

USC School of Dramatic Arts

THTR-520C Advanced Acting (Solo Perf)
Fall 2020—Tuesday & Thursday—12:00-1:50PM
Location: ONLINE

Instructor: Luis Alfaro, Associate Professor
Office Hours: Mondays
Contact Info: luisalfa@usc.edu/323.369.8306/SLACK

Course Description and Overview

A twice-weekly workshop focusing on creating solo performance work incorporating the body and voice in the process of honing individual skills and talents in the art of writing and performing your own work.

Learning Objectives

Students will write their own material for the stage and read contemporary solo performance work from assigned text as well as research, create and develop material on a weekly basis. Students will participate in the dramaturgy and assistance of their fellow student's work. The class will train together in the process of honing individual talents, through observation and participation. The focus is on learning how to write and perform your own work.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Extreme Exposure: An Anthology of Solo Performance Texts from the Twentieth Century.
Edited by Jo Bonney. Publisher: Theatre Communications Group (TCG):
ISBN: 1-55936-155-7

The Presence of the Actor

Joseph Chaikin

Publisher: Theatre Communications Group (TCG):

ISBN-10: 1559360305 / ISBN-13: 978-1559360302

Towards a Process of Generous Criticism

Liz Lerman

[professor will provide]

Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments

This class is process oriented and it is assumed that finished works will be the result. Students who have completed the requirements of the class should expect strong first drafts, at the very least, of their work. If the Professor chooses to focus on elements within the solo work that might benefit the student more than a finished work, the student will not be penalized for an unfinished draft.

The class is split into three sections –

conceptualization (weeks 1-5), production (weeks 6-10) presentation (weeks 11-15). First part will focus on writing numerous assignments and learning the skills of performance writing. Second part will focus on writing of two solo works. Third part will focus on preparing for culmination performance. The semester will be spent creating material, learning performance technique, training with fellow students and doing research. The course will focus on both finding and exploring a solo voice, using autobiographical exercises, as well as focusing on topical or thematic material developed in collaboration with fellow class members.

Assignments are performed/presented in the classroom (online). Therefore, it is expected that you will bring your completed assignments to class and share them. Assignments must be typed on standard, single space, 12 point and printed out to present and hand in. Towards the end of the semester, drafts will have to be emailed.

It is difficult to qualify an artwork, so the discipline and timing of meeting and turning in assignments is important towards your grade. Turning in assignments late or not at all affect your grade.

FOR SDA Assignments: Monologues will be rehearsed and performed. Students will be required to complete written “homework” assignments on a weekly basis. Students are expected to present their work in class weekly. Students will be expected to focus out of class time for the preparation of their performances.

Students must complete and perform a final monologue to constitute a final exam and to come to the final wrap-up class during the scheduled final exam period, to pass the course. Class assignments will be regarded as written exams.

FOR SDA GRADING CRITERIA: *The grading guidelines shall clearly articulate the specific and expected standards which constitute work of excellent, good, and fair quality with regard to the course in question.*

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.

Grading Breakdown

The SDA GUIDELINES on GRADING as published elsewhere in this handbook are:

- *Each course shall contain at least three assignments, projects, exams, papers or exercises which shall be evaluated during the semester and which shall provide an analytical record of each student's progress in the course.*
- *Attendance shall be weighted at no more than 15% as per University Guidelines. Studio Courses must delineate how participation will be graded (in class exercises, scene study, etc.)*
- *There shall be no unexcused absences.*
- *No late assignments, projects, exams, papers, or exercises shall be accepted unless advance extensions have been arranged between the student and the teacher or unless exceptional circumstances occur.*

School of Theatre classes use the University's grading scale:

96-100%=A

95-91%=A-

88-90%=B+

85-87%=B

81-84%=B-

78-80%=C+

75-77%=C

71-74%=C- [Fail Grade for Graduate Credit]

67-70%=D+

66-64%=D

61-63%=D-

Criteria of evaluation will be based on the individual students' potential for learning and creation, and grades will not be competitively based, i.e. who writes the "best" work in the class.

Students are expected to show up on time; present assignments when they are due and actively participate with in-class dramaturgical analysis and discussion of fellow class work. Class time is impossible to make up - one must be there to participate. Reliability and enthusiasm count.

Grade Evaluation

In-Class Participation/Dramaturgical Analysis/Writing Assignments	50%
Midterm	10%
Final Performance	30%
Final Exam	10%

Criteria of evaluation will be based on the individual students' potential for learning and creation, and grades will not be competitively based, i.e. who writes or performs the "best" work in the class.

Students are expected to show up on time; present assignments when they are due and are actively participating in the in-class dramaturgical analysis and discussion of fellow classmates presented work. Class time is impossible to make up - one must be there to participate. Reliability and enthusiasm count.

Final Examination Date:

Thursday, November 19, 2020 from 11:00AM-1:00PM ONLINE

***NOTE:** All classes must meet for the Final Examination as established by the University. You may not hold your final examination on the last day of classes.*

Culmination Performance

TBA

Holidays

First Day of Class, Tuesday, August 18, 2020

Labor Day, Monday, September 7, 2020

Last Day of Class, Thursday, November 12, 2020

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Week #1 - Getting to Know You

[First step in writing about yourself. Assignment: “The Manifesto”, a list of at least 10 events/facts that make up the character of you. What do you believe? Thinking about the complicated/complex person you are.]

Week #2 - Let's Talk

[Critical response process. Hand out – “Towards a Process of Critical Response” by Liz Lerman. Step one: affirmation/the pop/what did you like? Step two: criticism in the form of a question. Step three: opinion/observation (do you want to hear it?) Assignment: “Children’s Story”, using metaphor to understand the poetry in your play. Write a children’s story about a relationship you destroyed, something complicated that allows metaphor to explain.]

Week #3 - Letting Go

[Sound & Movement exercise. Listening to the audience, learning how to build energy and go with what is available. Assignment: “Worst Solo Performance Ever” a one-minute performance of the worst solo performance you can think of, using conceptualization, realizing that everything is interesting. Write it down on a piece a paper, let’s read it after and evaluate the performance on paper and in person.]

Week #4 - Thinking Outside of Ourselves

[Blind walk with a partner - sharing, vulnerability and trust. Tell your partner a secret that no one knows about you. Assignment: “Blueprint”, draw a blueprint of the place you call home. Label two areas with the following – safest place in the house, scariest place in the house. Write a memory about either, at least half a page.]

Week #5 – Working Together

[Assigning mentor partners, pair up with one other person in the class who will lead your dramaturgy sessions and be your creative partner for the rest of the semester. Assignment: “The Pitch”, tell your partner your idea for your World Piece. What do you want to say, how do you want to say it? Critical session observation for the class with only your partner responding.]

Week #6 – First Draft

[Introducing your first major piece for the class, critical response session led by your partner. Assignment: “Unpack”, add at least one full page to your piece. Where do you need to further a thought or explain a concept or idea? What is missing?]

Week #7 – Learning from Others

[First group presentation. Lisa Kron. ‘2.5 Minute Ride’, writing about family and history. Assignment: “The Walking Exercise”, building ensemble, listening, walking in a defined space and building the energy together. Fill the space that needs you the most. Continue group dramaturgy session, led by partners.]

Week #8 – *Getting to the Core*

[Second group presentation. Brenda Wong Aoki. 'Random Acts', writing about culture and ritual. Understanding the poetry of your own writing, the tension in your own story. The story you 'need' to tell versus the story you 'want' to tell, what are the differences? Continue group dramaturgy session, led by partners.]

Week #9

[Third group presentation. John Leguizamo. 'Freak', writing through humor. Add a page to your story. Assignment: "Personal Piece", writing the story you need to tell. Two pages max. Focus and clarity, thinking about metaphor.]

Week #10

[Fourth group presentation. Anna Deveare Smith. 'Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992' writing in the present tense. First group presentation of Personal Pieces along with dramaturgy session. Assignment: "Editing" add two pages to your piece. Expanding on thoughts, but clarifying your story.]

Week #11

[Fifth group presentation. Reno. 'Reno Finds Her Mind', writing with energy. Continue group dramaturgy session, led by partners.]

Week #12

[Sixth group presentation. Dael Orlandersmith. 'Monster', the poem as story. Edit one page out of your story. Continue group dramaturgy session, led by partners.]

Week #13

[Continue group dramaturgy session, led by partners.]

Week #14

[Continue group dramaturgy session, led by partners.]

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

Luis Alfaro is a Los Angeles born and raised Chicano writer known for his work in poetry, theatre, short fiction, performance and journalism. Luis spent six seasons as the Playwright-in-Residence at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (2013-2019) and a member of the Playwright's Ensemble at Chicago's Victory Gardens Theatre (2013-2020). He has been associated with the Ojai Playwrights Conference since 2002 and is currently a producer of the festival. He has had multiple productions at the Magic Theatre in San Francisco, The Public Theatre in New York and Playwrights' Arena in Los Angeles. Luis is the recipient of a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship. Last year he was awarded the PEN America/Laura Pels International Foundation Theater Award for a Master Dramatist, The United States Artist Fellowship and the Ford Foundation's Art of Change Fellowship. His plays and performances include *Electricidad*, *Oedipus El Rey*, *Mojada*, *Delano* and *Body of Faith*. Luis spent over two decades in the Los Angeles poetry community, and toured North and Latin America as a Performance Artist. He is a professor at the University of Southern California. An anthology of his plays, *The Greek Plays of Luis Alfaro*, will be released in September by Methuen Drama/Bloomsbury Press, and licensed by Dramatists Play Service, Inc. He currently holds commissions with Denver Center, Geffen Playhouse, South Coast Repertory and Victory Gardens Theatre. He is currently part of the artist collective at Center Theatre Group.