**USC**School of Dramatic Arts

**Dramatic Writing Studio, THTR-566 63256D**

**Spring Term – Tuesdays 7-9:55pm**

**Location: KAP 150**

**Instructor: Oliver Mayer**

**Office: MCC #101C**

**Office Hours : by appointment or walk-in (call or text first).**

**Contact Info:** [**omayer@usc.edu**](mailto:omayer@usc.edu)**, 310 867 9192**

**Course Description and Overview:**

Investigates gestalt of the student dramatic writer's professional development from the empty page and writing fundamentals to the first-draft script, business affairs, and dramaturgical advancement.

**Learning Objectives:**

I actively promote new writing and brave choices. Each week you will create new writing that extends the themes of your plays in unexpected new ways. Expectations: Year Ones will be writing new original plays for the NWF 1 requirement. Year Twos will be working on NWF 2 scripts. Year Threes will be writing toward their NWF 3 presentations. Write with purpose and dramatic energy; but remember that nothing is finished: The work you are creating is by nature work in progress – able to evolve. Celebrate this.

This semester’s theme is passion. We will search for ways to inject passion into the work.

We will also have at least one guest speaker to address your professional advancement.

**Required Readings:**

***Mother Courage and her Children***, by Bertholt Brecht (Grove Atlantic)

***Pecong***, by Steve Carter (Broadway Play Publishing)

***Sarita***, by Maria Irene Fornes (in Fornes’ ***Plays***, TCG)

***Dias y Flores***, by Oliver Mayer (in ***Envisioning the Americas***, NoPassport Press)

***Victory***, by Howard Barker (in ***Collected Plays V.1***, Riverrun Press)

***Sila***, by Chantal Bilodeau (Talonbooks)

Supplementary materials will appear online on Blackboard as well as via hard copy.

**Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments**:

Remember that professors do not “give” grades: students earn grades. Your final grade is up to you. Meeting course requirements does not equal excellence; I am looking for uncommon effort and commitment in each assignment. Dramatic writing demands bravery, chance-taking, and an active sense of play. The writing exercises will be your opportunity to be brave on the page. Students will be evaluated based on individual progress, receiving extended feedback for each assignment. Late assignments (weekly exercises) can be emailed to me at **omayer@usc.edu**; the midterm and final exams are mandatory and cannot be missed or made up on a later date.

**Assignment Rubrics**: ***A*** indicates work of excellent quality; ***A-/B+*** of good quality; ***B*** of average quality; **I expect no lower grade from you**.

**Grading Timeline**: We can discuss grades during my office hours. Please come see me.

**Grading Breakdown**: Your final grade consists of:

*Weekly Grade: 40% Final Scene Presentation: 30% Final Exam 20% Midterm Exam 10%*

This class will use the following grading scale:

96-100%=**A** 95-91%=**A-** 88-90%=**B+** 85-87%=B

81-84%=**B-** 78-80%=**C+** 77-75=**C** 71-74%= **C-**

66-64%=**D**  67-70%=**D+** 61-63%=**D-**

**Weekly Writing Assignments**: These are given both in-class or as homework. Students must be prepared to read aloud their work, for both peer review and my feedback. Absent students should email me or their fellow students about assignments given in-class and/or as homework. These should be turned in on time at the next class.

**Weekly Writing/Discussion Assignments:**

PLEASE DO THE READING. Rather than quantity of pages, I will do my best to focus on texts that effectively demonstrate an aspect of teachable passion.

**New Works Festival 1:**

At the end of the Spring Semester, the Dramatic Writing cohort’s 1st Year writers present their new plays at the New Works Festival 1 (NWF 1), co-produced by Playwrights’ Arena’s artistic director Jon Lawrence Rivera. Both NWF 1 plays will be read on the same day by a company of professional actors chosen expressly for the event. ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY. The event takes place on **Monday, May 1, from 11am-4pm**, venue TBA. We are planning for an acting company of 4-6 actors depending on cast size. Each writer will choose two actors specifically for the roles in the text, with the other roles chosen by Jon Lawrence Rivera and me.

**Attendance:**

While you are not graded on attendance, you will be graded on participation which requires your being in class. After two absences, excused or not, the third absence will affect your grade. Three tardy tallies will count as an unexcused absence. Be on time.

**Midterm Exam:**

Midterm will be given on **Tuesday, March 5th** **at 7pm**.

**Final Exam:**

Final Exam will be given on **Tuesday, May 7th at 5pm**.

**THTR 566 Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown:**

**January 14 Passion. Introduction of themes. Each writer will highlight a kind of passion in a scene to explore the world of the play, theme, voice, and tone. Writing in class: PASSION.**

**January 21 Obsessive-Compulsive. SARITA by Fornes. Read scenes.**

**January 28 Passion to Survive. MOTHER COURAGE by Brecht. Read scenes.**

**February 4 Passion for Horror. VICTORY by Barker. Read scenes.**

**February 11 Passion for Partnership. DIAS Y FLORES by Mayer. Read scenes.**

**February 18 Deep Dives. Scenes about love, sex and danger from your new plays. Dramaturgical Advancements: Guest speaker TBA.**

**February 25 Eco-Passion. SILA by Bilodeau. Read scenes.**

**March 1 LATC. Table Reads NWF 2, TBA.**

**March 3 Deep dives. Scenes about romance, complexity and entanglements from your new plays. MIDTERM given.**

**March 10 Passion for Home. PECONG by Carter. Read scenes. MIDTERMS returned.**

**March 17 SPRING BREAK, no class. Sleep and write!**

**March 24 How does love work in your play? Read scenes.**

**March 31 The Play Business: Guest speaker TBA.**

**April 7 ROUGH DRAFTS DUE.**

**April 14 In-class readings of plays by non-MFA 1s.**

**April 21 In-class readings of plays by non-MFA 1s.**

**April 26 LATC Master Class TBA**

**April 28 Last Class: Endings, and Beginnings. How best to use the summer.**

**May 1 NWF 1, Monday 11am-4pm, TBA. Attendance mandatory.**

**May 9 Tuesday, 5-7pm FINAL EXAM. Attendance mandatory.**

**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:**

**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**](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**

**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**

**USC Libraries: Need to do research but don't know where to start? Searching for a book, article, or data to support your argument? Not sure how to cite a source in your bibliography?**

**Ask a librarian! Research help is available:**

**•In person and by phone, chat and email at Ask a Librarian**

**•Through research guides and FAQs**

**•By contacting your subject librarian**