

GESM 111g: Seminar in the Arts

The Theatre Scene

Spring 2019

Units: 4

Mondays and Wednesdays 2:00-3:50PM

Location: MCC 102

Instructor: Luis Alfaro

Office: JEF207A

Office Hours: Tuesdays 10:00AM-2:00PM

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213-740-3302 office, 323-369-8306 Cell

COURSE DESCRIPTION

For theatre artists and professionals, a play is oftentimes the starting point for a journey of research, exploration and imagination.

Before the first day of rehearsal, the director spends time working with her dramaturge and designers in researching various aspects of the play as well as re-reading it multiple times.

The research would include: the historical period in which the play was written, its politics, customs and mores; the performance history or tradition of the play; the life of and other works by the author; and critical essays on the play or playwright.

This research and re-reading eventually lead the director to her concept of the play, an aesthetic, philosophical and visual realization of the play that is unique to that director working in concert with her artistic team of designers.

The director brings this concept to the first rehearsal and begins the process of sharing the research to her primary collaborators, the actors.

Before and during rehearsal, the designers and actors themselves do their own research, which is not dissimilar to the director's, but is more individually based on their priorities of characterization (actors) or visual rendering (designers).

Pre-production research is different for a new play or for a play which does not result from a traditional script, i.e. a devised work, which might evolve from movement based language or political framework. There, the director works with the playwright or choreographer and cast to explore the writer's intentions in the play, questioning scenes and characters as well as reading and rereading the text and any material that inspired or is pertinent to the play.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Analysis:** Increase the student's ability to analyze creative endeavors, including describing them with appropriate vocabulary, examining their formal elements, and engaging in research to understand their contexts.
2. **Making:** Expand the student's knowledge about the creative process, as exemplified by specific works studied, and, in many cases, by the student's making creative work.
3. **Connectivity:** Deepen the student's appreciation of the connections between creative endeavors and the concurrent political, religious, and social conditions; show how these endeavors fulfill cultural functions or fill cultural needs.
4. **Engagement:** Increase the student's understanding of becoming a lifelong supporter or participant in the arts by exposure to creative production in the contemporary environment.

Prerequisite(s): N/A

Co-Requisite(s): N/A

Concurrent Enrollment: N/A

Recommended Preparation: purchasing reader and texts prior to class

Course Notes: This class requires the viewing of play(s) outside of class time for discussion in class.

REQUIRED READINGS AND SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Ruined by Lynn Nottage

Doubt, A Parable by John Patrick Shanley

Anna in the Tropics by Nilo Cruz

Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard and/or handed out in class.

REQUIRED SHOWS (3)

MANDATORY SHOWS (1) MFA3

2/1-2/28 *Children of the Sun*

2/2-3/2 *Gnit*

2/9-3/3 *Swimmers*

ADDITIONAL SHOWS (1) MFA2

3/5-3/14 *New Work Festival*

These plays are in smaller venues, plan to get tickets in advance.

USC VISIONS AND VOICES SHOWS

Black Super Hero Magic Mama by Inda Craig-Galvan

Othello by William Shakespeare

Lackawanna Blues by Ruben Santiago-Hudson

Date Venue

3/27 Geffen Theatre

4/7 Noise Within

4/17 Mark Taper Forum

<http://visionsandvoices.usc.edu/>

GRADING BREAKDOWN

The final course grade is determined according to 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: 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 completion of work is coupled with poor understanding of class material.

When the mathematical GPA 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 excellent or good and toward the negative end of the scale for those with average or poor attendance and participation.

Further Grading Notes:

1. Any work that does not fulfill the required assignment is an automatic F.
2. If you are not a native speaker of English and/or you are an international student, please make an appointment with me in the first two weeks of classes to determine whether language accommodations might be necessary.
3. If your work in class is unsatisfactory, you will be warned before the deadline for dropping the course with a grade of W.
4. I will be happy to discuss your work at any time, and I encourage you to visit office hours at least once during the semester.

Additional Policies

Unless otherwise noted, all written assignments should be in MLA or Chicago format, double-spaced in 12 point Times New Roman font with one-inch margins on all sides.

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Participation	150	15
Performance Analyses	240	24
The World of the Play	110	11
First Paper	150	15
Second Paper	150	15
Final Project	200	20
TOTAL	1000	100

Assignment Rubrics

All papers will be turned in to Blackboard or Turn-It-In

Assignment Submission Policy

All assignments are due at the start of class on the date listed. No late work will be accepted.

Grading Timeline

All papers will be returned graded within 2 weeks of due dates.

A Note on Communication and Media:

All phones must be turned off and put away before class begins. Laptops can be used for the taking of notes with permission.

Email communication. Please feel free to email me for any reason regarding the class, but allow 48 hours for a response. While email is a seemingly casual messaging medium, please maintain decorum in your communication.

PARTICIPATION 15%

Objective: Participation includes active listening, respect for the class and various opinions, and engaging with the material, students, guests, and professor. All of this is essential to learning. We will practice the following tenets for discussion:

- Listen actively and attentively.
- Listen respectfully, without interrupting.
- Comments that you make (asking for clarification, sharing critiques, expanding on a point, etc.) should reflect that you have paid attention to the speaker's comments.
- Listen carefully to what others are saying even when you disagree with what is being said.
- Respect each other's views.
- Challenge one another, but do so respectfully.
- Always use a respectful tone.
- Avoid inflammatory language.
- Avoid put downs (even humorous ones).
- No name-calling or other character attacks.
- No interrupting or yelling.
- Do not interrupt when someone else is speaking.
- Be aware of the fact that tone of voice and body language are powerful communicators. Some postures or facial expressions (e.g., crossed arms, eye rolls, loud sighs) can silence, provoke, intimidate, or hurt others. Others (e.g. facing and looking at the speaker, staying quiet, nodding) can show you are listening respectfully.
- Make eye contact with other students and refer to classmates by name.
- Let others speak. Once you are done speaking, let at least two other people talk before you speak again. Don't dominate the discussion.
- It's okay to be emotional about issues and to name those emotions.
- It's okay to ask a question that you think may be unsophisticated or uninformed.
- Don't worry about impressing people.
- Try not to silence yourself out of concern for what others will think about what you say.

Attendance during seminar is mandatory. Missing more than two classes and/or being late will impact your ability to be an active participant. There are many forms of meaningful participation, including insightful questions and active listening. If you tend to feel uncomfortable speaking in class, see me so we can work out a participation strategy. This course is largely discussion-based. It is up to you to come to class prepared to engage in lively conversation and respectful debate.

Please let me know in advance if there are circumstances that impair or impede your attendance or participation. You are responsible for obtaining notes, handouts, and important information that you may have missed due to absence or lateness. The class will be visited by members of the production teams, casts, and professors from USC's SDA. This is an opportunity for students to ask questions and engage with practitioners about the theatre-making process. Students are expected to engage with the guests and to prepare ahead of class with questions.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSES 24% 2 PAGES

Objective: The response papers are designed for you to practice analytical writing and performance analysis.

Students view three (3) productions this semester. For the three (3) productions, students will write an analytical paper on one of the plays. This is a close reading of the production and no additional sources are to be used.

For the four Performance Analyses, each student must write one paper on four of the five following elements:

- Stage/Lighting Design
- Director/Dramaturg choices
- Casting/Inclusivity vis-à-vis script requirements/accents or dialects
- Costuming/makeup
- Sound/music

Each response paper is due at the beginning of class on Monday after the production run.

THE WORLD OF THE PLAY 11% 1 PAGE

Objective: This is to help you explore creative ways for developing your analytical skills and conceptualizing the world of the play.

This is our ORIGIN STORY piece. One page.

FIRST PAPER (STAGING DRAMATIC LITERATURE): 15% 1 PAGE

Objective: This is a paper in which you will use critical analysis of the text to support performance and production choices.

This is going to be our Parent Piece, a MONOLOGUE (only one character speaks) and the prompt is “There are so many things you do not know about me...”. One page, to be read out loud in class and turned in as well.

SECOND PAPER (READING THE TEXT AND PERFORMANCE): 15% 3 PAGES

Objective: This paper is designed for students to engage their skills in both reading dramatic literature and reading performance.

The second paper will require each student to select one of the plays they have seen and analyze the difference between how the student imagined the play when he read it and the difference he observed in performance. Students must have a thesis statement and use two (2) of the additional readings (handouts) from class in their paper to support their argument.

FINAL PROJECT 20%**5-6 PAGES**

Objective: The final project will demonstrate the student's critical and analytical understanding of the production cycle.

For their final project, will write their own short play (minimum 10 pages). Analyze it from conceptualization into a proposal for production. We will work in teams to build a strong narrative and analysis that helps us imagine a play from idea into presentation.

COURSE SCHEDULE: A WEEKLY BREAKDOWN

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/ Due Dates
Week 1	Slide Show/Origin Story	Origin Story	
Week 2	Origin Story/Parent Piece	Parent Piece	
Week 3	Reading of Monologues		
Week 4	Reading of Monologues		
Week 5	Short Play Research	<i>Elements of your play</i>	
Week 6	Conceptualization Report	Report on Plays seen	
Week 7	Design Report	Report on Plays seen	Team Report on Assigned Plays
Week 8	Production Report	Report on Plays seen	Team Report on Assigned Plays
Week 9		Report on Plays seen	Team Report on Assigned Plays
Week 10	SPRING RECESS (3/10-17)		
Week 11	In-Class Readings	Report on Plays seen	
Week 12	In-Class Readings	Report on Plays seen	
Week 13	In-Class Readings	Report on Plays seen	
Week 14	In-Class Readings	Report on Plays seen	
Week 15	In-Class Readings	Report on Plays seen	
FINAL			Date: For the date and time of the final for this class, consult the USC <i>Schedule of Classes</i> at classes.usc.edu .

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” 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>.

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website for DSP and contact information: (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

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. See the university’s site on Campus Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

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. 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. www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Relationship and 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. 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: 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. 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. studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. dsp.usc.edu

Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa

Diversity at USC

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. diversity.usc.edu

USC Emergency Information

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. emergency.usc.edu

USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime. Provides overall safety to USC community. dps.usc.edu