

USC School of Dramatic Arts

THTR-456: Latinx Theatre

Spring 2021—Tuesdays/Thursdays—10:00AM-11:50AM

Location: ONLINE

Instructor: Luis Alfaro, Associate Professor

Office: ONLINE

Office Hours: By appointment, Mondays & Wednesdays

Contact Info: luisalfa@usc.edu/323.369.8306.cel

Course Description and Overview

A twice-weekly workshop focusing on how Latinx/@ identity is shaped within dramatic literature and performance. Topics such as violence, memory, sexuality and the Latinx/@ body onstage will all be incorporated into the study of Latinx/@ theatre and performance from the 1980s to the present. Ultimately this course asks the following questions: What makes a play a Latinx/@ play? What are the primary markers of the genre of Latinx/@ Theatre? How is *Latinidad* depicted both inside and outside that genre? The class will look at both dramatic literature and performance. Interviews with living authors of work we are reading will be part of this course.

Learning Objectives

Identify key Latinx/@ playwrights, their works and themes, and characteristics of Latinx/@ theatre and performance. Interpret key dramaturgical elements used to construct *Latinidad*. Analyze how race, gender, sexuality, citizenship, and generation are relevant in the dramatic depiction of Latinx/@s. Be able to communicate perspectives and evaluation in a clear and organized manner in class discussions and writing.

Goals

Students will write and present individual and group research papers on subjects, themes, ideas from the plays read in the semester.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Destiny of Desire, Karen Zacarias, (2018)

Karina Played Pachanga Music, Israel Lopez Reyes, (2017)

Water by the Spoonful, Quiara Hudes Alegria, (2010)

Anna in the Tropics, Nilo Cruz, (2003)

Mud, Maria Irene Fornes, (1985)

Zoot Suit, Luis Valdez, (1979)

Alma, Benjamin Benne (2017)

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 students will have read all the plays, met all the visiting artists. Finished papers and presentations will be the result. If the Professor chooses to focus on elements within the play that might benefit the student more than a finished paper, the student will not be penalized for an unfinished presentation.

The class is split into THREE sections – conceptualization (weeks 1-7), production (weeks 8-12) presentation (weeks 13-15). The First Section will focus on numerous writing assignments and learning the dimensions of Latinx playwriting and artmaking. The Second Section will focus on reading plays and meeting artists. The Third Section will focus on the subjects of the works and how they create culture and community.

Assignments are presented in the classroom online. Therefore, it is expected that you will bring your completed assignments and share them. Assignments should be in standard, single space, 12 pt. Regular submission deadline will be Sundays at MIDNIGHT.

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, will definitely affect your grade.

FOR SDA Assignments: 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 a final exam and to come to the final wrap-up class during the scheduled final exam period, in order to pass the course. You cannot leave early. If you have a conflicting final exam, you should let me know at the beginning of the semester. 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 collaborators 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	25%
Mid Term Exam	100	15%
Final Exam	100	25%
Character/Environment Assignment	100	10%
Report on play assignment	100	25%

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Week #1 – *It's a Bust*

[Setting up the room. Creating a list of collective class agreements on how we want to work as a collaborative class. What are your personal goals for this course? What can you offer to the larger cohort of collaborators you will be working with? What are the ways you want to work in? How can we listen and respond to each other?]

Week #2 - *Let's Talk*

[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.]

Week #3 – *Reading Plays on Tuesday / Meeting the Artist on Thursday*

[Reading a contemporary play live in class. Having a preliminary dramaturgical conversation about the work. Deciding the research elements we will explore. Make group and partner assignments for the research teams. Meeting the artist to interrogate the work and its creation. Each meet the artist will be led by a student.]

Week #4 – *Reading Plays on Tuesday / Meeting the Artist on Thursday*

[Reading a contemporary play live in class. Having a preliminary dramaturgical conversation about the work. Deciding the research elements we will explore. Make group and partner assignments for the research teams. Meeting the artist to interrogate the work and its creation. Each meet the artist will be led by a student.]

Week #5 – *Reading Plays on Tuesday / Meeting the Artist on Thursday*

[Reading a contemporary play live in class. Having a preliminary dramaturgical conversation about the work. Deciding the research elements we will explore. Make group and partner assignments for the research teams. Meeting the artist to interrogate the work and its creation. Each meet the artist will be led by a student.]

Week #6 – *Reading Plays on Tuesday / Meeting the Artist on Thursday*

[Reading a contemporary play live in class. Having a preliminary dramaturgical conversation about the work. Deciding the research elements we will explore. Make group and partner assignments for the research teams. Meeting the artist to interrogate the work and its creation. Each meet the artist will be led by a student.]

Week #7 – *Reading Plays on Tuesday / Meeting the Artist on Thursday*

[Reading a contemporary play live in class. Having a preliminary dramaturgical conversation about the work. Deciding the research elements we will explore. Make group and partner assignments for the research teams. Meeting the artist to interrogate the work and its creation. Each meet the artist will be led by a student.]

Week #8 – Reading Plays on Tuesday / Meeting the Artist on Thursday

[Reading a contemporary play live in class. Having a preliminary dramaturgical conversation about the work. Deciding the research elements we will explore. Make group and partner assignments for the research teams. Meeting the artist to interrogate the work and its creation. Each meet the artist will be led by a student.]

Week #9 – Reading Plays on Tuesday / Meeting the Artist on Thursday

[Reading a contemporary play live in class. Having a preliminary dramaturgical conversation about the work. Deciding the research elements we will explore. Make group and partner assignments for the research teams. Meeting the artist to interrogate the work and its creation. Each meet the artist will be led by a student.]

Week #10 – Reading Plays on Tuesday / Meeting the Artist on Thursday

[Reading a contemporary play live in class. Having a preliminary dramaturgical conversation about the work. Deciding the research elements we will explore. Make group and partner assignments for the research teams. Meeting the artist to interrogate the work and its creation. Each meet the artist will be led by a student.]

Week #11 – Reading Plays on Tuesday / Meeting the Artist on Thursday

[Reading a contemporary play live in class. Having a preliminary dramaturgical conversation about the work. Deciding the research elements we will explore. Make group and partner assignments for the research teams. Meeting the artist to interrogate the work and its creation. Each meet the artist will be led by a student.]

Week #12 – Reading Plays on Tuesday / Meeting the Artist on Thursday

[Reading a contemporary play live in class. Having a preliminary dramaturgical conversation about the work. Deciding the research elements we will explore. Make group and partner assignments for the research teams. Meeting the artist to interrogate the work and its creation. Each meet the artist will be led by a student.]

Week #13 – Reading Plays on Tuesday / Meeting the Artist on Thursday

[Reading a contemporary play live in class. Having a preliminary dramaturgical conversation about the work. Deciding the research elements we will explore. Make group and partner assignments for the research teams. Meeting the artist to interrogate the work and its creation. Each meet the artist will be led by a student.]

Week #14 – Reading Plays on Tuesday / Meeting the Artist on Thursday

[Reading a contemporary play live in class. Having a preliminary dramaturgical conversation about the work. Deciding the research elements we will explore. Make group and partner

assignments for the research teams. Meeting the artist to interrogate the work and its creation. Each meet the artist will be led by a student.]

Week #15 – Final Class Presentation
[Presentation of final research paper.]

Course Notes

Announcements and course assignments will be posted to Blackboard as well as given in class. Students must check USC email accounts and Blackboard regularly, which means at least once every 24 hours for email, and at least once a week for Blackboard or when directed by the instructor (these come as Blackboard notifications via USC email). Please keep up-to-date with your class-related emails and Blackboard postings.

You are expected to attend all classes except in the case of doctor-documented illness or family crisis.

Please do not be late; if you are tardy, your weekly assessment grade is compromised.

Please do not have computers open in class unless I ask you to do so for a specific exercise. Use of computers will constitute lack of participation.

Please do not use cell phones in class for any reason.

Please do not have personal conversations during instruction time because it interferes with the presentation of other students' work and with classroom instruction.

Final Examination Date:

Tuesday, May 11, 2021 from 8:00AM-10:00AM 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.

Holidays

First Day of Class, Tuesday, January 19, 2021

Wellness Day, Tuesday, March 23, 2021

Wellness Day, Thursday, April 22, 2021

Last Day of Class, Thursday, April 29, 2021

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 an associate professor of dramatic writing at the USC School of Dramatic Arts. He has been working in theatre, performance, poetry and journalism since 1982. A multi-disciplined artist, he also works as a director, curator, producer, educator and community organizer.

A Chicano born and raised in the Pico-Union district of downtown Los Angeles, Alfaro is the recipient of a John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation fellowship, popularly known as a “genius grant,” awarded to people who have demonstrated expertise and exceptional creativity in their respective fields.

He is the first playwright-in-residence in the 87-year history of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the largest repertory company in the United States, serving for six seasons (2013-19) through the generous support of the Andrew S. Mellon Foundation. His work at OSF included curating a writer’s retreat (Brown Swan Lab), conference (Latino Play Project) and as a member of the artistic staff.

In 2018, he was awarded the PEN/America/Laura Pels International Foundation for Theatre Award for a Master American Dramatist; the United States Artists Fellowship, through the generous support of the Doris Duke Foundation; the Ford Foundation Art of Change Fellowship and the Annenberg Artist-in-Residence for the city of Santa Monica.

He is also a Joyce Foundation Fellow. Alfaro is the only playwright to have received two Kennedy Center ‘Fund for New American Play’ awards in the same year.

In 2017, *Oedipus el Rey*, was part of the 50th anniversary season off-Broadway at The Public Theatre in New York City with a sold-out run, extended three times and a Critic’s Pick of the New York Times. This season he returned to the Public with *Mojada*, his critically-acclaimed adaptation of *Medea*, which received an extended run.

His plays have been seen throughout the U.S., Canada, Europe and include *Mojada: A Medea in Los Angeles* (Portland Center Stage, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Getty Villa-Malibu [Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle and Los Angeles Ovation Award, Best Play], Victory Gardens Theatre–Chicago [Jefferson Award, Best New Play], and upcoming at Portland Center Stage); *St. Jude* (Victory Gardens Theatre-Chicago, Under The Radar West @ Kirk Douglas Theatre-Los Angeles, South Coast Repertory-Costa Mesa); *Delano* (Magic Theatre-San Francisco); *Painting in Red* (Playwrights Arena-Los Angeles); *Alleluia the Road* (Campo Santo/California Shakespeare-San Francisco); *Aesop* in Rancho Cucamonga (Lewis Family Playhouse-Rancho Cucamonga); *Bruja* (Magic Theatre-San Francisco, Borderlands Theatre-Tucson); *Oedipus el Rey* (Getty Villa-Malibu, Magic Theater-San Francisco [Glickman Prize, Bay Area Theatre Critics Award], Boston Court Theatre-Pasadena [L.A. Weekly Award, Adaptation], Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company-Washington DC, Borderlands Theatre-Tucson, Pangea Theatre-Minneapolis, Miracle Theatre Group-Portland, Victory Gardens Theatre-Chicago [Best of the Year: Chicago Tribune, Huffington Post, Chicago Sun-Times, Chicago Reader], eSe Teatro-Seattle, Dallas Theatre Center, San Diego Repertory); *Hero* (Playwrights Arena-Los Angeles, Teatro Vision-San

Jose); *Electricidad* (Goodman Theater-Chicago, Mark Taper Forum-Los Angeles [Published-American Theatre Magazine, Backstage Garland Award], Teatro Vision-San Jose, Sacramento Theatre Company, San Pedro Playhouse-San Antonio, Teatro Nuevo Mexico-Albuquerque, Pacifica Spindrift Players, Bilingual Foundation of the Arts-Los Angeles, Artes de la Rosa-Fort Worth, Teatro Vagon-San Francisco, Teatro Espejo-Sacramento; 32 productions); *Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner* (Teatro Vista-Chicago, Synchronicity-Atlanta, Hartford Stage, Oregon Shakespeare Festival); *Body of Faith* (Cornerstone Theater Company-Los Angeles [PEN Center Award for Drama]); *Straight as a Line* (Goodman Theatre-Chicago, 3-Legged Race-Minneapolis, Playwrights Arena-Los Angeles, Primary Stages-New York, National Theatre of Romania [two-year run], Edinburgh Festival-Scotland); *Bitter Homes and Gardens* (Latino Chicago, Playwrights Arena-Los Angeles); *Ladybird* (La Jolla Playhouse-POP Tour); *Black Butterfly, Jaguar Girl, Pinata Woman and Other Super Hero Girls, Like Me* (Smithsonian Museum, The Kennedy Center, Actors' Gang-Los Angeles, Coterie Theatre-Kansas City, Mark Taper Forum-Los Angeles, East L.A. Repertory, Working Classroom-Albuquerque).

His solo performance work has been seen throughout the U.S., England and Mexico, including the Institute of Contemporary Art in London, The Getty Center, Boston Center for the Arts, The Goodman Theatre, Hirshorn Museum at the Smithsonian, South Coast Repertory, Oregon Shakespeare Festival and X-Teresa Performance Space in Mexico City.

Alfaro was a resident artist at the Mark Taper Forum for 10 years. He served as director of new play development, where he produced and developed over 150 new plays in the Taper Too, New Work Festival and Next Step seasons as well as managed the laboratory work of the company.

He has taught throughout the country and is now an associate professor with tenure in the MFA Dramatic Writing Program at the University of Southern California (USC). Previously, he taught at California Institute of the Arts (Cal-Arts).

He has an Emmy-nominated short film, *Chicanismo* [Best Experimental Film, San Antonio CineFestival, Best Short, CineAccion San Francisco] and an award-winning recording, down town, on SST/New Alliance Records [Best Spoken-Word Release, National Association of Independent Record Distributors].