

THTR 125: Text Studies for Production

Units: 4

Fall 2020 – Mon/Wed – 2-3:50pm

Location: GFS 220

Instructor: Matthew 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

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.

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.scriptsug.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.

Sharing of course materials outside of the learning environment

USC policy prohibits sharing of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

SCampus Section 11.12(B)

Distribution or use of notes or recordings based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study is a violation of the USC Student Conduct Code. This includes, but is not limited to, providing materials for distribution by services publishing class notes. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the Internet or via any other media. (See Section C.1 Class Notes Policy).

Course evaluation

Course evaluation occurs at the end of the semester university-wide. It is an important review of students' experience in the class. You should expect to receive an email update once the system has launched to provide your feedback on this course. In addition, you are always welcome to connect with with me as the instructor to offer any feedback on the course.

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.

EDI @SDA: Professional Development/Mandatory EDI Training

Wednesday, September 15, 2021

As part of our EDI initiatives and call to action, some workshops will be offered to faculty and staff and to students. Competencies that will be included: Anti-Racism (Faculty/Staff) and Equity Mindedness (Faculty/Staff), and then Theater Intimacy & Building Cultures of Consent (Students, Faculty/Staff). More details will follow. NOTE: All SDA classes will be cancelled to support involvement in this effort.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Week	Topic	In-class work & Assignments
Week 1 8/23 & 8/25	Introduction to Course ----- Foundations of Theatrical Analysis	Review syllabus ----- READ <i>Twelfth Night</i> by next class
Week 2 8/30 & 9/1	Action & Structure ----- Given Circumstances	----- Group Exercise: Given Circumstances
Week 3 9/6 & 9/8	LABOR DAY – NO CLASS ----- Character – Objectives & Adaptations	----- Group Exercise: Dissecting Relationships READ <i>Wedding Band</i> by next class

Week	Topic	In-class work & Assignments
Week 4 9/13 & 9/15	Character – Conflicts & Relationships ----- EDI TRAINING – NO CLASS	Writing Partner Meeting -----
Week 5 9/20 & 9/22	Plot Development – Progressions ----- Plot Development – Structure & Org.	Group Discussion ----- Group Discussion
Week 6 9/27 & 9/29	Context & Research – Historical Relation, Background of Author, etc. Review <i>Twelfth Night</i> ----- Context & Research – Bring It All Together	Group Exercise: Begin Digging Written Assignment 1 Due. READ <i>Water By The Spoonful</i> by next class ----- Group Exercise: Discuss, Combine Research & Resources
Week 7 10/4 & 10/6	MIDTERM ----- Exploring Scenes	Written Exam – Topic TBA ----- Group Exercise: Scene Breakdown
Week 8 10/11 & 10/13	Exploring Scenes ----- Dramaturgical Discussion	Group Exercise: Scene Breakdown ----- Group Exercise: Scene Breakdown
Week 9 10/18 & 10/20	Questions & Reevaluations ----- Dialogue – Analyzing Conversational Exchange	Read <i>Marisol</i> by José Rivera by next class ----- Group Exercise: Beneath The Dialogue
Week 10 10/25 & 10/27	Tempo, Rhythm, & Mood Questions & Reevaluations ----- Style & Design	Group Exercise ----- Group Exercise: Imagery
Week 11 11/1 & 11/3	Style & Design – Image Review ----- Analyzing the Screenplay	Read <i>Get Out</i> by Jordan Peele by next class -----

Week	Topic	In-class work & Assignments
Week 12 11/8 & 11/10	Dialogue – Grammar & Punctuation ----- Dialogue – Subtext, Rhythm & Inflection	-----
Week 13 11/15 & 11/17	Casting – Character Breakdown ----- Casting – Character Breakdown	Group Exercise: Character Digging ----- Writing Partner Meeting
Week 14 11/22 & 11/24	Questions & Interpretation ----- Interpretation – Understanding Subjectivity	Written Assignment 2 Due ----- Group Exercise: Sharing Interpretations of Character Objectives
Week 15 11/29 & 12/1	Reevaluate Texts – Revisit Plays/Screenplay ----- Conclusions & Review	Group Discussion & Open Dialogue On Previous Texts -----
FINAL EXAM	FRIDAY, DECEMBER 10th 2PM-4PM	

SDA PRODUCTIONS, ISPS, AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

SDA productions, ISPs and Extracurricular Activities* will not excuse you from any class work. There will be no exceptions made for absences in class, missed or delayed assignments, homework or lack of class participation resulting from your involvement in any of the above. Your grade will reflect your work in this class, independent from work in any other class or activity.

*Activities that have been officially sanctioned by the larger university (such as marching band, song girls, or varsity sports) are exempt. You must submit official documentation to your professor regarding your participation in an event prior to your absence.

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 GFS 120 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) 814-4618 (Vidoe Phone), (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.

Health and Participation in Class

You are expected to complete your Trojan Check screener daily and, as your instructor, I may ask you to show your daily screening in class. Your health and safety, and the health and safety of your peers, are my top priorities. If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19, or if you discover that you have been in close contact with others who have symptoms or who have tested positive, you must follow the instructions on Trojan Check. My hope is that if you are feeling ill or if you have been exposed to someone with the virus, you will stay home to protect others. I will ensure that you can continue to participate in class remotely so that your education is not disrupted.

To reduce the spread of COVID-19, USC requires that face coverings (masks) be worn indoors including in classrooms. Face coverings must cover your nose and mouth and be worn throughout the class session. A mask with a valve is not considered an adequate face covering and should not be used, as it can expel exhaled air, increasing the risk to others. Eating or drinking during class is prohibited because of the risk posed by removing your mask for these activities. Failure to comply with these requirements will result in your being asked to leave the classroom immediately. Requests for accommodations related to the face covering and eating/drinking policies should be directed to the Office for Student Accessibility Services (<https://osas.usc.edu/>).

SDA Student Support & Reporting Form:

To facilitate a supportive environment of accountability, SDA has created an internal system of reporting for students to address issues/concerns and to offer feedback or suggestions for improvement. This mechanism provides a pathway for reporting and offering feedback without fear of retaliation or judgment. Any submission filed through this form will be reviewed and processed accordingly through SDA Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

To file a report, please visit: <https://bit.ly/SDAstudentreporting>

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 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.

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 Student Accessibility Services - (213) 740-0776

<https://osas.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 Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710

campussupport.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.