

THTR 395m – Drama as Human Relations

63095R/Units: 4

Spring 2020 — MON, WED — 2:00-3:50pm

Location: THH 215

Instructor: Boni B. Alvarez

Office: MCC 214

Office Hours: MON, WED - by appointment

Contact Info: bbalvare@usc.edu

(I will reply as soon as I can, but please allow 36 hours for a response.)

Course Assistant: Lena Ford

Contact Info: lenaford@usc.edu

Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

This course explores intercultural diversity and the dynamics of human relations through contemporary dramatic works. We will read plays that address various aspects of perceived human differences, including those based on race, ethnicity, class, level of education, religion, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, political affiliation, and national origin. We will consider how these differences create tensions, cause despairs, stir up conflicts, as well as generate hopes and deliver redemptions among dramatic characters striving to survive and thrive in a multiethnic environment. Inspired by the etymological roots of “drama” as “to do, to act, and to perform,” our curriculum will also include analysis of films and television shows that attempt a move towards social change. The course encourages its participants to appreciate the challenge and pleasure of experiencing diversity in interpersonal encounters across various boundaries.

This course fulfills the diversity requirement for undergraduate general education.

Learning Objectives

- This course broadens students’ dramatic literacy of contemporary American plays and playwrights.
- This course cultivates the students' abilities for dramatic analysis and critical thinking via class discussion and through writing essays on close readings of the texts.
- Through analysis and embodied encounters of dramatic artworks, students may appreciate how theater and performance artists intervene in contemporary cultures to promote social change toward more diverse, equitable, and inclusive societies.
- Through group assignments, students will sharpen ensemble-building and presentational skills, expanding awareness of interpersonal dynamics in daily situations.

Required Readings

Texts marked with an asterisk (*) have been ordered through the USC Bookstore. They may also be found electronically through USC Libraries. All other texts will be distributed via Blackboard or as hard copies.

- Alvarez, Boni B. *Guarded*
- Fornes, Maria Irene. *Mud*
- Jacobs-Jenkins, Branden. *Gloria*
- *Lew, Michael. *Teenage Dick*
- *Moraga, Cherie. *Heroes & Saints*
- *Nottage, Lynn. *Sweat*
- *Speigel, Ruby Rae. *Dry Land*

Required films and videos will be viewed in class.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

The quality of work in this class is largely determined by the thoroughness of your effort, the ongoing process, and the imagination/critical thought displayed.

Participation – 15%

Students must actively participate in the discussion topics and in-class readings. Students will be evaluated on preparedness of the assigned readings, eagerness to be involved in class activities, and the quality of contributions to discussion. Many ideas, positions, and opinions will arise; students should be respectful in the ensuing dialogue, practicing active listening & engagement.

Play Review – 15%

This 3-page paper will review the MFA Year 3 production of *Guarded*. Production and performance elements will be evaluated in relation to the reading and analysis of the written text. A more detailed prompt will be distributed.

Students must acquire tickets. This is a limited run with varied performance times, so plan accordingly. Performances are at the Scene Dock Theatre: Feb 15, 16, 22, 23, 28, 29, March 7 & 8.

Weekly Intro – 15%

Students will sign up in pairs* to present an introductory profile on one of the texts/films/shows being studied. The purpose of the profile is to inform your audience about the playwright/director/producer, providing aspects on their life and work and a brief overview of the historical, cultural, and social backgrounds of the specific work being studied. Introductions will be 7-10 minutes; students will submit a written outline of their presentation. *Depending on class size, the number of students assigned to a piece may vary.

Character Analysis (2) – 10% each

Students will submit two 2-3-page responses to plays, taking a deeper dive into the characters, analyzing their specific arcs, resonance and (non-)relatability with their audiences. A more detailed prompt will be distributed.

(1) – Fornes’ *Mud* & Nottage’s *Sweat*

(2) – Lew’s *Teenage Dick*, Spiegel’s *Dry Land* & Moraga’s *Heroes & Saints*

Reality Presentation – 20%

This is a group presentation – no longer than 15 minutes. Groups will present a pitch for a TV/streaming reality series. In addition to the live presentation, students will submit a 3-5page written statement, outlining a synopsis, subject and theme, season arc, and ‘character’ breakdown. This is a creative assignment – design of materials and presentation is determined by the group and can implement visual aids, a ‘script’, live performance, film/video, music, etc. Students will work as a creative team and will earn the same grade for the assignment.

Final Paper – 15%

A final paper surveying the works studied over the course of the semester, evaluating overall effectiveness of a piece’s connectivity and impact on audiences. A more detailed prompt will be distributed.

Grading Breakdown

ASSIGNMENT	% of grade
Participation	15
Play Review	15
Weekly Intro	15
Reality Pitch Presentation	20
Character Analysis – 1	10
Character Analysis – 2	10
Final Paper	15
TOTAL	100

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.

A+: 100-98	A: 97-94	A-: 93-90
B+: 89-87	B: 86-84	B-: 83-80
C+: 79-77	C: 76-74	C-: 73-70
D+: 69-67	D: 66-64	D-: 63-60
F: 59-0		

When a student’s mathematical GPA falls between two grades, the final grade will be weighted towards the higher end of the scale for students whose attendance and participation in class have been excellent or good and toward the lower end for those with average or poor attendance and participation.

Assignment Submission Policy

Deadlines are listed on the weekly schedule – please plan accordingly. NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED.

Additional Policies

Attendance is compulsory. Unexcused absences will affect your grade adversely – if you are not in class, you are not participating in the class discussion and analysis. In the event of an absence, it is your responsibility to secure class notes from your classmates. If you are absent on a day you are scheduled to give a presentation, you will receive a 0 for the assignment. There will be no make-up assignments. Please do not be late to class.

Technology - Please be respectful of the class and your colleagues – CELL PHONES AND DEVICES ARE PROHIBITED unless needed for the text being discussed for the day. During such sessions, no extracurricular activity on devices permitted.

<u>WK</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>WEEKLY SCHEDULE</u>	
1 Introduction			
	MON 1/13	Syllabus Review; Introductions	
	WED 1/15	Relating to Drama: keys for audience investigation	
2 Enlightenment & American Dreams			
	MON 1/20	NO CLASS – MLK HOLIDAY	
	WED 1/22	Fornes' <i>Mud</i>	
3	MON 1/27	<i>Mud (cont)</i>	
	WED 1/29	Nottage's <i>Sweat</i>	
4	MON 2/3	Nottage's <i>Sweat</i>	
Queer Relations			
	WED 2/5	RuPaul's <i>DRAG RACE</i>	
5	MON 2/10	Alvarez's <i>Guarded</i>	
	WED 2/12	<i>Guarded (cont)</i>	CHARACTER ANALYSIS 1 – Hard Copy DUE in-class
6	MON 2/17	NO CLASS – PRESIDENTS' DAY	
	WED 2/19	Jenkins' <i>MOONLIGHT (2016)</i>	
7	MON 2/24	<i>MOONLIGHT (cont)</i>	
Friends With Disabilities			
	WED 2/26	Lew's <i>Teenage Dick</i>	
8	MON 3/2	<i>Teenage Dick (cont)</i>	
	WED 3/4	<i>AMAZING RACE</i>	
9 Oh, To Be a Woman			
	MON 3/9	<i>SURVIVOR</i>	
	WED 3/11	<i>SURVIVOR (cont)</i>	<i>Guarded</i> REVIEW – Hard Copy DUE in-class
10	MON 3/16	NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK	
	WED 3/18	NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK	
11	MON 3/23	Spiegel's <i>Dry Land</i>	
	WED 3/25	<i>Dry Land (cont)</i>	
12	MON 3/30	TBA	
	WED 4/1	REALITY PRESENTATIONS	
13	MON 4/6	REALITY PRESENTATIONS	
Are Politics Entertaining?			
	WED 4/8	Moraga's <i>Heroes & Saints</i>	
14	MON 4/13	<i>Heroes & Saints (cont)</i>	
	WED 4/15	Shanley's <i>DOUBT (2008)</i>	
15	MON 4/20	<i>DOUBT (cont)</i>	
	WED 4/22	Jacobs-Jenkins' <i>Gloria</i>	CHARACTER ANALYSIS 2 – Hard Copy DUE in-class
16	MON 4/27	<i>Gloria (cont)</i>	
	WED 4/29	Wrap-up	
FINAL	MON 5/11	2:00-4:00pm	FINAL PAPER DUE

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