

USC School of Dramatic Art

THTR 590 Directed Research for the Dramatic Writing Student

Units: 2 Section: 63220D

**FALL 2015—Wednesday—Time:
3:00-4:50 pm PST**

Location: PED 202

Instructor: Josefina Lopez

Office: Massman Drama Center (DRC),
josefinl@usc.edu

Office Hours: 1:30 - 2:30 pm, Wednesdays by appointment
only; 24-hour business day (M-F) cancellation required

Contact Info: josefinl@usc.edu, (emails will be returned
within 48 hours), 323 304 9914 (calls will be returned within 48
hours)

IT Help: USC Information Technology
Services, <http://itservices.usc.edu>; School of
Dramatic Arts – Mr. Prakash Shirke **Contact
Info:** shirke@usc.edu, (213) 740-1288, MCC

Course Description

Directed Research for dramatic writing students serves as a course in which dramatic writing students can explore points of departure for their characters and stories, researching and examining the underpinnings of the who, what, why, where, and how of these dramatic elements in order to be able to write more organically and authentically from the outset. This is an opportunity for dramatic writing students to make discoveries that go beyond the superficial, a look at what's beyond the "tip of the iceberg."

Learning Objectives

Students will learn how to do traditional research as well as employ new ways of doing research that goes "outside of the box."

Prerequisite(s): If not in Master of Fine Arts in Dramatic Writing program, a writing sample and instructor approval.

Course Notes

Students must check email and Blackboard regularly, which means at least once every 24 hours for email and at least once a week for Blackboard or when directed by the instructor.

Students are not allowed to use computers, electronic devices, or cell phones in class.

Recommended Reading and Recommended Supplementary Materials

Heal Your Body from A to Z, Hay House Press, http://www.amazon.com/Heal-Your-Body--Z-Louise/dp/B006OSJRWE/ref=sr_1_5?ie=UTF8&qid=1440487081&sr=8-5&keywords=HEAL+YOUR+LIFE+FROM+A+TO+Z

Description 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:

25% - Weekly Grade. This evaluates your engagement in reading and writing assignments, writing exercises, and evaluative discussions in class.

25% - 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 dramaturgical packet of 10 - 15 pages (12 point font, stapled or clipped) explaining the who, what, where, when, why, how of a future play or full-length play being written in another class. This dramaturgical packet will go beyond the physical and superficial aspects of the play, but a true exploration of the emotional, unconscious, and even spiritual forces that shape the play.

Grading is determined on the following scale:

96-100%=A 88-90%=B+ 81-84%=B- 75-77%= C 67-70%=D+ 95-91%=A- 85-87%=B
78-80%=C+ 71-74%= C- 66-64%=D 61-63%=D- [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.

The final project grade is evaluated on a percentage scale with the grade breaking down as follows: 25% Quality of structure/through-line/plotting, 25% Quality of character

development, 25% Quality of dialogue development, 25% Quality of overall creative achievement and professionalism⁵ (i.e. editing, presentation, length, etc.).

Grading Breakdown

25% Weekly Grade (cultural analysis, writing exercises, etc.)

25% Writing Workshops and Project Cultivation, 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 exercises 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

8/26 Introductions and overview. Discussion of syllabus, final project, TRAUMA & LIFE THEMES - writing exercise

9/2 – *WHO IS THE PROTAGONIST AND THEIR CONFLICTS?* - writing exercise.

9/9 – *WHO IS THE ANTAGONIST AND THEIR CONFLICTS?* - writing exercise

9/16 – *WHAT DOES THE PROTAGONIST WANT/NEED?* - writing exercise

9/23 – *WHAT ARE THE RULES, VALUES & FORCES IN THE STORY?* - writing exercise

9/31 – *WHERE DOES THE PROTAGONIST LIVE/INHABIT?* - writing exercise

10/7 – *WHERE DOES THIS STORY TAKE PLACE?* writing exercise.

10/14 – *WHEN DOES THIS STORY TAKE PLACE?* - writing exercise

10/21 – *WHEN DOES THIS STORY BEGIN AND END?* - writing exercise

10/22 – *WHY DOES THE PROTAGONIST WANT IT?* - writing exercise

11/4 – *WHY DOES THE PROTAGONIST NEED TO DO THIS?* - writing exercise

11/11 – *HOW TO CONDUCT SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWS* - writing exercise

11/18 – *HOW TO KNOW YOUR STORY/YOURSELF* - writing exercises.

11/25 – Holiday. No class. (THANKSGIVING).

12/3 – *SPECIAL SKILLS TO TAP INTO YOUR INTUITION & CREATIVITY* - Last day of class. Final projects due by 12/14 at 2 pm. No projects accepted after deadline.

12/14 – FINAL EXAMINATION DATE 2 pm to 4 pm. 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.

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://capsnet.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/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* 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.