

THTR 395m – Drama as Human Relations

62991R/Units: 4

Fall 2020 — MON, WED — 10:00-11:50pm

Location: ONLINE

Instructor: Boni B. Alvarez

Office Hours: by appointment via Zoom

Contact Info: bbalvare@usc.edu

(Please allow 36 hours for a response.)

Course Assistant: Francesca Calvo

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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, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, 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 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 through reading dramatic texts and group presentations on working playwrights.
- This course cultivates the students' abilities for dramatic analysis, dramaturgy, and critical thinking via class discussion and through group projects.
- Through analysis and embodied encounters of dramatic artworks, students learn to identify 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, organizational skills, and presentational skills.

Required Readings

Texts marked with an asterisk (*) have been ordered through the USC Bookstore and can be purchased at usctext.com. All other texts will be distributed via Blackboard.

- Cale, David. *Harry Clarke*
- Fornes, Maria Irene. *Mud*
- Jacobs-Jenkins, Branden. *Gloria*
- *Lew, Michael. *Teenage Dick*
- *Nottage, Lynn. *Sweat*
- *O'Hara, Robert. *Barbecue*
- Park, Jiehae. *Peerless*
- Spiegel, Ruby Rae. *Dry Land*

*Jenkins' *Moonlight* is required viewing – access to a streaming platform may be required (Amazon Prime, Apple iTunes, Netflix, etc).

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 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, and employing empathy.

Weekly Intro – 15%

Students will be divided into groups to present a 15-20 minute introductory profile on one of the playwrights whose work is being studied. Elements that should be explored include biographical information, career and artistic goals & accomplishments, themes & topics in the playwright's body of work. Groups may also include a brief overview of the specific play being studied.

Character Analysis (2) – 15% 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*, Cale's *Harry Clarke* **OR** Jenkins' *Moonlight*
- (2) – Lew's *Teenage Dick*, Jacobs-Jenkins' *Gloria*, Park's *Peerless* **OR** Spiegel's *Dry Land*

Dramaturgical Project – 25%

Dramaturgs serve as invaluable resources during the rehearsal process, particularly in the development of new plays. For each play studied, we will have a dramaturgical team. Teams will field questions that arise during the play readings and provide reports for subsequent class sessions. At the conclusion of play readings, teams will provide other materials (production reviews, critical essays, promotional materials, photos, etc) for the class to consider. While this assignment is research-oriented, it is also a creative assignment. Students will work as a creative team and will earn the same grade for the assignment.

Final Paper – 15%

A final written assignment surveying the works studied over the course of the semester, evaluating overall effectiveness and audience impact. A more detailed prompt will be distributed.

Grading Breakdown

ASSIGNMENT	% of grade
Participation	15
Weekly Intro	15
Dramaturgical Project	25
Character Analysis – 1	15
Character Analysis – 2	15
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

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.

Technology

Camera Policy

This course has a “camera-on” policy. Class dynamics are substantially compromised without the ability to see the people in class. For privacy concerns, students may use virtual backgrounds. If there are other challenges and concerns, please contact the professor regarding other accommodations.

Time Zone Accommodations

USC considers the hours from **7:00am to 10:00pm**, in the local time zone for each student, as reasonable times for students to attend synchronous sessions. Students facing obstacles to their learning as a result of time zone differences should contact the professor.

Recording Online Classes

USC policy requires that all classes conducted online be recorded. ITS has set up Zoom to automatically record and transcribe class sessions, which are then made available in Blackboard. Students should review their responsibilities towards the appropriate use and handling of these recordings under existing SCampus policies regarding class notes (<https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-c/>). Students are not permitted to create their own class recordings. Violations of these policies will be met with the appropriate disciplinary sanction. Zoom recordings will be retained in the cloud until the end of the semester, at which point they will be deleted.

<u>WK</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>WEEKLY SCHEDULE</u>
1 Introduction		
	MON 8/17	Introductions; Syllabus Review
2 Enlightenment & American Dreams		
	<u>WED 8/19</u>	<u>Fornes' <i>Mud</i></u>
	MON 8/24	Fornes' <i>Mud</i>
	<u>WED 8/26</u>	<u>Nottage's <i>Sweat</i></u>
3	MON 8/31	Nottage's <i>Sweat</i>
	<u>WED 9/2</u>	<u>Nottage's <i>Sweat</i></u>
4 Queer Relations		
	MON 9/7	NO CLASS – LABOR DAY
	<u>WED 9/9</u>	<u>Cale's <i>Harry Clarke</i></u>
5	MON 9/14	Cale's <i>Harry Clarke</i>
	<u>WED 9/16</u>	<u>Cale's <i>Harry Clarke</i></u>
6	MON 9/21	Jenkins' MOONLIGHT (2016)
	<u>WED 9/23</u>	<u>Jenkins' MOONLIGHT (2016)</u>
7 Friends With Disabilities		
	MON 9/28	Lew's <i>Teenage Dick</i>
	<u>WED 9/30</u>	<u>Lew's <i>Teenage Dick</i></u>
8	MON 10/5	Lew's <i>Teenage Dick</i>
	<u>WED 10/7</u>	<u>Jacobs-Jenkins' <i>Gloria</i></u>
9	MON 10/12	Jacobs-Jenkins' <i>Gloria</i>
	<u>WED 10/14</u>	<u>Jacobs-Jenkins' <i>Gloria</i></u>
10 Oh, To Be a Woman		
	MON 10/19	Park's <i>Peerless</i>
	<u>WED 10/21</u>	<u>Park's <i>Peerless</i></u>
11	MON 10/26	Park's <i>Peerless</i>
	<u>WED 10/28</u>	<u>Spiegel's <i>Dry Land</i></u>
12	MON 11/2	Spiegel's <i>Dry Land</i>
	<u>WED 11/4</u>	<u>Spiegel's <i>Dry Land</i></u>
13 Narratives - Making It All Up		
	MON 11/9	O'Hara's <i>Barbecue</i>
	WED 11/11	O'Hara's <i>Barbecue</i>
FINAL	MON 11/23	8:00-10:00am FINAL PAPER DUE

DUE - CHARACTER ANALYSIS 1
SAT, 9/26m – 11am

DUE - CHARACTER ANALYSIS 2
SAT, 10/31 – 11am

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