

USC School of Dramatic Arts

GESM 110: Eco-Theatre

Section #35314

Spring 2016 — Tuesdays & Thursdays — 10:30 – 11:50 am

Location: Massman Theatre - DRC

Instructor: Paula Cizmar

Office: JEF 201, 950 W. Jefferson, Los Angeles 90089

Office Hours: Available: Tues 12:30 - 5 pm ; Wed 10 am – Noon; Wed 6 – 8 pm; Thurs 9 - 10 am; Thurs 1 – 3 pm; please note that office hours are by appointment only; contact me via email or phone, at least 24 hours in advance. For appointments outside these hours, I am available by videoconference on SKYPE or Google Hangout.

Contact Info: cizmar@usc.edu; 323.376.1216 mobile; 213.821.2090 office; www.paulacizmar.com

ITHelp: 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 and Overview

Theatre, nature, science, and social issues converge in this course which explores the many ways plays and live performance are dealing with such major environmental crises as climate change, loss of natural resources, extinction. Along the way, the class will investigate related concerns such as science denial, science fraud, political obstacles, and historical treatment of the issues. How did different groups view conservation—if they thought of it at all? What is wilderness? How did we set out to “tame nature”? What is the Native American view? How does industry/technology threaten the health of the earth? What are the alternative positive-action views of the deep ecology movement? Theatre has responded to these topics in various ways and in diverse genres—such as street theatre, dystopian futurism, children’s theatre, and reality-based work—and students will be invited to create their own responses as well.

Learning Objectives

Using plays and performance pieces about the environment as a springboard, this course encourages an understanding of the relationship of humanity and nature and addresses the climate change crisis. The specific learning objectives include: *Analysis, Connectivity, Engagement, and Making*. (1) *Analysis*: Students will read and interpret plays that use fictional stories to address specific environmental issues, while at the same time researching the scientific, sociopolitical, and economic background of the problems enumerated in the theatrical works. They will synthesize the various topics and viewpoints; assess the playwriting in both aesthetic and sociopolitical terms; and analyze the development of both the issues and the artistic response. Approaches that differ by gender, culture, generation, and nation will be investigated and the effectiveness of various types of theatre will be viewed. (2) *Connectivity*: Students will not only be encouraged to begin making connections between such everyday occurrences as tap water and its sources (and the troubled history of the sources), but they will also begin to

recognize the interconnectivity of humans and all of nature. They will achieve awareness of the relationship between the actions of one region and the effects on surrounding regions; and they will gain experience in how theatre and art are connected to the community—and, indeed, can help create community. (3) *Engagement*: Project-based learning will be a component of the class; students will be presented with various scenarios via the plays and the nonfictional resources, and will be asked to propose a project in which they can actively engage in problem-solving or awareness-raising. Students will engage as individuals and/or as teams. (4) *Making*: Students will not only read and investigate dramatic literature and nonfiction, but will also be provided with the skills to create their own fictional or nonfictional response. Options are enumerated under “Final Project” below. In addition, collaboratively, the class will create a blog that deals with theatre, art, and the environment.

Prerequisite(s): None

Co-Requisite (s): None

Concurrent Enrollment: None

Recommended Preparation: Reading/viewing the plays and works listed in Required Readings and Supplementary Materials.

Please note: This class is GOING GREEN. This means that we will save on time, energy, and paper. You will not have to print your work; instead, we will project your materials, project plans, etc. onto a giant screen via laptop computer. You will not have to print assignments, including your Final Project; instead, you’ll turn in a PDF of all documents electronically; I will give you feedback directly on your manuscript via electronic Sticky Notes. All handouts and course materials will be paperless, available online via Blackboard, with backups sent via email.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Plays (required):

Chantal Bilodeau. SILA.

Paula Cizmar. THE CHISERA. (available via PDF from instructor)

Henrik Ibsen. AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE.

EM Lewis. SONG OF EXTINCTION.

Cherrie Moraga. HEROES AND SAINTS.

Henry Murray. TREEFALL.

Steve Waters. THE CONTINGENCY PLAN.

Plays (for individual essays – select one):

Diane Glancy. THE BIRD HOUSE.

Michael Hollinger. TOOTH AND CLAW.

Karen Malpede. EXTREME WHETHER.

Jose Rivera. MARISOL.

Nonfiction (*required*):

Elizabeth Kolbert. THE SIXTH EXTINCTION.

Nonfiction (*recommended*):

Naomi Klein. THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING.

Wallace Stegner. BEYOND THE HUNDREDTH MERIDIAN: JOHN WESLEY POWELL AND THE SECOND OPENING OF THE WEST

Selected readings (excerpts on Blackboard – provided):

Mary Hunter Austin. THE LAND OF LITTLE RAIN.

Tom Lynch, Cheryll Glotfelty, et al. THE BIOREGIONAL IMAGINATION: LITERATURE, ECOLOGY, AND PLACE.

Marc Reisner. CADILLAC DESERT: THE AMERICAN WEST AND ITS DISAPPEARING WATER.

George Sessions. DEEP ECOLOGY FOR THE 21st CENTURY.

The assigned books are available for purchase in the bookstore or on Amazon.

Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments

Work to be completed includes reading, viewing, critical analyses, a sample proposal, and a creative project.

***Grading criteria:** The quality of work in this class is determined by the thoroughness of the effort, the ongoing process, and the imagination/critical thought displayed. The rubric for determining the quality of work for the Final Project is described below in the detailed description of the project.*

Grading Scale for SDA: **A** indicates work of excellent quality; **B** of good quality; **C** of average quality; **D** of below average quality; and **F** indicates inadequate work.

Grading Breakdown

Your grade will be based on multiple components: reading assignments, class exercises and discussion, two critical analysis essays, a Sample Proposal for an environmental awareness engagement project, a mid-term exam, a Final Project (creative project; see details below), a final exam, and participation. Participation includes class exercises, discussion, plus contributions to feedback on other students' work. In addition, as a group collaboration, the class will create a blog that deals with theatre, art, and the environment.

Sample Proposal. Please note that the Sample Proposal will be a written proposal for a potential project designed to raise awareness about an environmental issue. The project should be some sort of event that would potentially involve a theatre or performance component for at least part of it. (This is a proposal only; you will not be required to construct the event itself.)

Final Project. The Final Project is a creative project of your own choosing. Options include writing a short play; OR: creating a Glogster/Pinterest/Prezi presentation; organizing an event; writing a journal article on bioregionalism, drought, or another environmental topic and how it might intersect with the arts; doing independent research on a specific eco-theatre topic; interviewing scientists and presenting their work documentary style; interviewing writers and

artists about eco-issues and presenting the work using multimedia; creating an online magazine and covering environmental and theatre stories.

Timeliness. Please bear in mind that you earn your grade based on the timely completion of your work, plus the quality of your work. Late assignments are marked down due to missed deadlines. Assignments are accepted only within one week of due date. After that, they are considered a missed assignment, which counts as zero.

Components of the overall grade are weighted as follows (see below for details):

Participation	100 points
Posts - Assigned Reading	(total) 120 points
Critical Analysis Essay 1	60 points
Critical Analysis Essay 2	60 points
Sample Proposal - Environmental Engagement Project	135 points
Mid-term Exam	120 points
Prep/Research for Final Project	60 points
Contribution to Collaborative Blog	60 points
Final Project	165 points
Final Exam	120 points
TOTAL	1000 points

Grading Scale for SDA: **A** indicates work of excellent quality; **B** of good quality; **C** of average quality; **D** of below average quality; and **F** indicates inadequate work.

Note: *The SDA GUIDELINES on GRADING state that:*

- *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

The Critical Analysis Essays and the Sample Proposal must be submitted electronically to cizmar@usc.edu. Please follow these guidelines: (1) Submit the essays and the proposal as PDFs; I will be able to make comments on Sticky Notes directly on the PDF; (2) Provide a subject header on the email that gives your name, the name of the class, and the number of the essay (1 or 2) or the name of the proposal. Weekly posts about the assigned reading will be submitted to the appropriate discussion site on Blackboard. Your blog contribution will be posted directly to the collaboratively created blog. The Final Project will be submitted via BlackBoard (the submission site will open during the last week of the semester).

Additional Policies

Participation is essential and figures into your grade. Your participation is necessary not only for the development of your own work and insights, but for the development of your colleagues' work and insights as well. Theatre is a highly collaborative, community-oriented medium and embracing these principles will enhance your experience in this course—as well as in other endeavors in other fields! We will operate as if we are in a

creative workshop that thrives on team commitment. Please honor your obligation to your colleagues' work. Absences must be for reasons of illness or emergency and must be accompanied by a written explanation; in your absence, please prepare the assigned work that is due and turn it in immediately upon return to the workshop.

1. You are entering into a collaborative relationship with fellow creatives and, thus, it is your responsibility to be available to your workshop colleagues for feedback, analysis, and support.
2. All workshop members must be treated with respect.
3. You are required to attend the workshop and to be on time. Tardiness is defined as being 15 minutes late or more. Excessive tardiness will affect your ongoing writing and participation grade. Only one (1) unexcused absence is allowed.
4. Other absences must be for reasons of illness or emergency, and you must notify me in writing (preferably in advance).
5. All assignments, written and/or otherwise, must be prepared on time and turned in (or presented) on the deadline date. Late assignments will be marked down due to the missed deadline. Assignments not turned in within a week of deadline count as missed assignments (zero credit).
6. IF YOU MISS CLASS: It is your responsibility—and SOLELY YOUR RESPONSIBILITY—to make up work you have missed and to obtain information about missed class discussions or missed assignments from your classmates or Blackboard, not from me. I will not be repeating lectures or class discussion; you will need to make arrangements to do independent research on whatever topics you have missed to keep up with the workshop. You will also need to keep in contact with your classmates to obtain notes and/or information re: what you missed. Again: Do not request notes or information from me. Class materials can be found on the Blackboard site for this course. For your syllabus, handouts, etc., go to Blackboard.
7. Please check your e-mail regularly to see if there are any changes in class meeting place, etc. On rare occasions, it becomes necessary to schedule a new location for class meeting. If I am unable to provide you with this information in the preceding class, I will send you the information via e-mail and/or text message.
8. We're going green in this classroom, so you will be providing all workshop members with copies of your work by **projecting your documents onto the screen in the classroom from your computer**, thus eliminating the need for paper. When necessary, you will exchange documents with the others via email. Instructions on how to do this will be provided and we will create a schedule of volunteer scribes to assist in this area so that it will not be necessary for everyone to carry a laptop to all class meetings. For

collaborations, you may work on Google documents that may be team-edited via Google Drive. We may also create a workshop blog, FB page, or Google circle—thus embracing social media for positive outcomes.

9. If you desire an appointment with me, you are required to contact me via e-mail or text message at least 24 hours in advance, otherwise there is no guarantee I will receive your message with sufficient time to make arrangements to meet with you. Please note that I have included multiple ways to contact me on the front page of this syllabus.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Week 1 1/12/2016 and 1/14/2016

Topics: Introduction to the world of eco-theatre. Discussion of the origin and purpose of live theatre, introduction to the environmental crisis and the relationship between theatre and issues. Discussion: What does extinction mean to all of us?

PLEASE NOTE: All topics, activities, etc. occur over two days EACH week.

ACTIVITIES

Read excerpts from SONG OF EXTINCTION and read first chapter of THE SIXTH EXTINCTION. (Bring book to class.) Discuss.

ASSIGNMENTS

Due Week 2:

Read the entire play: SONG OF EXTINCTION.

Read the first three chapters of THE SIXTH EXTINCTION.

Write a 100-word post on these books. *Note: Each week, all posts are due Friday at midnight.*

Get ready to read THE CHISERA.

Week 2 1/19/2016 and 1/21/2016

Topics: Humanity and Nature. Can we LIVE together? What is the anthropocene? Voices from the Past: The Nature Writers of the American West.

ACTIVITIES

Read excerpts from THE CHISERA. (On PDF.)

Read excerpts from Mary Hunter Austin's THE LAND OF LITTLE RAIN. (Selection provided on BlackBoard)

Discuss plays read thus far. Discuss differences between fiction and nonfiction stories, and differences between live theatre and film.

Watch excerpts of water videos (Rain Shadow, etc.).

Discuss our obligation to nature.

ASSIGNMENTS

Due Week 3

Read the entire play: THE CHISERA.

Read chapters four, five, and six of THE SIXTH EXTINCTION.

Write a 100-word post on these books.

Get ready to read THE CONTINGENCY PLAN.

Be prepared to discuss.

Week 3 1/26/2016 and 1/28/2016

Topic: Global Warming, Climate Change, Depleted Resources - The Madness of Modernity. How did we get where we are? Also: Junk Science – Fraud, Sell-outs, Denial.

ACTIVITIES

Read excerpts of THE CONTINGENCY PLAN. (Bring books to class.)

Read excerpts from THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING. (Provided on BlackBoard.)

Discuss all readings thus far.

Team Meeting: Brainstorm about collaborative blog. Assign roles; create To Do list.

Special class: 1/28 Elizabeth Galoozis of USC Libraries will lead a workshop on researching different types and perspectives of information.

ASSIGNMENTS

Due Week 4.

Read the entire first play in THE CONTINGENCY PLAN: ON THE BEACH.

Read chapters seven, eight, nine of THE SIXTH EXTINCTION.

Write a 100-word post on these books.

Get ready to read RESILIENCE in THE CONTINGENCY PLAN.

Week 4 2/2/2016 and 2/4/2016

Topic: Can Technology Save Us? Can Imagination Save Us? (I.e., Do We Really Need To Change?) Also: The Developing World - A Fair Share?

ACTIVITIES

Continue discussion of ON THE BEACH, plus read excerpts from RESILIENCE (the second play in THE CONTINGENCY PLAN). (Bring books to class.)

Watch excerpts of utopian videos, technological changes to save the environment. (YouTube).

Team Meeting: Prepare launch schedule for collaborative blog.

ASSIGNMENTS

Due Week 5

Read the entire second play in THE CONTINGENCY PLAN: RESILIENCE.

Read chapters ten, eleven, twelve of THE SIXTH EXTINCTION.

Write a 100-word post on these books.

Get ready to read TREEFALL.

Write Critical Analysis Essay 1. (Topic to be discussed in class.) Due 2/11.

Week 5 2/9/2016 and 2/11/2016

Topic: The Apocalyptic View: Will humans heed the warning? The Role of the Dystopian: Movies and novel—and plays—that warn of the future destruction.

ACTIVITIES

Read excerpts from TREEFALL. (Bring books to class.)

Team Meeting: Prepare to get collaborative blog up and running.

TURN IN Critical Analysis Essay 1. (Due 2/11.)

ASSIGNMENTS

Due Week 6:

Read the entire play: TREEFALL.

Read the rest of THE SIXTH EXTINCTION.

Write a 100-word post on these books.

Launch collaborative blog.

Begin research on potential engagement/awareness project; plan Sample Proposal.

Week 6 2/16/2016 and 2/18/2016

Topic: Arts and Activism: The Hero(ine) on a Mission. Introduction to Deep Ecology and Arne Naess.

ACTIVITY

Read excerpts of AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE. (Bring books to class.)

Read excerpts of DEEP ECOLOGY FOR THE 21st CENTURY. (Provided on BlackBoard)

Brainstorm potential projects for Sample Proposal.

ASSIGNMENTS

Due Week 7

Create a Sample Proposal for a potential documentary project (due 2/25).

Begin research/prep for your Final Project.

Write a 100-word post on Deep Ecology.

Read entire play: AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE.

Complete reading of all plays/assigned reading to date.

Week 7 2/23/2016 and 2/25/2016

Topic: The Beautiful Action – Arne Naess and An Alternate Way To View Activism. Also: The Native Americans' Relationship with the Earth.

ACTIVITIES

Read additional excerpts, DEEP ECOLOGY.

Discuss plays and nonfiction read to date.

View videos of Paiute/Shoshone efforts to save their land. (YouTube)

Present preliminary ideas for Sample Proposals.

Story Conference: Present ideas for your Final Project.

Team Meeting: Check in on collaborative blog.

Preparation for mid-term. (Mid-term is 3/8/2016).

ASSIGNMENTS

Due Week 8

Continue work on Sample Proposals (due 3/3).

Continue to operate the collaborative blog.

Continue research/prep for Final Project (may include vision boards).

Write a 100-word post on your thoughts about art and the environment.

Week 8 3/1/2016 and 3/3/2016

Topic: Water. Water. Water.

ACTIVITIES

Attend WATER RITES at Visions and Voices, 3/1/2016.

Present selected Sample Proposals. (Due 3/3/2016.)

Story Conference – Present research/prep/vision boards.

TURN IN Sample Proposals, 3/3/2016.

ASSIGNMENT

Due Week 9

Read selections from DEEP ECOLOGY.

Read the first act of MR. BURNS.

Write a 100-word post on MR. BURNS and what you think is going on.

Refine preparation/refine plans for Final Project.

Week 9 3/8/2016 and 3/10/2016

Topic: The End of the World as We Know It – The Future? (What culture do we save?)

ACTIVITIES

Mid-term exam, 3/8/2016.

Read excerpts from MR. BURNS.

Discuss the Sample Proposals. Analyze and assess - Viable? Possible? Potential impact?

Present remainder of students' research/prep/vision.

ASSIGNMENT

Due Week 10

Read the entire play: MR. BURNS.

Be prepared to discuss.

Write a 100-word blog post on any topic related to theatre and the environment.

No class 3/15 and 3/17 - SPRING BREAK.

Week 10 3/22/2016 and 3/24/2016

Topic: The Elements of Playwriting – Character, Dialogue, Story, Structure, Spectacle. How is contemporary theatre possibly different from traditional theatre?

ACTIVITIES

Discuss MR. BURNS.

Analysis of structure in plays read to date—including MR. BURNS.

Analysis of characters—the difference between characters in Ibsen and characters in Lewis or Washburn.

Team meeting: Status of collaborative blog.

ASSIGNMENT

Due Week 11

Write a 100-word blog post comparing MR. BURNS to another play.

Write Critical Analysis Essay 2. Topic to be discussed in class. Due 3/29/2016.

Week 11 3/29/2016 and 3/31/2016

Topic: Commitment - How do ordinary people accomplish extraordinary things?

ACTIVITIES

TURN IN Critical Analysis Essay 2. (Due 3/29/2016.)

Read excerpts from HEROES AND SAINTS. (Bring books to class.)

Read excerpts from THE BIOREGIONAL IMAGINATION. (Provided on Blackboard.)

Brainstorm session: Trouble-shooting problems/re-evaluating direction of Final Projects.

ASSIGNMENT

Due Week 12:

Read the entire play: HEROES AND SAINTS.

Write a 100-word blog post about community activism.

Prepare a segment of your project for evaluation.

Week 12 4/5/2016 and 4/7/2016

Topic: The Personal Is Political - What Will Each of Us Do?

ACTIVITIES

Read excerpts of SILA. (Bring books to class.)

Ongoing assessment/discussion of works in progress.

ASSIGNMENT

Due Week 13

Write a 100-word blog post about the notion of the bioregional imagination.

Keep collaborative blog going.

Continue work on Final Project.

Week 13 4/12/2016 and 4/14/2016

Topic: The Overall Picture: So how do theatre and environmental issues intersect?

ACTIVITY

Discussion of all works read to date.

Catch-up on plays/essays/topics that were not given sufficient time.

Prepare a schedule for presentation of Final Projects.

ASSIGNMENT

Get ready to present Final Project. (Due weeks 14 and 15.)

Week 14 4/19/2016 and 4/21/2016

Topic: Being Creative in a Crisis.

ACTIVITY

Presentation of Projects, part 1.

Week 15 4/26/2016 and 4/28/2016

Topic: Wrapping It All Up.

ACTIVITY

Presentation of Projects, part 2.

Post-Mortem.

Final Examination Date:

5/10/2016 8 am – 10 am. Please note: The University schedules the Final Exams long before the semester begins. The date and time are determined by USC and cannot be changed. You must be present for the Final. Please mark your calendar now.

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/academicssupport/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.

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 GFS 120 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website and contact information for DSP: http://sait.usc.edu/academicssupport/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.