

USC School of Dramatic Arts

THTR 500 Dramaturgical Perspectives and Approaches, 63223D

SYLLABUS DATED January 6, 2020

Units: 2

Spring 2020, Session 001—Mondays—Time: 5:00-7:50 PM

Location: GFS 112

Instructor: Velina Hasu Houston, MFA, PhD

Office: USC School of Dramatic Arts, 1029 Childs Way, Mail Code 0791

Office Hours: 3-5 PM Mondays by appointment only via email to the instructor (other times can be negotiated); as a courtesy, 24-hour cancellation via email to the instructor and/or student required.

Contact Info: greentea@usc.edu, (213) 740-8686; email is preferred contact, response in 48 hours or less.

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

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. This is not a class in which you start a new play, but one in which you focus on the evolution of an existing play that fits the aforementioned parameters.

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. You should be aware of the world in which you have set your play, the time in which it is set, and other key characteristics of your creative expression.

Required Readings

Chinese Ghost Stories: Curious Tales of the Supernatural by Lafcadio Hearn, Tuttle classics, 1st edition.

Brazilian Folktales, Eds. Livia Maria M. de Almeida, Ana Maria Portella, Margaret Read MacDonald; Libraries Unlimited (World Folklore Series).

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 Readings:

Unsettling America: An Anthology of Contemporary Multicultural Poetry, Ed. by M. Mazziotti Gillan & J. Gillan

The Writers Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers, 3rd Edition, By Christopher Vogler

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. Ireland

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). You will complete reading assignments and discuss them meaningfully towards the expansion of your universes of thought, which organically feeds your creative expression.

The Final Exam is on May 11 from 4:30-6:30 pm. The required reading will be engaged with for the exam so please read both books thoroughly, beyond what we share in class.

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. Your final project play 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 60-87 pages, not including the title page, copyright page, and cast of characters page. 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).

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-]

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

1/13 – Review of syllabus, and interactive questions and answers. Assessment of projects to be revised. Oral synopses and discussion. Read “The Soul of the Great Bell” and “The Story of Ming Yi” (Hearn) for 1/27.

1/20 – Holiday. No class. Martin Luther King, Jr., Birthday

1/27 – Investigation of motivations, mythologies, cultural aspects if applicable; development of research plan to deepen character and story exploration in tandem with discussion of “The Soul of the Great Bell” and “The Story of Ming Yi.” Discussion of characters, discussion of protagonist’s routine circumstances and five conversations exercise, investigation of the particularity of the time in which focus is brought to the protagonists’ lives. Prepare 15 new pages for 2/3 that reflect impact of explorations and exercises.

2/3 – Presentation of new pages, dramaturgical discussion and resolutions. Student 1: _____, Student 2: _____, Student 3: _____, Student 4: _____. For 2/10, read “The Legend of Zhi Nu” and “The Return of Yan Zhenjing” (Hearn).

2/10 – Discussion of “The Legend of Zhi Nu” and “The Return of Yan Zhenjing.” Exploration of the initiation of conflict/adventure in the routine circumstances of each student’s protagonist and the ensuing desires and needs that emerge in protagonists. Prepare 15 new pages for 2/24 that reflect impact of explorations and exercises. Read two assigned readings in the Almeida-Portella-MacDonald book.

2/17 – Holiday. No class. President’s Day.

2/24 – Discussion of Almeida-Portella-MacDonald readings. Presentation of new pages, dramaturgical discussion and resolutions. Student 1: _____, Student 2: _____, Student 3: _____, Student 4: _____. Revised Act I due on 3/2.

3/2 – Mid-term self-reads of revised work to-date: Student 1 _____, Student 2 _____.

3/9 – Mid-term self-reads of revised work to-date: Student 3 _____, Student 4 _____.

3/16 – Holiday. No class. Spring Break. (3/14-3/22)

3/23 – Writing workshop and private conferences. Students will focus on revisions of Act I based upon mid-term self-reads and dramaturgical feedback and completion of revision of play.

3/30 – Writing workshop and private conferences. Students will focus on revisions of Act I based upon mid-term self-reads and dramaturgical feedback and completion of revision of play.

4/6 – Reading of student’s play in its entirety with dramaturgical feedback: Student 1 _____ . PED 208.

4/13 – Reading of student’s play in its entirety with dramaturgical feedback: Student 2 _____ . MCC 107 (a class is in there until 4:50 pm).

4/20 – Reading of student’s play in its entirety with dramaturgical feedback: Student 3 _____ . MCC 107 (a class is in there until 4:50 pm).

4/27 – Reading of student’s play in its entirety with dramaturgical feedback: Student 4 _____ . MCC 107 (a class is in there until 4:50 pm).

5/11 - Final Examination, 4:30-6:30 pm, site TBA. Will engage the Hearn book as well as the Almeida-Portella-MacDonald book.

*ADDITIONAL POLICIES

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.

Statements 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