

### Course Description

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 choices. Suddenly elements add up to new quotients, and we find ourselves feeling differently about relationships we may well have taken for granted. Risk and reward become palpable; gambling, drama and the unexpected find new pathways and connections. Using several diverse texts that share this nexus of risk and reward, we will together build scenes and plays that help create new alternative possibilities for our work and our lives. We will rearrange the world we think we know on the page, and find how choice forces us to see the world with new eyes. Although we will be dealing with work that may have history, you will be writing new scenes in an IMMEDIATE PRESENT that makes connections based on our discussions, reading assignments, and shared goals.

**Prerequisite(s):** You must be registered in MFA Dramatic Writing, or else receive clearance to attend class from SDA's Office of Admissions and Student Services.

### Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

These books will be available at the USC Bookstore. They can also be purchased online or elsewhere. Supplementary materials will be made available online via Blackboard.

Federico Garcia-Lorca, **THREE PLAYS**

Federico Garcia-Lorca, **IN SEARCH OF DUENDE**

Oliver Mayer, **BLOOD MATCH AND OTHER PLAYS**

Edwin Wong, **THE RISK THEATRE MODEL OF TRAGEDY**

Anna Ziegler, **ACTUALLY....**

### Description and Assessment of Assignments

Your final grade is up to you. Meeting course requirements does not equal excellence. For that, you will need uncommon effort and commitment to your work. Dramatic writing demands bravery, boldness, and an active sense of play. Come each week ready to work.

### Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

August 26	<b>INTRODUCTIONS:</b> Getting the writing on track. Identifying personal risks, rewards, foul-lines, soft spots, where it hits home.
September 2	<b>LABOR DAY:</b> university holiday, <b>NO CLASS.</b> Prepare first pages. Read Wong's <b>THE RISK THEATRE MODEL OF TRAGEDY, PART 1.</b>
September 9	<b>RISKS:</b> First Pages. Each student must participate, share 5-15 pages of new material.
September 16	<b>REWARDS:</b> Wong's Risk Model of Tragedy discussed. Assignment: identify and write towards one of Wong's examples. New scenes.
September 23	<b>TEMPTATIONS:</b> Lorca's <b>IN SEARCH OF DUENDE</b> , and the ideas of earthiness, irrationality, the heightened awareness of Death, and a dash of the diabolical. New scenes.
September 30	<b>WAGERS:</b> Lorca's <b>BLOOD WEDDING/BODAS DE SANGRE</b> discussion of risks/rewards and temptations. New scenes.
October 7	<b>CHAOS:</b> Mayer's <b>BLOOD MATCH</b> discussion, comparison of risks/rewards and temptations. New scenes.
October 14	Guest Instructor:
October 21	<b>CONCORD:</b> Lorca's <b>YERMA</b> discussion of themes in relation to risk. <b>ASSIGNMENT:</b> How would you update for maximum tragic pull? New scenes.
October 28	<b>ROLLING WITH A HOT HAND:</b> Ziegler's <b>ACTUALLY...</b> , and the play that attempts to find the drama in and for the present moment. New scenes.
November 4	<b>CHANCE:</b> Mayer's <b>THE SINNER FROM TOLEDO</b> and the adaptation from short story to the stage over time. Supplementary materials available online through Blackboard. New scenes.
November 11	<b>BEYOND TRAGEDY:</b> Where does the duende meet the risk/reward of your play? Discussion of goals and pitfalls along the way. New scenes.
November 18	Possible Guest Instructor: Poet Jess Willard, and the responsibility to find one's own music, theme, obsession, and way out.
November 25	<b>FINAL PIECES #1:</b> four presentations read in class.
December 2	<b>FINAL PIECES #2:</b> four presentations read in class.
December 16	<b>EXAM. FINAL RESPONSES/THOUGHTS ON FUTURE WORK.</b>

### Extra-Curricular Commitments and ISPs

Should you choose to participate in any extra-curricular project, such as an Independent Student Production, the SDA administration and faculty will not make allowances or exceptions for absences in class, missed or delayed assignments, home work that is required as preparation for class, or lack of participation in class resulting from your extra-curricular involvement.

### **Grading Breakdown**

This class demands active participation, discussion, and feedback on a weekly basis. Be prepared to discuss each other's work and to do so with both compassion and insight. Your final grade will be determined thusly:

Weekly Grade: 30%  
 Weekly Scene Work: 30%  
 Completed Play: 40%

A indicates work of excellent quality; B of good quality; C of average quality. I expect no lower grade than that from any of you.

### **Assignment Rubrics**

Weekly Writing Assignments will be given both in-class and as homework. You will be expected to be writing and presenting scenes every week. Be prepared to read aloud your work, both for peer review and for my feedback. Absent students should email me or contact their fellow students about missed assignments. These should be read to present at the next class you attend.

### **Grading Timeline**

We can discuss your grades during the semester, preferably during office hours.

### **Additional Policies**

Unlike some other classes at SDA, we do not use a great deal of technology in this course. That said, feel free to either share your new scenes weekly online with me and the other students, or print them and distribute hard copies in class.

Also, students will be expected to attend plays, both on campus and off. When possible, tickets will be provided. Try to attend SDA productions, particularly those of the MFA Acting classes. When you see a play, be prepared to discuss it in class. Scheduled plays to attend include **3 PADEREWSKIS** on Saturday, October 12 at USC (RSVP required).

## **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](http://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](mailto: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](http://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](http://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](http://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](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. [equity.usc.edu](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://dps.usc.edu)