

USC School of Dramatic Arts

THTR-529A: Textual Studies for Performance
Fall 2020—Wednesdays/Fridays—12:00PM-1:50PM
Location: ONLINE

Instructor: Luis Alfaro, Associate Professor
Office: JEF Upstairs #207A
(Green building corner Jefferson and McClintock)
Office Hours: By appointment/Mondays
Contact Info: luisalfa@usc.edu/323.369.8306/SLACK

Course Description and Overview

A twice-weekly workshop focusing on the textual reading of dramatic texts as a fundamental tool for rehearsal and performance. We will focus on the essential elements of plays through weekly assignments, readings of scenes, and extensive classroom analysis and dramaturgy.

Learning Objectives

Students will read plays, write their own material about and for the stage, as well as research material. Students will participate in the dramaturgy of new plays. The class will work together in the process of honing individual talents, through observation and participation. The focus is on learning how to take a play and prepare for performance. We will examine character, plot and the dynamics of what make a good literary dramatic text and production. We will engage in dramaturgical response using the landmark essay "Towards A Process of Critical Response" as a base for conversation and suggestion.

Goals

Acquiring a reading skill that allows for the performer to engage a play for building a character, exploring the elements of a play to successfully interpret and translate a dramatic text.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

The Presence of the Actor

Joseph Chaikin

Publisher: Theatre Communications Group (TCG):

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

Towards a Process of Critical Response

Liz Lerman

[professor will provide]

Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments

This class is process oriented. The semester will be spent reading and creating material, learning technique and doing research. The course will focus on both finding and exploring the individual artist's voice and talents to build on an artist's strengths.

Assignments are presented in the classroom. Therefore, it is expected that you will bring your completed assignments to class and share them. It is difficult to qualify an artwork, so the discipline and timing of meeting and turning in assignments is important towards your grade.

FOR SDA Assignments: Students will be required to complete "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.

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)*
- *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 performs the 'best' 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 mates work. Class time is impossible to make up - one must be there to participate. Reliability and enthusiasm count.

Grade Evaluation

<u>Student Responsibility</u>	<u>Point Value</u>	<u>% of Grade</u>
Weekly Class Dramaturgy	100	50%
'Expression' Papers	100	30%
Mid Term Check-In	100	10%
Final Exam	100	10%

Semester Suggested Plays

Richard & Jane & Dick & Sally by Noah Diaz

The Refugee Hotel by Carmen Aguirre

Karina Played Pachanga Music (the dallas slasher marathon) by Israel Lopez Reyes

Mud by Maria Irene Fornes

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Week #1 – *It's a Bust*

[Setting up the room. Meeting the professor. Ways of working.]

Week #2 – *Let's Talk / Play #1*

[Critical response process. "Towards a Process of Critical Response" by Liz Lerman.

Step One: *Statements of Meaning* - Responders state what was meaningful, evocative, interesting, exciting, and/or striking in the work they have just witnessed. An affirmation/The Pop/What did you like?

Step Two: *Artist as Questioner* – What were you hearing? Showing my cards.

Step Three: *Neutral Questions* - Responders ask neutral questions about the work, and the artist responds. Questions are neutral when they do not have an opinion couched in them. Criticism in the form of a question.

Taking the trust walk with a partner in the class. Interviewing them. Writing your partners story in a monologue.]

Week #3 – Reading of Play / Discussion / Partner presentations: First Day of Rehearsal

Week #4 – Reading of Play / Discussion / Partner presentations: First Day of Rehearsal

Week #5 – Reading of Play / Discussion / Partner presentations: First Day of Rehearsal

Week #6 – Reading of Play / Discussion / Partner presentations: First Day of Rehearsal

Week #7 – Reading of Play / Discussion / Partner presentations: First Day of Rehearsal

Week #8 – Reading of Play / Discussion / Partner presentations: First Day of Rehearsal

Week #9 – Reading of Play / Discussion / Partner presentations: First Day of Rehearsal

Week #10 - Reading of Play / Discussion / Partner presentations: First Day of Rehearsal

Week #11 – Reading of Play / Discussion / Partner presentations: First Day of Rehearsal

Week #12 – Reading of Play / Discussion / Partner presentations: First Day of Rehearsal

Week #13 – Reading of Play / Discussion / Partner presentations: First Day of Rehearsal

Week #14 – Reading of Play / Discussion / Partner presentations: First Day of Rehearsal

Week #15 – Evaluation session. Dramaturgy discussion.

Final Examination Date:

Friday, November 20, 2020 from 11:00AM-1:00PM ONLINE

NOTE: All undergraduate 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.

Academic Calendar/Holidays

First Day of Class, Wednesday, August 19, 2020

Labor Day, Monday, September 7, 2020

Last Day of Class, Friday, November 13, 2020

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, popularly known as a "genius grant", presented to people who have demonstrated expertise and exceptional creativity in their respective fields. 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 a member of the artist collective at Center Theatre Group.