

USC School of Dramatic Arts

GESM 111: Eco-Theatre – Art, Science, and Bio-Regionalism in Contemporary Plays

Section #35310R

Fall 2017 - Tuesdays & Thursdays - 11 am – 12:20 pm

Location: MCC 102

Instructor: Paula Cizmar

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

Office Hours: Available: Tues 1 - 3 pm ; Wed 10 am – Noon; Wed 1 – 3 pm; Thurs 1 – 4 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, political obstacles, the historical treatment of the issues, and the additional impact environmental damage has on communities without sociopolitical clout. Questions to be explored include: 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? Is the environmental burden dispersed equitably? 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 things we take for granted and the overall ecology (such 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 participate in projects in which they actively engage in problem-solving or awareness-raising. Students will engage as members of a team. (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 we will save on time, energy, and paper. You will not need to print your presentations; instead, we will project your materials, project plans, etc. onto a screen via laptop. You will not print assignments, including your Final Project; instead, you’ll turn in a PDF of all documents and materials electronically; I will give you feedback via electronic 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*.

Nonfiction (required):

Elizabeth Kolbert. *THE SIXTH EXTINCTION*. Excerpt. Link provided on Blackboard.

Plays (for individual essays – select one for written assignments as instructed):

Michael Hollinger. *TOOTH AND CLAW*.

Karen Malpede. *EXTREME WHETHER*.

Henry Murray. *TREEFALL*.

Jose Rivera. *MARISOL*.

Steve Waters. *THE CONTINGENCY PLAN*.

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 plays/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.

Assignment	% of Grade
1. Written Assignment 1	15%
2. Midterm Assignment (Sample Proposal)	15%
3. Written Assignment 2	15%
4. Blog Posts	10%
5. Final Project	20%
6. In class exercises	10%
7. Participation	15%
TOTAL:	100%

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 discussed below in detailed description.*

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

Excellent: A (4) = 100-94; A- (3.7) = 93-90

Good: B+ (3.3) = 89-86; B (3) = 85-84; B- (2.7) = 83-80

Average: C+ (2.3) = 79-76; C (2) = 75-74; C- (1.7) = 73-70

Poor: D+ (1.3) = 69 – 66; D = 65-64 (1) ; D = 63 - 60 (0.7) = 60s; F (0) = 59 and below

•“Excellent” indicates that the student couples clear understanding of the class material with original and creative insight, as demonstrated by their work; “Good” means that the student demonstrates a clear understanding of the material and has done the work well; “Average” indicates that the student demonstrates a general understanding of the material but with some gaps; “Poor” indicates that there are identifiable gaps in the student’s understanding of the class material; “Failure” is the result of the student not having completed his or her assignments coupled with poor understanding of the material.

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

Information about Assignments to be Graded

Your grade will be based on multiple components: assigned reading and video presentations; class exercises and discussion (including pop quizzes if necessary); two written assignments (which are critical analysis essays); blog entries; a midterm project (which is a Sample Proposal for an environmental awareness engagement project); a Final Project (a creative project—see details), and participation. Participation includes class exercises, discussion of the reading and videos, providing feedback on other students' work. The blog entries are part of a group collaboration, i.e., the class will create a blog that deals with theatre, art, and the environment. Each student will be responsible for at least three short blog posts (75-250 words each). Blog contributions of relevant material and breaking environmental news are encouraged; personal reflections on an environmental issue are also an option.

Sample Proposal (for the midterm). Please note that the Sample Proposal will be a written proposal for a potential project designed to raise awareness about an environmental issue. Each class member will be assigned to a team, and that team will plan some sort of event that would potentially use art or performance to draw attention to an environmental crisis and the actions people can take to help remedy the situation. (This is a proposal only; you will not be *required* to construct the event itself. However, it would be of additional benefit if we were able to actually execute one of these projects; we will seek partners to help put at least one of these proposals into practice.) Guidelines for the proposal will be provided on Blackboard.

Final Project. The Final Project is a creative project of your own choosing. Options include writing a short play, OR: making a video; 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 and presenting it; 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; creating a short graphic novel; designing a game related to eco-theatre. Whatever you can imagine. (Note: All Final Projects are subject to approval.)

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 deadline. Assignments are accepted only within one week of due date, provided an extension has been arranged. After that, they are considered a missed assignment, which counts as zero.

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 Blog Posts must be submitted electronically via Blackboard. To obtain information on these items, go to the Assignments section, found

in the Blackboard navigation menu. Under Assignments, you will find the guidelines on how to prepare an essay, due date, and so forth. Please note: The essays themselves are **submitted** under Content. There will be a space labeled TurnItIn, with the essay's name listed, and this is where you will submit the essay. The guidelines and the TurnItIn features will not be available until two weeks before the specific assignment is due. In-class exercises and activities (and any pop quizzes) will also be submitted via Blackboard. For the collaboratively created blog, your Blog Contribution will be posted directly to the blog site. The Final Project will be submitted via BlackBoard (the submission site will open during the last week of the semester) and/or presented in class.

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 on time.

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. According to SDA guidelines, no unexcused absences are 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 may 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 or 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 8/21-8/25	Class 1	INTRODUCTION to the World of Eco-Theatre The origin and purpose of live theatre. The environmental crisis. The relationship between theatre and issues. Intro to key ideas: extinction, extractivism; climate change; water shortages; anthropocene; sustainability; bio-regionalism. In-class exercise/assignment: Please text me, sending me your name, email address, and phone number.
----------------------------	---------	---

SONG OF EXTINCTION and THE CHISERA

	Class 2	Begin <i>Song of Extinction</i> . (Always bring books to class!) Prepare for weekly blog. <i>(Select blog editors; launch blog by Week 3)</i>
WEEK 2 8/28-9/1	Class 3	In-depth look at the Issue: Extinction. See the excerpt from <i>The Sixth Extinction</i> . Assign Written Assignment 1
	Class 4	Humanity and Nature – Can we LIVE together?: Discuss excerpts from <i>The Sixth Extinction</i> and <i>Song of Extinction</i> . <i>Practicum: How to blog—with meaning!</i>

WEEK 3 9/4-9/8	Class 5	The characters: <i>Song of Extinction</i>
	Class 6	Introduce <i>The Chisera</i> . The Worlds (Past and Present, Fictional and Non-) of <i>The Chisera</i> . <i>Practicum</i> : Focused Research with Integrity
<i>Note: 9/8 Last day to drop a class without a mark of "W" and receive refund.</i>		
WEEK 4 9/11-9/15	Class 7	The Issues: Water (<i>The Chisera</i>) and Extinction (<i>Song of Extinction</i>): Who is affected? Who speaks for the communities?
	Class 8	A New Approach: Sustainability and Its Relationship to <i>Song of Extinction</i> and <i>Chisera</i> . Video: Hawaii- A Model of Sustainability.
WEEK 5 9/18-9/22	Class 9	Story Check-In. Exploring various options including: Dystopian, Futurism, Children's Lit, etc. Outcomes: How do stories resolve—and how do we deal with untidy endings? Plus a close look at ending of <i>Song of Extinction</i> . Written Assignment 1 due
	Class 10	Water Is Life: <i>The Chisera</i> and rain shadow videos. <i>Practicum</i> : Purpose, Intention, Audience, Action. Prepare for Midterm (Sample Proposal) Reminder: Blog Posts!
WEEK 6 9/25-9/29	Class 11	The People: Introduction to Mary Hunter Austin and her work. Introduction to Paiute activists.
	Class 12	<i>Practicum</i> : Inspiration and Brainstorming- First Phases of Creating/Making an Engagement Project
WEEK 7 10/2-10/6	Class 13	What is Deep Ecology? Introduction to Arne Naess and a Joyful Action.. <i>Practicum</i> : Assessing Needs and Goals
	Class 14	Rain, Drought, Floods, Desert: Finish <i>The Chisera</i> Turn in and present MIDTERM Sample Proposals
<i>Note: 10/6 Last day to drop class without a mark of "W" on transcript or change pass/no pass to grade.</i>		

ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE and HEROES AND SAINTS

WEEK 8 10/9-10/13	Class 15	Global and Local Issues: <i>Enemy of the People</i> and <i>Heroes and Saints</i> . <i>Practicum</i> : What Matters To You? Assign Written Assignment 2
	Class 16	Whistleblowers: <i>Enemy of the People</i> .
WEEK 9 10/16-10/20	Class 17	Covert Action, The Supernatural, Theatricality: <i>Heroes and Saints</i> .
	Class 18	<i>Practicum</i> : Working with Creative Exercises and Vision Boards
WEEK 10 10/23-10/27	Class 19	The People: Like or Love – <i>Enemy</i> and <i>Heroes and Saints</i>
	Class 20	Continue <i>Enemy</i> and <i>Heroes and Saints</i> . <i>Practicum</i> : Present Exercises and Vision Boards Written Assignment 2 Due
WEEK 11 10/30-11/3	Class 21	Continue: Present Exercises, Vision Boards, for Final Project <i>Practicum</i> : Options - Style, Approach, Adaptability

SILA

Class 22	Place, Culture, History: Begin <i>Sila</i> Reminder: Prepare for Final Projects
----------	--

WEEK 12 11/6-11/10	Class 23	<i>Sila</i> and Communication: The Iconic bears, the Indigenous People
	Class 24	Check in: Final Projects. Work-in-progress reports. Continue work on <i>Sila</i> . <i>Note: 11/10 Last day to drop class with a mark of W.</i>
WEEK 13 11/13-11/17	Class 25	Continue <i>Sila</i> ; add The Arctic – videos.
	Class 26	Bio-regionalism - A Wrap Up.
WEEK 14 11/20-11/24	Class 27	<i>Sila</i> : Breath, Wind, Life, Magic. How it all works.
	Class 28	NO CLASS 11/23 – Thanksgiving.
WEEK 15 11/27-12/1	Class 29	Present Final Project works-in-progress, part 1.
	Class 30	Present Final Project works-in-progress, part 2.

Final Examination Date:

Tuesday, 12/12/2017 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. 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 Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>. 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>.

Support Systems:

Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX compliance – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. <https://equity.usc.edu/>

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

Student Support & Advocacy – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

Diversity at USC – <https://diversity.usc.edu/>

Tab for Events, Programs and Training, Task Force (including representatives for each school), Chronology, Participate, Resources for Students

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.