

# USC School of Dramatic Arts

## THTR 125: Text Studies for Performance

Fall 2018 ~ Tues/Thurs ~ 9:30-11:50am

**Instructor:** Tiffany Cole

**Office Hours by Appointment Only:**

Appointments are usually available on Tuesdays and Thursdays, on off-class days on occasion, and are scheduled for in-person or Skype-style.

**Contact Info:** [colet@usc.edu](mailto:colet@usc.edu) ~ Skype: tcole\_la

### Catalogue Description

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

There are several sections of this course, each lead by a different SDA faculty member, and each with a reflective flavor of that person's background. You are encouraged to engage with your peers in this and other sections to understand more deeply and gain differing perspectives. Each section is grounded by three shared common texts, along with two additional texts that vary from section to section, and basic principles/techniques for theatrical analysis. As a seminar based course, the process of our developing an analytical language for understanding dramatic texts will be cultivated by the lectures and group discussions, and your understanding will be enhanced by the assignments along the way.

### Learning Objectives

- Building knowledge and appreciation of how dramatic texts work.
- Developing basic analytical tools to discover how the playwright scores a production for performance.
- Hone the analytic skills required for understanding dramatic texts through close and careful readings with an evidence based approach.
- Sharpening critical thinking by writing essays that argue a thesis through textual evidence.
- Improving mindfulness of the collaborative relationships between the playwright, director, designers, actors and audience as expressed in a dramatic text.

### Class Meetings:

- Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30-10:50am in KAP 147
- **Required reading is due on the listed date.**
- **Always bring assigned readings to class with you;** this is essential for the close readings and discussions which will take place in class.
- There are no excused absences in this class. (1) If you have a religious conflict with a class or any class assignment, let Ms. Cole know by email during the first two weeks of the semester; (2) if you will be absent or late for class for any reason, email Ms. Cole in advance of the class.
- Turn off all cell phones during class sessions. If your phone is on during examinations, you will be asked to leave the room.
- Laptops can be distracting during lectures/discussions and they are not allowed in class. If you need to use a laptop during class, please discuss this with Ms. Cole during the first week of classes.

## Required Readings:

The following are paperbacks and have been ordered for you at the USC Bookstore:

- Odets, Clifford: *Awake and Sing!* (Dramatists Play Service).
- Shakespeare, William: *Twelfth Night* (Applause Books).  
**NOTE:** If you own copies of Shakespeare's plays already, you may use those for class, but preference is made for First Folio editions. Just be aware that editions of Elizabethan plays vary and your editions may not line up exactly with those used for class. This is a First Folio edition.
- Hellman, Lillian: *The Little Foxes* (Dramatists Play Service).
- Hudes, Quiara Alegria: *Water by the Spoonful* (Dramatic Play Service).
- Ionesco, Eugene: *Rhinoceros* (Samuel French).

## Description and Grading Breakdown of Assignments/Examinations:

1. **Participation in Class:** As stated in the Overview, your participation in class is essential to the learning process. Attendance is requisite for understanding the material, but contribution to the overall class discussions and atmosphere broaden the course experience (15%).
2. **Class Exercises:** Individual and/or group exercises will be given throughout the semester (10%).
3. **Written Assignment 1:** Concerning material from class, the prompt will be given 1-2 weeks prior to its due date (TBA). Students are encouraged to re-write papers if they wish, to be turned in within 2 weeks of the hand-back date; please see Ms. Cole prior to the re-write to confirm notes on the paper (15%).
4. **Midterm Examination:** In-class exam on the first two texts and concepts covered thus far (20%).
5. **Written Assignment 2:** Concerning material from class, the prompt will be given 1-2 weeks prior to its due date (TBA). This paper will not have the re-write option, so Students are encouraged to (a) take advantage of Written Assignment 1's re-write option, and (b) connect with Ms. Cole to discuss the paper or review an outline; if it is later than 3 days prior to the due date there is no guarantee that Ms. Cole will be able to connect and respond, so plan ahead (20%).
6. **A Final Examination:** A comprehensive exam that will cover concepts and texts discussed; the format will be announced during Class Conclusions and Review (20%).

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** The Final Examination will take place according to the USC Final Examination Schedule. The date and time is given on this syllabus; make all travel plans with this date in mind.

## Description of Grading Criteria:

- **No late work will be accepted.** If illness or an emergency interferes with the completion of assignments, contact Ms. Cole at least 24 hours **before** the due date.
- The final course grade is determined by the average of all four assignments/examinations, as well in-class exercises and participation, based on the following scale:
  - 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: the D range (.7-1.3) = 60's; F (0) = 59 and below
- "Excellent" means that clear understanding of the class material is coupled with original and creative insight; "good" means that the class material has been understood clearly; "average" means that the class material has been generally understood, but gaps in understanding remain; "poor" means that there are identifiable gaps in the understanding of class material; "failure" means that gaps in the successful completion of work is coupled with poor understanding of class 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, but will be weighted toward the negative end of the scale for those with poor attendance and participation.

## Course Schedule:

- Aug. 21      INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE
- Aug. 23      Foundations of Theatrical Analysis - Action & Structure
- Aug. 28      Foundations Cont'd - Given Circumstances & Methods

**I: Clifford Odett's *Awake and Sing!***

- Aug. 30      Applying the Foundations
- Sept. 4      Context & Research
- Sept. 6      Character & Setting

NOTE: Friday, Sept. 7, is the last day to add this course or to select the "P/NP" option.

- Sept. 11      Questions of the Play

**II: William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night; or What You Will***

- Sept. 13      Applying the Foundations
- Sept. 18      Continue Plot Development
- Sept. 20      Delivering the Lines
- Sept. 25      Setting & Atmosphere
- Sept. 27      Connections & Reevaluations - Revisit *Awake and Sing!*

**III: Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes***

- Oct. 2      MIDTERM Test; Intro *The Little Foxes*
- Oct. 4      Applying the Foundations

NOTE: Friday, Oct. 5 is the last day to drop this course without "W" or to change "P/NP" to a letter grade.

- Oct. 9      Theatrical Style/Function
- Oct. 11      Character & Setting
- Oct. 16      Questions of the Play
- Oct. 18      Connections & Reevaluations - Revisit Play *Awake and Sing!* & *Twelfth Night*.

#### **IV: Quiara Alegría Hudes' *Water by the Spoonful***

Oct. 23	Applying the Foundations
Oct. 25	Working with the Text
Oct. 30	Character & Casting
Nov. 1	Non-linear Storytelling
Nov. 6	Connections & Reevaluations - Revisit <i>Awake and Sing!</i> , <i>Twelfth Night</i> , & <i>The Little Foxes</i> .

NOTE: Friday, Nov. 9, is the last day to drop this course with a mark of "W."

#### **V: Eugene Ionesco's *Rhinoceros***

Nov. 8	Applying the Foundations
Nov. 13	Style & Entrance
Nov. 15	Approaching Design
Nov. 20	Dangers in Interpretation
Nov. 22	**Thanksgiving Holiday**
Nov. 27	Connections & Reevaluations - Revisit <i>Awake and Sing!</i> , <i>Twelfth Night</i> , <i>The Little Foxes</i> , & <i>Water by the Spoonful</i> .
Nov. 29	Class Conclusions & Review.

Final Examination Date:

Th Dec 6	FINAL EXAMINATION SCHEDULED for 11:00am to 1:00pm (See above for details.)
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**ENJOY YOUR WINTER BREAK!!!!!!**

**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://adminopsnet.usc.edu/departments/departments-public-safety>. This is important for the safety of the 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 <http://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/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/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.
- *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