

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 37th 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:

Plays are at their best when they explore systems we think we know by presenting alternative arrangements. Suddenly elements add up to new quotients, and we feel differently about relationships we may well have taken for granted. Time becomes a main player, particularly in the way it functions over the course of a play. Using a wide diversity of texts, we will examine strategies of time (de)construction and management -- as well as the power of "what if" to create alternative possibilities – in order to rearrange the world we think we know, and to see the drama in a single choice.

Goals:

To write original scenes that take advantage of their moment in their own highly individual way.

Required Readings:

Christopher Marlowe, EDWARD II
Oliver Mayer, BLOOD MATCH, and Other Plays
John Mighton, THE LITTLE YEARS
OyamO, THE RESURRECTION OF LADY LESTER
Gurira, Danai, ECLIPSED
Amanda Peet, OUR VERY OWN CARLIN McCULLOUGH (manuscript provided by professor)
Harold Pinter, PINTER PLAYS

These collections have been ordered at the USC Bookstore. Purchase them there or elsewhere.
Supplementary materials will be made available online over the course of the semester via Blackboard.

Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignment:

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, making bold and nuanced choices, and an active sense of play. Your final grade consists of:

Overall Weekly Grade: 30%
Midterm Exam: 15%

Final Play: 30%
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 20	TIME OF THE ESSENCE: Examining pace, velocity, measure, and taking one's own heart rate, as well as the heart rate of the piece you are writing.
August 27	BENDING TIME: discuss <i>Edward II</i> . How many years can you jam into a single play? What is the source of the (dis)order of things? Pushing your play to its extremity: tragic, comic or otherwise. What is the worst thing that can happen? Go there. Read first scenes.
September 3	LABOR DAY: university holiday. NO CLASS.
September 10	RESURRECTIONS: discuss <i>The Resurrection of Lady Lester</i> . How does music affect time? How does one bring the dead back to life? Read new scenes.
September 17	CARACOLES: discuss <i>The Little Years</i> . Time bends, but not always toward our better angels. Paranoia on the page, and claustrophobia as an idea dives inward. In-class writing.
September 24	OBLIQUITIES: discuss <i>Eclipsed</i> . Addressing injustices at an angle.
October 1	MIDTERM: given in class. Evaluation of new writing up to this point, and ways forward.
October 8	BETRAYALS: discuss <i>Betrayal</i> . How does time rearrange our expectations? New scenes.
October 15	BREAK POINTS: <i>Our Very Own Carlin McCullough</i> and the shifting points in the match of a play. Looking for the break points in the collisions between your characters.
October 22	RESURRECTIONS, TWO: discuss <i>Fortune is a Woman</i> . Why history? How does one bring the dead writer back to life, as well as their story? Read new scenes.
October 29	REWRITING FOR PERFORMANCE: ON DEADLINE, <i>Members Only</i> at LATC. A frank discussion about the realpolitik of bringing a text to production – particularly a premiere.
November 5	PUTTING IT TOGETHER IN A NEW WAY: What if? Why here, and why now? Does it have to be this way? Divining the alternative arrangements in the new work.
November 12	THRESHOLDS OF REVELATION: Listening to criticisms with as much calm as possible (harder than it sounds!) and using new insight to find hidden connections.
November 19	SCRIPTS ON PARADE
November 26	MORE SCRIPTS ON PARADE
December 10	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 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 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.