

# USC School of Dramatic Arts

## **THTR 125: Text Studies for Production**

**Fall – Tues, Thurs – 9:30 - 10:50 62640D**

**Location:** GFS 222

**Instructor: Paula Cizmar**

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

**Office Hours:** Available: Tues 3 – 4:30 pm; Wed Noon – 2 pm; Thurs 3 – 4:30 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.

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**IT Help:** USC Information Technology Services

<http://itservices.usc.edu>; School of Dramatic Arts IT – Mr. Prakash Shirke, Contact Info: shirke@usc.edu; 213.740.1288. MCC

**Teaching Assistant: TBA**

**Contact Info:** TBA

### **Catalogue Description**

**THTR 125** *Focuses on the questions, artistic choices, methodologies, and approaches of an actor/director/designer in the preparation of a production score prior to rehearsal.*

This course encourages students to take initiative and develop independent, analytical thinking about dramatic texts through close and careful reading. This course will focus on learning techniques for taking a script and transforming it into a stage production. Using a range of plays as source material we will explore how to take a play apart to understand how it is put together and works as theatre. We will practice the dramaturgical methodologies actors, directors, and designers need to employ prior to rehearsal to understand the bones of a dramatic text and flesh it out into a production score. By the time we conclude, students should feel confident that they can approach any dramatic text they encounter and know how to begin exploring it on its own terms.

### **Course Overview**

The course is structured as a seminar in which student discussion and analysis are primary.

- Students are encouraged to engage not only with peers in their respective sections but also with those in other sections.
- The course is taught by faculty from various areas within SDA, who meet to share teaching strategies and resources.
- The reading list comprises five plays, three of which are common to all sections of THTR 125 and two texts that vary per section.

### **Learning Objectives**

The course is designed to equip students with basic analytical tools and interpretive perspectives that will enhance learning in all future SDA courses including acting, dramatic writing, directing, and tech/design. Goals are:

- To offer students an in-depth study of how dramatic texts work.

- To develop their ability to discover how the author provides them with the material they need to create a successful production
- To hone their ability to read and analyze these dramatic works deeply and to see them as dramatic scores.
- To improve their mindfulness of the collaborative relationships between actor, text, theatre event, and the audience as expressed in a dramatic text.

### Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

- *Awake and Sing* by Clifford Odets
- *Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare
- *Our Country's Good* by Timberlake Wertenbaker
- *Water by the Spoonful* by Quiara Alegria Hudes
- *Father Comes Home from the Wars* by Suzan-Lori Parks

Note: Supplementary materials will be provided online via Blackboard.

### Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments

Assignment	% of Grade
1. Written Assignment 1	15%
2. Midterm Assignment	20%
3. Written Assignment 2	20%
4. Final	20%
5. In class exercises	10%
6. Participation	15%
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>100%</b>

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

- “Excellent” indicates that the student couples clear understanding of the class material with original and creative insight; “Good” means that the student demonstrates a clear understanding of the material; “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.

### The SDA GUIDELINES on GRADING:

- There shall be 3 graded assignments and a final examination as scheduled by USC.
- Attendance shall be weighted at no more than 15% as per University Guidelines.

- There shall be no unexcused absences.
- **No late assignments** shall be accepted unless advance extensions have been arranged between the student and the teacher or unless exceptional circumstances occur.

### Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

<b>WEEK 1</b> 8/21-8/24	Class 1	INTRODUCTION
<b>AMERICAN CLASSIC – AWAKE AND SING</b>		
	Class 2	Begin <i>Awake and Sing</i>
<b>WEEK 2</b> 8/27-8/31	Class 3	Background: <i>Awake and Sing</i> ; Assign Written Assignment 1
	Class 4	Character: <i>Awake and Sing</i>
<b>WEEK 3</b> 9/3-9/7	Class 5	Setting: <i>Awake and Sing</i>
	Class 6	Exploring Scenes: <i>Awake and Sing</i>
<b>WEEK 4</b> 9/10-9/14	Class 7	Exploring Scenes: <i>Awake and Sing</i> ; Written Assignment 1 due 9/11
	Class 8	Finish <i>Awake and Sing</i>
<b>SHAKESPEARE – TWELFTH NIGHT</b>		
<b>WEEK 5</b> 9/17-9/21	Class 9	Working with the Text: <i>Twelfth Night</i>
	Class 10	Delivering the Lines: <i>Twelfth Night</i>
<b>WEEK 6</b> 9/24-9/28	Class 11	Character: <i>Twelfth Night</i>
	Class 12	Setting: <i>Twelfth Night</i>
<b>WEEK 7</b> 10/1-10/5	Class 13	Exploring Scenes: <i>Twelfth Night</i>
<b>OUR COUNTRY’S GOOD</b>		
	Class 14	Intro: <i>Our Country’s Good</i> ; MIDTERM due 10/4
<b>WEEK 8</b> 10/8-10/12	Class 15	Working with the Text: <i>Our Country’s Good</i> ; Assign Written Assignment 2
	Class 16	The Three Worlds of <i>Our Country’s Good</i>
<b>WEEK 9</b> 10/15-10/19	Class 17	Character and Setting: <i>Our Country’s Good</i>
	Class 18	Exploring Scenes: <i>Our Country’s Good</i>
<b>WATER BY THE SPOONFUL</b>		
<b>WEEK 10</b> 10/22-10/26	Class 19	Begin: <i>Water by the Spoonful</i>
	Class 20	Working with the Text - Dissonance: <i>Water by the Spoonful</i>
<b>WEEK 11</b> 10/29-11/2	Class 21	Character and Casting: <i>Water by the Spoonful</i>
	Class 22	Theatricality: <i>Water by the Spoonful</i> ; Written Assignment 2 due 11/1
<b>WEEK 12</b> 11/5-11/9	Class 23	Exploring Scenes: <i>Water by the Spoonful</i>
<b>FATHER COMES HOME FROM THE WARS</b>		
	Class 24	Intro: <i>Father Comes Home from the Wars</i>
11/11		Last day to drop a class with a mark of “W”
<b>WEEK 13</b> 11/12-11/16	Class 25	Epic Theatricality: <i>Father Comes Home from the Wars</i>
	Class 26	Poetry and Character: <i>Father Comes Home from the Wars</i>
<b>WEEK 14</b> 11/19-11/23	Class 27	Themes – Slavery, War, Odyssey: <i>Father Comes Home...</i>
	<b>NOTE</b>	NO CLASS 11/22 THANKSGIVING
<b>WEEK 15</b> 11/26-11/30	Class 28	Exploring Scenes: <i>Father Comes Home from the Wars</i>
	Class 29	Final review. Class conclusions.

## Assignments and Deadlines:

Assignment 1: Close reading of an extract (to be indicated by instructor) of *Awake and Sing*. Due Date: Tuesday 9/11. (750 words)

Midterm: Close reading of an extract (to be indicated by instructor) of *Twelfth Night*. Due Date: Thursday 10/4. (750 words)

Assignment 2: Script coverage. Provide “coverage” for Play 3 as if you were on the play selection committee of a theatre, play development conference, or grants agency, using the form supplied. Due Date: Thursday 11/1 (Word count as indicated on form provided)

Final: A 1500-word essay in response to a topic that you select from options provided by the instructor. Due Date: Thursday 12/6 @ 1 pm.

In-class exercises: For each unit you will be told in advance which exercises will contribute to this element of your grade.

### **Final Examination Date: Thursday 12/6 11 am – 1 pm**

*Please note this is the final examination date as scheduled by the University. This information can be found online at USC's site for the Schedule of Classes.*

## **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/>*

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

***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.