

USC School of Dramatic Arts

THTR 566 Dramatic Writing Studio

Units: 4

Fall 2018—Mondays—Time: 12 Noon-2:50 pm

Location: Massman Drama Center (DRC) 120

Instructor: Velina Hasu Houston, MFA, PhD

Office: Massman Drama Center

Office Hours: 10:30-12 M by appointment only via email to the instructor (other times can be negotiated); 24-hour cancellation via email to the instructor required

Contact Info: greentea@usc.edu, (213) 740-8686

IT Help : USC Information Technology Services, <http://itservices.usc.edu>;

School of Dramatic Arts – Mr. Prakash Shirke, Contact Info:

shirke@usc.edu, (213) 740-1288, MCC

Catalogue Description

This is the USC description of THTR 566 as stated in the USC catalogue: “Investigates gestalt of the student dramatic writer’s professional development from the empty page and writing fundamentals to the first-draft script, business affairs, and dramaturgical advancement. Instruction Mode: Lecture. Grading Option: Letter.”

Mission

This is the mission of the Master of Fine Arts in Dramatic Writing program as stated on the USC School of Dramatic Arts website: “The Master of Fine Arts in Dramatic Writing (MFADW) is an intensive, intimate, mentor-based, practicing literary arts program for today’s dramatic writer. The MFADW, centrally housed in the School of Dramatic Arts at USC, an elite research university, is designed to mine the literary potential of the artist, and prepare the artist to engage meaningfully in global society and the profession.”

Course Description & Learning Objectives

In keeping with those statements, THTR 566 Dramatic Writing Studio focuses on the gestalt of the professional development of the student dramatic writer. This includes writing maturation, professional development to help you prepare to engage meaningfully in the profession, and development of the artist to help you prepare to engage meaningfully in society. That means that, towards fulfillment of those objectives, you will:

- 1) Write
- 2) Read, and
- 3) Engage in discourse and activity.

Starting from the empty page, you are expected to write a first-draft, professionally promising play. You are expected to develop this play over the course of the semester, which means utilizing mentor and peer dramaturgy to refine your play. Note that dramaturgy must be via constructive criticism, not destructive criticism. That means discussing the strengths of a play and, in addressing concerns, being specific and helpful

This class continues through your residency in this program. It is an environment in which you should develop a portfolio of plays with which to make an impact on the profession.

This course includes students from Years One, Two, and Three in the USC School of Dramatic Arts' MFADW program, but, at the discretion of the instructor, may include graduate students from other writing-related programs at USC. The course takes place each fall and spring, combining the MFA in Dramatic Writing cohort in a writing collective in the hopes of enriching and deepening educational experience.

Course Notes

- Please regularly check the Blackboard site for this course (definitely every time you receive an e-mail alert). See note below under "Required Readings." If you are unfamiliar with Blackboard: <http://itservices.usc.edu/blackboard/> and <https://blackboard.usc.edu/webapps/login/>.
- To give you an idea how to gauge your writing work, for each unit of in-class time, the university expects two hours of out-of-class student work per week over a semester.
- The final is on Friday, December 7 from 11 am-1 pm. Note this date and time in your calendars now. They are set by USC and students are required to participate. Please do not make travel plans that prohibit you from attending your final.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

See Blackboard note under "Course Notes" and "Required Readings."

Required Readings

- "String Theory" by Jenny Yang Cropp
- "The Poet X" by Elizabeth Acevedo
- "The Writing Life" by Annie Dillard
- "Look Alive Out There" by Sloane Crosley
- Blackboard Readings. Our Blackboard page will provide links to pertinent readings, syllabus (also on USC Schedule of Classes), essays, and resources. Blackboard and e-mail are means of communication for this course. Furthermore, in the event of an emergency, continuation of curriculum for all USC courses is via Blackboard.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

For writing maturation and professional development:

- Full-length play: first draft at mid-term (mid-term self-reads), final draft on last day of class; dramaturgical feedback from entire cohort.
- Learning Service Assignment

For Development of the Artist:

- Oral Interpretations of Required Readings

Grading Breakdown

<u>ASSIGNMENT</u>	<u>% OF FINAL GRADE</u>
Weekly Grade – Writing of your play, Engagement in dramaturgy: giving and taking constructive criticism	20%
Mock Director/Dramaturgy Encounter (Evaluation of execution of exchange)	10%

Learning Service Assignment (Evaluation of scene written from impact of learning service event)	10%
Oral Interpretations of Required Readings (Evaluation of preparedness and execution)	10%
Mid-term Self-Read	25%
Final Project	25%

Please note that the writing maturation portion of the class is 90% of your grade. All assignments are evaluated on a 100=A+ rubric, while the final two in the Grading Breakdown are evaluated via a rubric (Attachment A). Remember that grades are not given, but earned.

Assignment Submission Policy

Assignments are to be submitted on due dates noted in Course Schedule. No late assignments accepted; if an assignment is not received on-time *then a grade of "0" will be recorded*. Assignments under 10 pages may be submitted to instructor's email, but ONLY with the following header: "Homework – Assignment Name – Date (as in 08-20-2018, etc.)." *If that header is not used, then the assignment is not considered submitted. Please be mindful of this header standardization. Thank you.*

Additional Policies

See sections below for other USC policies.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

For all dates, the year is 2018.

8/20. Introductions, review of syllabus. Timed pitches, workshop and synopses.

8/27. Character-building as a foundation of your play. Workshop and readings with dramaturgical feedback.

9/3. USC holiday – Labor Day. No class.

9/10. First scenes with assigned peer dramaturges: Wabvuta (dramaturge: Kaur), Kaur (dramaturge: Carreño), Houston (dramaturge: Flint), Gardner (dramaturge: Wabvuta), Flint (dramaturge: Andrei), Carreño (dramaturge: Gardner), Black (dramaturge: Houston), Andrei (dramaturge: Black). Each student is allotted 25 minutes for the sharing of their scene and dramaturgical feedback. These sharings will be timed so that everybody's work is shared.

9/17. Oral Interpretation #1 (Dillard) (Andrei, Black). Writing workshop on course final project plays. Please empower your writing in workshop with the impact of the shared literature.

9/24. Oral Interpretation #2 (Acevedo) (Carreño, Flint). Writing workshop on course final project plays. Please empower your writing in workshop with the impact of the shared literature.

9/27. Learning Service Assignment. Attend the Actors' Gang Prison Project workshop presentation at Walden House/HealthRIGHT 360, 10:30-1:30, Thursday, September 27, 2018. Write a scene based upon your observations. Submit to instructor.

10/1. No class due to 9/27 Learning Service Assignment.

10/8. Mid-term self-reads. Andrei, Black, Carreño. Note that each student will present as much of her or his play that is completed at the time. There is no page limitation on this draft of your play. Write large and imaginatively.

10/15. Mid-term self-reads. Flint, Gardner, Houston.

10/22. Mid-term self reads. Kaur, Wabvuta.

10/29. Secondary scenes: workshop, presentation, dramaturgical feedback. (Andrei, Black, Carreño). each student will be assigned a slot and will present as much of her or his play that is completed at the time.

11/5. Oral Interpretation #3 (Yang Cropp) (Gardner, Houston). Writing workshop on course final project plays. Please empower your writing in workshop with the impact of the shared literature.

11/12. Oral Interpretation #4 (Crosley) (Kaur, Wabvuta). Writing workshop on course final project plays. Please empower your writing in workshop with the impact of the shared literature.

11/12. Writing workshop on course final project plays. Secondary scenes: workshop, presentation, dramaturgical feedback.

11/19. USC Holiday – Fall Break. No class.

11/26. Last day of class. Mock Director/Dramaturgy event. Final scripts due. (The Final Project, a full-length play (typed in standard manuscript format with standard margins in Courier or Times 12-point type) is due the last day of class in hard copy. The play manuscript formatting template located on Blackboard is required for any course work submitted, including pages. Any variations from the template, however slight, must be approved in advance by the instructor or *the student will have a point removed for each unapproved modification*. You also may utilize the play manuscript template found on Final Draft software (https://www.amazon.com/Final-Draft-FDX-CARD-10/dp/B01L8QHP6G/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1501092633&sr=8-1&keywords=final+draft+software). For the entire play manuscript, do not exceed eighty-five (85) pages. For each page beyond 85, *one point will be subtracted from the grading assessment*. If you copyright your play (Electronic Copyright Office: https://eco.copyright.gov/eService_enus/start.swe?SWECmd=Start&SWEHo=eco.copyright.gov), you may add an 86th page with the copyright information on it as the last page in the manuscript. Note that you cannot add a copyright page until you have received your copyright registration from the U.S. Library of Congress.)

12/7. 11 am-1 pm. Final examination date and time. Site TBD.

Other USC Policies: 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://capsnet.usc.edu/departments/departments-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.

ATTACHMENT “A” –THTR 566

USC MFADW EVALUATION OF THE PLAY – THTR 566

Course Number/Name: THTR 566 DRAMATIC WRITING STUDIO

Student Name: _____

Grading Guidelines from Syllabus:

USC definitions of grades: “A” for work of excellent quality, “B” for work of good quality. USC Department of Grading details the grading issue: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/ARR/grades/gradinghandbook/gradingpolicies.html>.

Grading is determined on the following scale:

96-100%=A	88-90%=B+	81-84%=B-	75-77%= C	67-70%=D+	61-63%=D-
95-91%=A-	85-87%=B	78-80%=C+	71-74%= C-	66-64%=D	

[Failing Grade for Graduate Credit = C-]

The class presentation grade is evaluated on this scale with the grade breaking down as follows: 25% Quality of structure/through-line/plotting, 25% Quality of character development, 25% Quality of dialogue development, 25% Quality of overall creative achievement and professionalism of project.

- ✓ _____ Quality of structure/through-line/plotting
- ✓ _____ Quality of character development
- ✓ _____ Quality of dialogue development
- ✓ _____ Quality of overall creative achievement
and professionalism of project.