

THTR 125 Textual Analysis for Production
Section 62644D
Units: 4
Fall 2020—Tuesday/Thursday—Time: 12:00 – 1:50pm
Location: ONLINE

Instructor: Laurie Fisher, Ph.D.
Office: Virtual Appointments via Blackboard
Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 10-11am, and by appointment
Contact Info: ldfisher@usc.edu

IT Help: Customer Support Center
Contact Info: consult@usc.edu; 24-hr phone help: 213-740-5555

Welcome to THTR 125: Textual Analysis for Production.

Course Description

This course encourages students to take initiative and develop independent, analytical thinking about dramatic texts through close and careful reading. This course will focus on learning techniques for taking a script and transforming it into a stage production. Using a range of plays as source material, we will explore how to take a play apart to understand how it is put together and works as theatre. We will practice the dramaturgical methodologies actors, directors, and designers need to employ prior to rehearsal to understand the bones of a dramatic text and flesh it out into a production score. By the time we conclude, students should feel confident that they can approach any dramatic text they encounter and know how to begin exploring it on its own terms.

The course is structured as a seminar in which student discussion and analysis are primary.

- Students are encouraged to engage not only with peers in their respective sections but also with those in other sections.
- The course is taught by faculty from various areas within SDA, who meet to share teaching strategies and resources.
- The reading list comprises 5 plays, three of which are common to all sections of THTR 125 and two texts which vary per section.

Learning Objectives

The course is designed to equip students with basic analytical tools and interpretive perspectives that will enhance learning in all future SDA courses including acting, dramatic writing, directing, and tech/design:

- To offer students an in-depth study of how dramatic texts work
- To develop their ability to discover how the author provides them with the material they need to create a successful production

- To hone their ability to read and analyze these dramatic works deeply and to see them as dramatic scores
- To improve their mindfulness of the collaborative relationships between actor, text, theatre event, and the audience as expressed in a dramatic text.

Course Notes

This course will be taught entirely online. Class meetings will be held via Zoom. Please check Blackboard daily for any class announcements or updates on assignments. PowerPoint lecture slides will occasionally be used, and they will be posted on Blackboard after the class session. We will be viewing videos throughout the semester, and I will provide links for you to access any media.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Desktop or laptop with up-to-date version of Zoom is required for all students.

USC Technology Support Links:

[Zoom information for students](#)

[Blackboard help for students](#)

[Software available to USC Campus](#)

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials (all materials available at USC Bookstore, on Amazon, or through USC Libraries)

Wedding Band by Alice Childress (PDF on Blackboard)

Twelfth Night by William Shakespeare (Folger edition: ISBN 978-0-7434-8277-6)

Water by the Spoonful by Quiara Alegría Hudes (Theater Communications Group)

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? by Edward Albee (ISBN 978-0451158710)

Wonderland by Chay Yew (in the collection *The Hyphenated American*)

Various handouts (posted on Blackboard)

Description of Assignments

Assignment 1: Close Reading of an excerpt of *Wedding Band*. Due on Blackboard Turnitin under Assignments, by 11:59 pm on date specified, 750 words. (This assignment may be rewritten for re-evaluation with the permission of the Instructor.)

Midterm: Close Reading of an excerpt of *Twelfth Night*. Due on Blackboard Turnitin under Assignments, by 11:59 pm on date specified, 750 words. Assignment may NOT be rewritten.

Assignment 2: Creative assignment. You will provide a design for a production (with explanatory notes), an actor's journal, an essay that focuses on historical background, or write-up of a different dramaturgical concern. I will offer detailed suggestions in class. Due on Blackboard Turnitin under Assignments, by 11:59 pm on date specified.

In-class exercises and homework– quizzes, outlines, and other short writing assignments. These assignments must be turned in on time and cannot be made up or rewritten.

Final Exam: Comparative essay exploring specific thematic and dramaturgical considerations from different works studied. 1,500 words. Due on Blackboard Turnitin under Assignments, on the date scheduled for the final exam.

Grading Breakdown

| Assignment /Assessment Breakdown | % of Grade |
|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Writing Assignment 1 | 15% |
| Midterm | 20% |
| Writing Assignment 2 | 20% |
| Final | 20% |
| Class Exercises | 10% |
| Participation | 15% |
| TOTAL | 100% |

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

A indicates work of excellent quality; **B** of good quality; **C** of average quality; **D** of below average quality; and **F** indicates inadequate work.

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| A | 95-100 |
| A- | 90-94 |
| B+ | 87-89 |
| B | 83-86 |
| B- | 80-82 |
| C+ | 77-79 |
| C | 73-76 |
| C- | 70-72 |
| D+ | 67-69 |
| D | 63-66 |
| D- | 60-62 |
| F | 59 and below |

“Excellent” means that clear understanding of the class material is coupled with original and creative insight; “good” means that the class material has been understood clearly; “average” means that the class material has been generally understood, but gaps in understanding remain; “poor” means that there are identifiable gaps in the understanding of class material; “failure” means that gaps in the completion of work is coupled with poor understanding of class material.

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

Assignment Rubrics

Rubrics will be posted on Blackboard with each assignment.

Assignment Submission Policy

As a general rule, no late work will be accepted. However, if illness or emergency interferes with the completion of an assignment, please contact me at least 24 hours prior to the due date, and I will try to work something out with you.

Grading Timeline

Grading and feedback on formal assignments will generally be given within two weeks of turn-in date. For shorter assignments, turnaround will be within a week.

Additional Policies and Expectations

Zoom Etiquette:

Please do the following in order for the class to run as smoothly as possible:

- Keep your camera view on unless I instruct you to do otherwise. PLEASE NOTE: if you are having connectivity issues, you may turn off your camera, or call in to the session without video. Please ask me if you need any assistance.
- Keep your mic muted unless you are speaking
- Use the “raise hand” function when you want to speak, unless we are reading scenes aloud or in breakout groups
- Feel free to also use the group chat function to add comments or ask questions
- Refrain from texting or using private chats during the class session
- Please note that all sessions will be recorded. This will benefit you in two ways: 1) you will have the recordings available if you want to review information, and 2) for those students who are unable to attend the synchronous class, you will be able to view the lecture to make up for the class time you missed.

Communication policies:

Please send me an email, in advance, if you are prevented from attending a class. Also, while time constraints make it impossible for me to review full essay drafts by email, I am happy to respond to specific questions about an assignment. I will usually respond within 24 hours, depending upon when the request is sent and how much grading I happen to be facing at that point of time. Please note: I will not answer questions regarding a formal assignment less than one day before the assignment is due. In addition, if you email me after 6pm during the week, I probably won't respond until the following day, and if you email me on a weekend, I might not respond until Monday morning—again, depending on my workload. Please check all relevant handouts and emails before emailing me a question. I'm happy to help however I can, provided that you do not already have the answers at your disposal.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Following is a general outline of how the course will unfold. Please note that the schedule is subject to change according to the specific needs of the class.

| | Topics/Daily Activities | Readings and Homework | Deliverable/ Due Dates |
|-----------------------|--|---|------------------------|
| Week 1 8/17 | 8/18 Course Introduction; Intro to Theatrical Analysis | DUE 8/20: Elinor Fuchs “Visit to a Small Planet”; <i>Wedding Band</i> Act 1 | |

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| | 8/20 Elinor Fuchs, "Visit to a Small Planet"; <i>Wedding Band</i> , Act 1 | | |
| Week 2 8/24 | 8/25 Background and World of the Play 8/27 Characters and thematic concerns | <i>Wedding Band</i> | |
| Week 3 8/31 | 9/1 Close Reading guidelines; Intro to Writing Assignment 1. Introduction to Shakespeare. 9/3 Intro to <i>Twelfth Night</i> ; Act I | <i>Twelfth Night</i> (read entire play) | |
| Week 4 9/7 | Staging; Language | <i>Twelfth Night</i> (Act II and III) | Writing Assignment 1 due |
| Week 5 9/14 | Action; Adaptation Midterm Discussion and Guidelines | <i>Twelfth Night</i> (Act IV and V) | |
| Week 6 9/21 | Intro to Theater of the Absurd and its legacy; Background on Edward Albee; Setting the stage | <i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</i> | |
| Week 7 9/28 | Scene exploration: creating characters | <i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</i> | Midterm essay due |
| Week 8 10/5 | Production history; dramaturgical concerns | <i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</i> | |
| Week 9 10/12 | Historical background and considerations; cultural influence; social concerns; the world of the play; Assignment 2 guidelines and discussion | <i>Wonderland</i> | |
| Week 10 10/19 | Scene explorations Staging | <i>Wonderland</i> | |
| Week 11 10/26 | Intro to Hudes and to <i>Water by the Spoonful</i> | <i>Wonderland</i> <i>Water by the Spoonful</i> | Writing Assignment 2 due |
| Week 12 11/2 | The world of the play; stage and set design; history, time, and music | <i>Water by the Spoonful</i> | |
| Week 13 11/9 | Semester review: making connections | <i>Water by the Spoonful</i> <i>Final Review</i> | |

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| FINAL 11/19 | Final essay due | | Thursday, November 19, 11am. |

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.

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