



THTR 529b – Textual Studies for Performance

63240D/Units: 4

Spring 2018 — WED, FRI — 12:00-1:50

Location: KAP 113

Instructor: Boni B. Alvarez

Office: MCC 214

Office Hours: WED, FRI - by appointment

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Course Description

We will read a variety of plays - classical, contemporary, unproduced, etc, dealing with a diversity of styles, subjects, structures, time periods, characters, and worlds. These close readings of dramatic texts will serve as a fundamental tool for rehearsal and performance.

Learning Objectives

The course will mirror a professional rehearsal room. Plays will be approached as performers' first days of rehearsals, breaking down the texts via critical table work. Different points-of-entry will be explored to unpack the plays.

Key questions students will analyze a text with: What are the author's intentions? What world do the characters live in? What is the scene trying to do? Through close reading, students may appreciate the role of the playwright as the creator of the worlds they will come to inhabit.

This course cultivates the students' abilities for dramatic analysis and literacy. Throughout the semester, students will identify their biases when approaching texts and develop tools and methods to broaden their understanding of the play at hand.

Required Readings – The following have been ordered through the USC Bookstore. They can also be purchased online.

- Joseph, Rajiv. *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*. Soft Skull Press, 2010
- Moraga, Cherrie. *Heroes and Saints*. West End Press, 2000
- Nottage, Lynn. *Sweat*. Theatre Communications Group, 2017
- Orlandersmith, Dael. *Yellowman*. Vintage, 2002

Supplementary Materials – The following are required readings. These materials will be distributed electronically or as hard copies.

- Baitz, Jon Robin, *Coq Au Vin*
- Buchner, Georg, *Woyzeck*
- Euripides, *Medea*

- Fornes, Maria Irene, “I Write These Messages That Come”
- Fornes, Maria Irene, *Mud*
- Fuchs, Elinor, “Visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask a Play”
- Jacobs-Jenkins, Branden, *Neighbors*
- Nguyen, Qui, *Vietgone*

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Table Work – 20%

Students must actively participate as readers and be prepared when ancillary materials are required for analysis. Many ideas and opinions will be formed and shared; students should be respectful and professional in the ensuing dialogue.

Group Exercises (3) – 20%

Over the course of the semester, students will be divided into smaller groups to complete exercises. These exercises allow for more intimate examinations of the plays in smaller ensembles.

Play Responses (3) – 20%

Play responses require a combination of analytical and creative lenses in the exploration of plays. Students will employ different tools when approaching the worlds of the plays – visual, design, collage, music, etc. More specific prompts will be distributed for each response.

Midterm – 20%

A creative and performative writing assignment focusing on Fornes’ *Mud* or Nguyen’s *Vietgone* to further explore character intentions, motivations, and arcs. Students will share their writing with the class and field questions on their texts. A more specific prompt will be distributed.

Final Paper – 20%

A written essay utilizing Fuchs’ ‘Visit to a Small Planet’ as a launching pad for a play analysis from the lens of a specific character. A more specific prompt will be distributed.

Grading Breakdown

ASSIGNMENT	POINTS	% of grade
Table Work	30	20
Group Exercises	15	20
Play Responses	15	20
Midterm	20	20
Final	20	20
TOTAL	100	100

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.

A+: 100-98	A: 97-94	A-: 93-90
B+: 89-87	B: 86-84	B-: 83-80
C+: 79-77	C: 76-74	C-: 73-70 (failing grade for graduate credit)
D+: 69-67	D: 66-64	D-: 63-60

Assignment Submission Policy

NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED.

Additional Policies

Attendance is compulsory. More than 1 unexcused absence will affect your grade adversely – if you are not in class, you are not contributing to the table work. If you are absent on a day with a group exercise, you will receive a 0 for the exercise. There will be no make-up assignments.

Please be respectful of the class and your colleagues - CELL PHONE USE IS PROHIBITED.
NO EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY ON LAPTOPS/TABLETS, ETC.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

1	WED 1/10	Introductions; Baitz' <i>Coq Au Vin</i>	
	<u>FRI 1/12</u>	<u>Euripides' <i>Medea</i></u>	
2	WED 1/17	Euripides' <i>Medea</i>	
	<u>FRI 1/19</u>	<u>Euripides' <i>Medea</i></u>	GROUP EXERCISE
3	WED 1/24	Buchner's <i>Woyzeck</i>	READ Fuchs' 'Visit to a Small Planet'
	<u>FRI 1/26</u>	<u>Buchner's <i>Woyzeck</i></u>	
4	WED 1/31	Buchner's <i>Woyzeck</i>	GROUP EXERCISE
	<u>FRI 2/2</u>	<u>Fornes' <i>Mud</i></u>	READ 'I Write These Messages That Come'
5	WED 2/7	Fornes' <i>Mud</i>	
	<u>FRI 2/9</u>	<u>Fornes' <i>Mud</i></u>	
6	WED 2/14	Jacobs-Jenkins' <i>Neighbors</i>	
	<u>FRI 2/16</u>	<u>Jacobs-Jenkins' <i>Neighbors</i></u>	
7	WED 2/21	Jacobs-Jenkins' <i>Neighbors</i>	PLAY RESPONSE DUE - NEIGHBORS
	<u>FRI 2/23</u>	<u>Nguyen's <i>Vietgone</i></u>	
8	WED 2/28	Nguyen's <i>Vietgone</i>	
	<u>FRI 3/2</u>	<u>Nguyen's <i>Vietgone</i></u>	
9	WED 3/7	MIDTERM presentations	
	<u>FRI 3/9</u>	<u>MIDTERM presentations</u>	
SB	WED 3/14	Spring Break	
	<u>FRI 3/16</u>	<u>Spring Break</u>	
10	WED 3/21	<u>Orlandersmith's <i>Yellowman</i></u>	
	<u>FRI 3/23</u>	<u>Orlandersmith's <i>Yellowman</i></u>	GROUP EXERCISE
11	WED 3/28	TBA – working on a new play	
	<u>FRI 3/30</u>	<u>TBA – working on a new play</u>	
12	WED 4/4	Moraga's <i>Heroes & Saints</i>	
	<u>FRI 4/6</u>	<u>Moraga's <i>Heroes & Saints</i></u>	
13	WED 4/11	Moraga's <i>Heroes & Saints</i>	PLAY RESPONSE DUE – HEROES & SAINTS
	<u>FRI 4/13</u>	<u>Nottage's <i>Sweat</i></u>	
14	WED 4/18	<u>Nottage's <i>Sweat</i></u>	
	<u>FRI 4/20</u>	<u>Nottage's <i>Sweat</i></u>	PLAY RESPONSE DUE - SWEAT
15	WED 4/25	<u>Joseph's <i>Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo</i></u>	
	<u>FRI 4/27</u>	<u>Joseph's <i>Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo</i>; de-brief</u>	
FINAL	FRI 5/4	11am-1pm – FINAL PAPER DUE	

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/student/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>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking, and harassment are prohibited by the university. You are encouraged to report all incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity/Title IX Office* <http://equity.usc.edu> and/or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://dps.usc.edu>. This is important for the health and safety of the whole USC community. Faculty and staff must report any information regarding an incident to the Title IX Coordinator who will provide outreach and information to the affected party. The sexual assault resource center webpage <http://sarc.usc.edu> fully describes reporting options. Relationship and Sexual Violence Services <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp> provides 24/7 confidential support.

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://ali.usc.edu>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* <http://dsp.usc.edu> 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.