

THTR 125: Text Studies for Production

Units: 4

Fall 2020 – Mon/Wed – 2-3:50pm

Location: ONLINE

Instructor: Matthew Ramirez Montgomery

Office Hours By Appointment: Appointments held via Zoom.

Contact Info: mramire1@usc.edu

Timeline for replying to emails/calls within 24 hours.

IT Help: Customer Support Center

Contact Info: consult@usc.edu

Course Description

This course encourages students to take initiative and develop independent, analytical thinking about dramatic texts through close and careful reading. The focus will primarily be 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 in order 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.

Course Overview

There are several sections of this course, each led by a different SDA faculty member, and each with a reflective flavor of that person's background. You are encouraged to engage with your peers in this and other sections to understand more deeply and gain differing perspectives. Each section is grounded by three shared common texts, along with two additional texts that vary from section to section, and basic principles/techniques for theatrical analysis. As a seminar-based course, the process of our developing an analytical language for understanding dramatic texts will be cultivated by the lectures and group discussions, and your understanding will be enhanced by the assignments along the way.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Analyze dramatic texts through close and careful readings with an evidence-based approach in order to score a production for performance.
- Develop and argue a thesis through textual evidence, thus sharpening critical thinking.
- Explain and appreciate the collaborative relationships among the writer, director, designers, actors, and audience.

Course Notes

This course will be solely online. Class meetings will be held via Zoom. Please check Blackboard often for any class announcements or updates on assignments. Lecture slides may occasionally be used and will always be posted on Blackboard following class. Some multimedia including videos may be provided throughout semester and will also be posted on Blackboard or Google Drive.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

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

Required Readings

- *Wedding Band* by Alice Childress (Samuel French)
- *Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare
- *Water by the Spoonful* by Quiara Alegría Hudes (Dramatists Play Service)
- *Marisol* by José Rivera (Dramatists Play Service)
- *Get Out* by Jordan Peele <https://www.scriptslug.com/script/get-out-2017>

Description and Assessment of Assignments

- **PARTICIPATION (10%):** Your engagement is essential to the learning process. Attendance is requisite to understanding the material, but contribution to class discussions will broaden the course experience.
- **CLASS EXERCISES (15%):** Individual and group exercises will be given throughout the semester. For each unit(s), you will be told which exercises will contribute to this element of your grade.
- **WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT 1 (15%):** 750 words. Prompt will be given regarding material from class 1-2 weeks prior to due date (TBA). Students are encouraged to rewrite papers if they wish, to be turned in within 2 weeks of the hand-back date.
- **MIDTERM (20%):** In-class written exam on the first two texts and concepts covered thus far.
- **WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT 2 (20%):** 750 words. Prompt will be given regarding material from class 1-2 weeks prior to due date (TBA). **This paper will not have the rewrite option. Therefore, if needed, please contact Mr. Montgomery for any individual guidance on paper well before due date.**
- **FINAL (20%):** 1500 words. A comprehensive essay that will be in response to a topic you select from options provided by Mr. Montgomery. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** The Final Examination will take place according to the USC Final Examination Schedule.

Grading Breakdown

Final course grade is determined by the average of all four assignments/examinations, as well as in-class exercises and participation. See grading scale below for more info.

Assessment Tool (assignments)	% of Grade
Participation	10%
Class Exercises	15%
Written Assignment 1	15%
Midterm	20%
Written Assignment 2	20%
Final	20%
TOTAL	100%

Grading Scale

“Excellent” indicates that the student couples clear understanding of the class material with original and creative insight. “Good” means that the student demonstrates a clear understanding of the material. “Average” indicates that the student demonstrates a general understanding of the material but with some gaps. “Poor” indicates that there are identifiable gaps in the student’s understanding of the material. “Failure” is the result of the student not having completed his or her assignments coupled with poor understanding of the material. Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

Excellent: A (4) = 100-94; A- (3.7) = 93-90

Good: B+ (3.3) = 89-86; B (3) = 85-84; B- (2.7) = 83-80

Average: C+ (2.3) = 79-76; C (2) = 75-74; C- (1.7) = 73-70

Poor: the D range (.7-1.7) = 60s; F (0) = 59 and below

Assignment Submission Policy

No late work will be accepted. If illness or emergency interferes with the completion of assignments, contact Mr. Montgomery at least 24 hours before the due date.

Grading Timeline

Grading and feedback to be given within 48-72 hours after hand-in date.

Additional Grading Criteria

When the average 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 good but will be weighted toward the negative end of the scale for those with poor attendance and participation.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Week	Topic	In-class work & Assignments
Week 1	Introduction to Course	Review syllabus
	-----	-----
	Foundations of Theatrical Analysis	READ <i>Wedding Band</i> by next class
Week 2	Action & Structure	-----
	-----	-----
	Given Circumstances	Breakout Exercise: Given Circumstances
Week 3	Character – Objectives & Adaptations	READ <i>Twelfth Night</i> by next class
	-----	-----
	Character – Conflicts & Relationships	Group Exercise: Dissecting Relationships
Week 4	Plot Development – Progressions	-----
	-----	-----
	Plot Development – Structure & Organization	Writing Partner Meeting
Week 5	Questions & Reevaluations – Revisit <i>Wedding Band</i> .	Written Assignment 1 Due
	-----	READ <i>Water By The Spoonful</i> by next class
	Context & Research – Historical Relation, Background of Author, etc.	Breakout Exercise: Begin Digging
Week 6	Context & Research – Bring It All Together	Group Exercise: Discuss, Combine Research & Resources
	-----	-----
	MIDTERM	Written Exam – Topic TBA
Week 7	Exploring Scenes	Breakout Exercise: Scene Breakdown
	-----	-----
	Dialogue – Analyzing Conversational Exchange	Group Exercise: Working Beneath The Dialogue
Week 8	Tempo, Rhythm, & Mood	

Week	Topic	In-class work & Assignments
	Questions & Reevaluations -----	Read <i>Marisol</i> by José Rivera by next class -----
	Style & Design	Breakout Exercise: Imagery
Week 9	Style & Design – Image Review -----	-----
	Nonrealism & Nonlinear Storytelling	
Week 10	Dialogue – Grammar & Punctuation -----	Read <i>Get Out</i> by Jordan Peele by next class -----
	Dialogue – Subtext, Rhythm & Inflection	
Week 11	Casting – Character Breakdown -----	Breakout Exercise: Character Digging -----
	Casting – Character Breakdown	Writing Partner Meeting
Week 12	Questions & Interpretation -----	Written Assignment 2 Due -----
	Interpretation – Understanding Subjectivity	Group Exercise: Sharing Interpretations of Character Objectives
Week 13	Reevaluate Texts – Revisit Plays/Screenplay -----	Group Discussion & Open Dialogue On Previous Texts -----
	Conclusions & Review	
FINAL EXAM	TBA	

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, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following *protected characteristics*: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710

uscsa.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.