

# USC School of Dramatic Arts

THTR 63170D Dramaturgical Perspectives and Approaches  
Fall 2016 – Mondays – 5-7:50pm  
Location: PIRC #1016 (corner of McClintock Avenue and 37<sup>th</sup> Place  
on campus at Parkside International Residential College).

Instructor: Oliver Mayer  
PIRC #1007 or MCC #101-C  
Office Hours : by appointment or walk-in (call first).  
Contact Info: omayer@usc.edu, 310 867 9192

## Course Description and Overview:

Investigates art and craft of dramatic writing initiated/completed in other MFA in Dramatic Writing courses or that was submitted as a sample for program entry.

## Learning Objectives:

The untold art of rewriting! Each week, you will engage in writing exercises, readings (in-class and as homework), discussion, and critiques of each other's work towards the deepening of the writing and rewriting process. Using techniques derived from far and wide -- Mindfulness exercises, elements of design, music, sailing, sports as well as the examples of great dramatists – students will work on one or several of their original texts in order to create vibrant new drafts representative of who the writer is now and how the world reflects upon what's written.

## Goals:

By approaching rewrites in a new way, students will explore new ways to discover the actions, motives, poetry, music and interior life of their characters by forcing them to make choices and following their consequences, and will find new windows of opportunity in the stories they tell.

## Required Readings and Supplementary Materials:

Innaurato, *The Transfiguration of Benno Blimpie*

Branch, *Black Thunder*

Fugard, *Master Harold...And the Boys*

Mayer, *Collected Plays*

Shanley, *Dreamer Examines His Pillow*

Churchill, *Mad Forest*

Hentschker, *New Plays from Spain*

These collections have been ordered at the USC Bookstore. They can be purchased there or elsewhere.

## Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignment:

Remember that professors do not "give" grades: students earn grades. Your final grade is up to you. Meeting course requirements does not equal excellence; I am looking for uncommon effort and commitment in each assignment. Dramatic writing demands bravery, chance-taking, and an active sense of play. The writing exercises will be your opportunity to be brave on the page. Students will be evaluated based on individual progress, receiving extended feedback for each assignment. Your final grade consists of:

Overall Weekly Grade: 30%

Final Play: 30%

Midterm Exam: 15%

Final Exam 25%

School of Theatre classes use the University's grading scale:

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

**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.

**Weekly Writing Assignments:**

These are given both in-class or as homework. Students must be prepared to read aloud their work, for both peer review and my feedback. Absent students should email me or their fellow students about assignments given in-class and/or as homework. These should be turned in on time at the next class.

**Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown:**

August 22	REWRITING IS WRITING: Making choices, realizing that nothing is writ in stone.
August 29	RIGHTING: Righting moments for balance and speed when changing directions. SELF-ASSESSMENT: seeing one's greatest strengths and biggest weaknesses. CONFESSIONS: read <i>The Transfiguration of Benno Blimpie</i> by Innaurato.
September 5	LABOR DAY: university holiday. NO CLASS.
September 12	WRIGHTING: Building and rebuilding in the moment. CENTRAL AND PERIPHERAL VISION: focused versus open attention, reviewing. When less is more, and when choice/action trumps dialogue. REGRETS: <i>Master Harold...And the Boys</i> by Fugard.
September 19	RITING: Finding the sacred and creating the ritual. ALIGNMENT: aligning work with a higher purpose, connecting dreams, memories and revising based on areas of expertise. LEVELS OF MEANING: <i>Mad Forest</i> by Churchill.
September 26	RIGHTING AND WRONGING: Values, and what you believe in relation to what you write. ENVISIONING: seeing the desired future, redrafting towards it. HISTORY: <i>Ma Rainey's Black Bottom</i> by Wilson.
October 3	RESILIENCE: overcoming obstacles, recasting. Lorca's DUENDE: Going into the difficult dark passages, charting the unknown, writing without knowing but with feeling, in the dark. HOOKED ON A FEELING: <i>Dreamer Examines His Pillow</i> by Shanley.
October 10	MIDTERM: given in class. Evaluation of new writing up to this point, and ways forward. WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE WORLD: <i>Numbers</i> by Gomez-Glez.
October 7	EMPATHY AND COMPASSION: cognitive, affective and motivational skills, re-feeling. MYSTERY: <i>Ragged Time</i> by Mayer.
October 24	THE KNOWN UNKNOWN: Leaving room for mystery, open-endedness. Allowing the DUENDE its due. <i>The Taking of Miss Janie</i> by Bullins.
October 31	REWRITING FOR PERFORMANCE: ON DEADLINE, re-scripting. Don't Talk –"Do Do Do!"
November 7	PRESSURE POINTS: Listening for moments of disconnect, stress and confusion (not always bad things!) and charting plot-points along the way.

- November 14 BREATHING INTO IT: MAKING IT NEW AGAIN: Listening to criticisms with as much calm as possible (harder than it sounds!) and using what's been given to you\.
- November 21 REWRITES ON PARADE
- November 28 MORE REWRITES ON PARADE
- December 12 FINAL 5pm, venue TBD.

### **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](mailto: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](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.*