USC School of Dramatic Arts

Catalogue Description

Investigates art and craft of dramatic writing initiated/completed in other MFA in Dramatic Writing courses or writing that was submitted as a sample for program entry.

Course Description and Overview

The course will focus on a page-one, fully reconsidered revision of a play that you wrote in a past USC MFA in Dramatic Writing course or on the play that you submitted to enter the program.

Learning Objectives

Your objective is to deepen your grasp of key dimensions of your play – character and story in particular – to strengthen and refine past work that is important to you as a playwright.

Required Readings

Unsettling America: An Anthology of Contemporary Multicultural Poetry, Ed. by Maria Mazziotti Gillan & Jennifer Gillan
The Writers Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers, 3rd Edition, By Christopher Vogler

Blackboard https://blackboard.usc.edu/ provides additional links to pertinent readings, essays, and resources. (Blackboard, in addition to being the site that contains some course materials is also the means of communication and continuation of curriculum in the event of an emergency. If you do not know how to use Blackboard, visit the site and follow links to USC Blackboard Help.) The syllabus is posted on Blackboard as well as on the USC Schedule of Classes.

Supplementary:
Letters to A Young Poet, Rainer Maria Rilke (Available On-line), http://www.carrothers.com/rilke_main.htm
Poetics by Aristotle
The Process of Dramaturgy: A Handbook, Scott R. Irelan
The Art of Dramatic Writing by Lajos Egri

Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments

Academic integrity is important to the University. The student is urged to remember that professors do not "give" grades; students *earn* grades. Thus, a final grade is entirely up to the student with regards to the effort he or she chooses to expend to meet course requirements.

Please note that, every week, as I have done in the past, I will ask you if you need to see me outside of class. The invitation is always there; please make the time to see me if you need support or counsel.

Please note that late work is given a ten percent (10%) penalty and is accepted only within one week of its due date. The only exception is illness or personal crisis.

Here are USC's definitions of grades: "A" for work of excellent quality, "B" for work of good quality, "C" for work of fair quality for undergraduate credit and minimum passing for graduate credit, "C-" as a failing grade for graduate credit, "D-" for work of minimum passing quality for undergraduate credit, "F" for failure, "IN" for incomplete work, *student-initiated after 12th week and only awarded under exceptional circumstances.*

Your grade for this course is assessed as follows:

1. 25% - Participation and engagement in weekly dramaturgy and page submission
2. 25% - Final Exam
3. 50% - Final Project Play.

Participation and engagement means that you will write pages every week and bring them into class for reading and dramaturgical feedback. You will provide constructive criticism to your peers and accept their constructive criticism in return. You will take notes on what is said to you, type them up, and submit them to the instructor within twenty-four hours of the end of course (midnight the Tuesday after class). Furthermore, you will be able to discuss the Vogler book meaningfully with regards to your work.

The Final Exam is on May 6 from 7-9 pm. The required reading will be engaged with for the exam so please read both books thoroughly. The Final Exam will be a short essay exam.

The Final Project Play is the fully reconsidered revision of the play that you designated on the first day of class. A superficial revision is not acceptable. Please make certain that you fully reconsider your work over the course of the semester and that this development is obvious in the Final Project Play that you submit.

The Final Project Play shall be graded according to the following rubric:

- 25% Quality of character development.
- 25% Quality of story development.
- 25% Quality of dialogue crafting.
- 25% Originality, overall creative achievement, and professionalism of project.

Overall grading is determined on the following scale:

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

[Failing Grade for Graduate Credit = C-]

Your final project is a full-length play that must be typed in standard manuscript format with standard top/bottom/side one-inch margins in Courier or Times 12-point type. You may submit it electronically as a Word doc/docx document so that commentary also may be provided electronically. If you submit it as a PDF, it is understood that you do not desire written feedback.

Because you are emerging playwrights presenting your work to the profession, you are expected to refine your thesis into a play manuscript that is between 60-90 pages. Do not exceed the maximum.

You are encouraged to copyright your play (Electronic Copyright Office: https://eco.copyright.gov/eService_enu/start.swe?SWECmd=Start&SWEHo=eco.copyright.gov).

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

1/7 – Assessment of project to be revised. Oral synopses and discussion. Character development.

1/14 – Investigation of motivations, mythologies, cultural aspects if applicable; development of research plan to deepen character and story exploration. Writing workshop for first pages. Prepare new pages for 1/28 that reflect impact of investigations and research.

1/21 – Holiday. No class. Martin Luther King, Jr., Birthday

1/28 – Presentation of new pages, dramaturgical discussion and resolutions.

2/4 – Presentation of new pages, dramaturgical discussion and resolutions.

2/11 – Presentation of new pages, dramaturgical discussion and resolutions.

2/18 – Holiday. No class. President's Day.

2/25 – Mid-term self-reads of revised work to-date.

3/4 – Mid-term self-reads of revised work to-date. Note that revised first halves of work due on 3/18.

3/11 – Holiday. No class. Spring Break.

3/18 – First halves of revised plays due. Begin evaluation of second half work: investigation of motivations, mythologies, cultural aspects if applicable; development of research plan to deepen character and story exploration.

3/25 – Conferences.
4/1 – Conferences.
4/8– Writing workshop with prompts/exercises.
4/15 - Writing workshop with prompts/exercises.
4/22 - Writing workshop with prompts/exercises.
4/29 – Guest speaker: dramaturgy and rewriting. Final drafts due on this date.
 [5/6 – 7-9 pm. Final Examination.]

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 and contact information for DSP: http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html, (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

Statement on Academic Integrity
USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *SCampus*, the Student Guidebook, (www.usc.edu/scampus or http://scampus.usc.edu) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

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.

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/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.htmlprovides 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.