus. Workshop emphasis on one play, various scenes. *Actors including MFA actors may participate; student is responsible for engaging actors; it is advisable to secure commitments at least one week in advance. Refreshments will be provided. Lead instructor: Velina Hasu Houston

3/5 – Process focus. Workshop emphasis on one play, various scenes. *Actors including MFA actors may participate; student is responsible for engaging actors; it is advisable to secure commitments at least one week in advance. Refreshments will be provided. Lead instructor: Luis Alfaro

3/12 – Process focus. Workshop emphasis on one play, various scenes. *Actors including MFA actors may participate; student is responsible for engaging actors; it is advisable to secure commitments at least one week in advance. Refreshments will be provided. Lead instructor: Oliver Mayer

3/19 – Spring break.

3/26 – Process. Writing workshop and exercises. The objective: to confront critically strengths and weaknesses of each play toward continued productivity with regard to revisions and refinement. Lead instructor: Velina Hasu Houston

4/2 — Process. Writing workshop and exercises. The objective: to confront critically strengths and weaknesses of each play toward continued productivity with regard to revisions and refinement. Lead instructor: Luis Alfaro

4/9 — Process. Writing workshop and exercises. The objective: to confront critically strengths and weaknesses of each play toward continued productivity with regard to revisions and refinement. Lead instructor: Oliver Mayer

4/16 – End-of-term Evaluation. Analysis of one play. Student will bring in completed work today that must be revised from Process Focus days. *Student is responsible for securing actors for the reading; it is advisable to secure commitments at least one week in advance. Refreshments will be provided. Dramaturgical discussions: peer feedback and mentor dramaturgy. The objective: to confront critically strengths and weaknesses of each play toward immediate productivity with regard to revisions and refinement. Lead instructor: Velina Hasu Houston

4/23 – End-of-term Evaluation. Analysis of one play. Student will bring in completed work today that must be revised from Process Focus days. *Student is responsible for securing actors for the reading; it is advisable to secure commitments at least one week in advance. Refreshments will be provided. Dramaturgical discussions: peer feedback and mentor dramaturgy. The objective: to confront critically strengths and weaknesses of each play toward immediate productivity with regard to revisions and refinement. Lead instructor: Luis Alfaro

4/30 – Last day of class. End-of-term Evaluation. Analysis of one play. Student will bring in completed work today that must be revised from Process Focus days. *Student is responsible for securing actors for the reading; it is advisable to secure commitments at least one week in advance. Refreshments will be
provided. Dramaturgical discussions: peer feedback and mentor dramaturgy. The objective: to confront critically strengths and weaknesses of each play toward immediate productivity with regard to revisions and refinement. (All instructors)

5/1 – Your final projects (your scripts, which should have evolved past the drafts that you submitted for the USC graduate deadline) are due by 12:00 pm, noon. The final project represents a final examination of your work for the semester. Once you have submitted your work on time, your commitment to this course is finished.

5/7* – Final Examination, 7-9 pm. The final project represents a final examination of your work for the semester. Once you have submitted your work on time, your commitment to this course is finished.

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://saist.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.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct
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 Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity http://equity.usc.edu/ or to the Department of Public Safety http://caps.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/ provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems
A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute http://dornsife.usc.edu/all, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs

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http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information http://emergency.usc.edu/ will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.