

GESM 111: Eco-Theatre – Art, Science, and Bio-Regionalism in Contemporary Plays

Spring 2022 Monday & Wednesday 12 – 1:50

Location: CPA 258

Instructor: Paula Cizmar

Office: JEF 201, 950 W. Jefferson, Los Angeles 90089

Office Hours: Available: Wed 2 – 5 pm; Thurs 2 - 4 pm; please note that office hours are by appointment only and are only online; please contact me via email or phone at least 24 hours in advance to set up a Zoom appointment.

Contact Info: cizmar@usc.edu; 323.376.1216 mobile

www.paulacizmar.com

ITHelp: USC Information Technology Services

<http://itservices.usc.edu>; School of Dramatic Arts – Mr. Prakash

Shirke. Contact Info: shirke@usc.edu; 213.740.1288.

Alert 2022: This syllabus contains policies that take covid and the variants into consideration. In brief: Remote first week. Masks are required in class. No food or drink in class. See below for more details.

Course Description and Overview

Theatre, nature, science, and social issues converge in this course which explores the many ways plays and live performance are dealing with the environmental crisis. The class looks at climate change, declining natural resources, extinction, and environmental (in)justice. Along the way, the class will investigate related concerns such as science denial, science fraud, political obstacles, and historical treatment of the issues. How did different groups view conservation—if they thought of it at all? What is wilderness? How did we set out to “tame nature”? How does industry/technology threaten the health of the earth? What are the alternative positive-action views of the deep ecology movement? How is environmental justice a human rights issue? Theatre has responded to these topics in various ways and in diverse genres—such as street theatre, dystopian futurism, children’s theatre, and reality-based work—and students will be invited to create their own responses as well.

Learning Objectives

Using plays and performance pieces about the environment as a springboard, this course encourages an understanding of the relationship of humanity and nature and addresses the environmental crisis. The specific learning objectives include: *Analysis, Connectivity, Engagement, and Making*. (1) *Analysis*: Students will read and interpret plays that use fictional stories to address specific environmental issues, while at the same time researching the scientific, sociopolitical, and economic background of the problems enumerated in the theatrical works. They will synthesize the various topics and viewpoints; assess the playwriting in both aesthetic and sociopolitical terms; and analyze the development of both the issues and the artistic response. Approaches that differ by gender, culture, generation, and nation will be investigated and the effectiveness of

various types of theatre will be viewed. (2) *Connectivity*: Students will not only be encouraged to begin making connections between standard-issue basics of survival—such as the availability of tap water and its sources, and the troubled history of the sources—but they will also begin to recognize the interconnectivity of humans and all of nature. They will achieve awareness of the relationship between the actions of one region and the effects on surrounding regions; and they will gain experience in how theatre and art are connected to the community—and, indeed, can help create community. (3) *Engagement*: Project-based learning will be a component of the class; students will be presented with various scenarios via the plays and the nonfictional resources and will be asked to propose a project in which they can actively engage in problem-solving or awareness-raising. Students will engage as members of a team. (4) *Making*: Students will not only read and investigate dramatic literature and nonfiction, but will also be provided with the strategies to create their own fictional or nonfictional response. Options are enumerated under “Final Project” below. In addition, collaboratively, the class will create a blog that deals with theatre, art, and the environment.

Prerequisite(s): None

Co-Requisite (s): None

Concurrent Enrollment: None

Recommended Preparation: Reading/viewing the plays and works listed in Required Readings and Supplementary Materials.

Please note: This class is GREEN. This means that we will save on time, energy, and paper. You will not print your work; instead, you will present your work via the in-class projection system or via Blackboard. You will not print written assignments; instead, you'll turn in a PDF of all documents (and other types of projects) electronically. All handouts and course materials will be paperless, available online via Blackboard.

Technical Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

It is necessary for each student to become adept in the use of Blackboard and Zoom. See the links below for information on how to use this technology.

USC Technology Support Links

[Zoom information for students](#)

[Blackboard help for students](#)

[Software available to USC Campus](#)

USC technology rental program

If we need to deliver class online: We realize that attending classes online and completing coursework remotely requires access to technology that not all students possess. If you need resources to successfully participate in your classes, such as a laptop or internet hotspot, you may be eligible for the university's equipment rental program. Check with the tech support services listed above.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Plays in alphabetic order by author:

FORWARD. Chantal Bilodeau.

THE CHISERA. Paula Cizmar. (available via PDF from instructor)

HURRICANE DIANE. Madeline George.

THE CHILDREN. Lucy Kirkwood.

SONG OF EXTINCTION. EM Lewis

HEROES AND SAINTS. Cherrie Moraga

MR. BURNS. Anne Washburn.

Nonfiction:

THE SIXTH EXTINCTION. Elizabeth Kolbert.

The assigned plays/books are available for purchase in the bookstore or on Amazon.

Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments

Work to be completed includes reading, viewing, critical analyses, a sample proposal, and a creative project.

Assignment	% of Grade
1. Assignment 1	15%
2. Midterm Assignment (Sample Proposal)	20%
3. Assignment 2	20%
4. Final Project	20%
5. In class exercises	10%
6. Participation	15%
TOTAL:	100%

Grading criteria: *The quality of work in this class is determined by the thoroughness of the effort, the ongoing process, and the imagination/critical thought displayed. The rubric for determining the quality of work for the Final Project is discussed below in detailed description.*

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.

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: D+ = 69 – 66; D = 65-64; D = 63 - 60 (1.3) = 60s; F (0) = 59 and below

•“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 class material; “Failure” is the result of the student not having completed his or her assignments coupled with poor understanding of the material.

- 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 and will be weighted toward the negative end of the scale for those with poor attendance and participation.

Grading Timeline

Please bear in mind that you earn your grade based on the timely completion of your work, plus the quality of your work. Late assignments are marked down due to missed deadline.

Assignments are accepted only within one week of due date. After that, they are considered a missed assignment, which counts as zero.

Assignment Submission Policy

Assignments will be presented in class and/or submitted as PDFs, depending on the assignment. **Note:** *The SDA GUIDELINES on GRADING state that 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. Please communicate with me if you find yourself in this situation.*

Information about Assignments to be Graded

Your grade will be based on your completion of multiple components: assigned reading and video presentations; class exercises and discussion (including pop quizzes if necessary); two main assignments—Assignment 1 and Assignment 2-- which will involve student research; a Midterm project (which is a Sample Proposal for an environmental awareness engagement project); a Final Project (a creative project—see details); and participation. Participation includes class exercises, discussion, providing feedback on other students’ work. In addition, as a group collaboration, the class will create a blog that deals with theatre, art, and the environment. Each student will be responsible for at least two short blog posts (100-250 words each).

Sample Proposal (for the Midterm). Please note that the Sample Proposal will be a written proposal for a potential project designed to raise awareness about an environmental issue. Each class member will be assigned to a team, and that team will plan some sort of event that would potentially use art or performance to draw attention to an environmental crisis and the actions people can take to help remedy the situation. The proposal will include a mission statement, a plan, and a budget. (This is a proposal only; you will not be *required* to construct the event itself. However, it would be of additional benefit if we were able to actually execute one of these projects; perhaps we can seek a partner to help put at least one of these proposals into practice?) Guidelines for the Midterm will be provided on Blackboard.

Final Project. The Final Project is a creative project of your own choosing. Options include writing a short play; OR making a cartoon or short graphic novel; organizing an event; making a video; creating a presentation containing graphics and data; writing a journal article on an environmental justice issue and how it might intersect with the arts; doing independent research on a specific eco-theatre topic; interviewing scientists and presenting their work documentary style; interviewing writers and artists about eco-issues and presenting the work using multimedia; creating an online magazine and covering environmental and theatre stories. Whatever you can imagine. (Note: All Final Projects are subject to approval.) Guidelines for the Final Project will be provided on Blackboard.

Please bear in mind that you earn your grade based on the timely completion of your work, plus the quality of your work. Late assignments are marked down due to missed deadline. Assignments are accepted only within one week of due date, provided an extension has been arranged. After that, they are considered a missed assignment, which counts as zero.

Note: *The SDA GUIDELINES on GRADING state that:*

- *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.*

Assignment Submission Policy

Guidelines for Assignment 1, the Midterm, Assignment 2, and the Final Project will be posted on Blackboard. The Blog Posts must be submitted electronically via Blackboard. In-class exercises and activities (and pop quizzes, if needed) will also be submitted via Blackboard. For the collaboratively created blog, your Blog Contribution will be posted directly to the blog site. The Final Project will be presented in class and/or submitted via Blackboard, depending on the nature of your project. (The submission site will open during the last week of the semester.)

Additional Policies

1. Attendance and participation are key. SDA Guidelines call for no unexcused absences. **For online classes: This means you must show up, be on time, and be on camera.**
2. Participation is essential and figures into your grade. Think of this course as a professional, creative/activist workshop; thus, as a member of such a workshop, your participation is necessary not only for the development of your own work, but for the development of your colleagues' work as well. Theatre is a highly collaborative, community-oriented medium. Please honor your obligation to your colleagues' work.
3. You are entering into a collaborative relationship with fellow students, and thus it is your responsibility to be available to your colleagues for feedback, analysis, and support.
4. All class members must be treated with respect.
5. You are required to attend the class and to be on time. Tardiness is defined as being 15 minutes late or more. Excessive tardiness will affect your ongoing writing and participation grade.
6. Absences must be for reasons of illness or emergency, and you must notify me in writing (preferably in advance). **For in person sessions: If you are ill or showing signs of covid infection: Please stay at home. Communicate with me about this.**

Please remember that absences must be accompanied by a written explanation; also, in your absence, please prepare the assigned work that is due and turn it in immediately upon return to the class. It may become possible to create an alternative assignment for you to make up missed work. **Note: If you are ill due to coronavirus or because of virus protocols, you still need to make up the class work. To do this, watch the recording of the class, and write a paper in response to it.**

7. All assignments, written and/or otherwise, must be prepared on time and turned in (or presented) on the deadline date. Late assignments will be marked down due to the missed deadline. Assignments not turned in within a week of deadline count as missed assignments (zero credit).
8. **IF YOU MISS CLASS:** It is your responsibility to make up work you have missed and to obtain information about missed class discussions or missed assignments from Blackboard or from your classmates. I will not be repeating lectures or class discussion; office hours are not for the purposes of repeating lectures, but rather are for the purpose of helping you with areas in which you need guidance or where you are confused or where you are dealing with challenges. Class materials can be found on the Blackboard site for this course. For your syllabus, handouts, etc., go to Blackboard. **For covid-related absences: see item #6 above.**
9. Please check your e-mail regularly to see if there are any changes in class meeting, etc. On rare occasions, it becomes necessary to make changes to class meeting details. If I am unable to provide you with this information in the preceding class, I will send you the information via e-mail and/or text message.
10. For collaborations, you may work using a number of collaborative tools, such as Slack, Google documents, Google Drive.
11. If you desire an appointment, you are required to contact me via e-mail or text message at least 24 hours in advance, otherwise there is no guarantee I will receive your message in time to make arrangements to meet with you. Please note I have included multiple ways to contact me on page one of this syllabus.

Zoom Etiquette

If it becomes necessary to have a class session on Zoom, please remember that "Netiquette" or "internet etiquette," is important for collaborative work. Please respect the following guidelines:

- Whenever possible, please use your computer to log-in to the class rather than your phone. This will help us with the quality of visuals and audio, plus it will present fewer problems when sharing screens.
- If you have technical issues during class, please contact: USC Information Technology Services <http://itservices.usc.edu>; or School of Dramatic Arts – Mr. Prakash Shirke. Contact Info: shirke@usc.edu; 213.740.1288.
- Your camera must be on at all times, unless you are requested to hide video.

- Please attempt to log-in from an environment that does not have distracting background noise, such as pets, family members, machinery, music. If you find yourself in a situation with distracting noise, please use ear buds or headphones.
- When not speaking (for example, during a reading of a scene, when you are not playing a role), please mute your microphone. During discussions feel free to leave your mic on.
- Remember that you are in class, therefore behavior appropriate to class should be followed. Please do not walk around, leave the room, read, play games, etc. during class.
- You may use your devices for research that enhances the discussion during class, but please stay attuned to what is going on while engaged in research.
- Try to take turns speaking. Remember that Zoom creates problems when voices overlap.
- The chat box will be available to you to use during class, however please don't abuse it. For example, remember that everyone can see what you type in the chat. Therefore your comments should not contain private messages to another class member—which can be read in the saved chat. Also, try to use chat to enhance the discussion, rather than interrupt it.
- Remember: The class session is being recorded. (This includes the chat.)
- Be respectful of others at all times.
- Remember: We're all in this together. Now more than ever.

Sharing of Course Materials Outside of the Learning Environment

USC has a policy that prohibits sharing of any course content, including synchronous and asynchronous online 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 Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

WEEK 1 1/10-1/12 ONLINE Link can be found on Blackboard.	Class 1	INTRODUCTION to the World of Eco-Theatre The origin and purpose of live theatre. The environmental crisis. The relationship between theatre and issues. Intro to key ideas: extinction, extractivism; climate change; water shortages; anthropocene; sustainability; bio-regionalism; environmental justice.
	Class 2	SONG OF EXTINCTION Begin <i>Song of Extinction</i> ; Assign Weekly Blog Posts. (Always bring books to class!) <i>(Select blog editors; launch blog by Week 3)</i>
WEEK 2 1/17-1/19	Class 3	No meeting: Martin Luther King Day.
	Class 4	In-depth look at the Issue: Extinction. Assign Assignment 1 Humanity and Nature – Can we LIVE together?: Discuss excerpts from <i>The Sixth Extinction</i> and <i>Song of Extinction</i> . <i>Practicum:</i> How to blog—with meaning!
WEEK 3 1/24-1/26	Class 5	The characters: <i>Song of Extinction</i>
	Class 6	Outcomes: How do stories resolve—and how do we deal with untidy endings? Sustainability—Not Extinction. <i>Video:</i> Hawaii- A Model of Sustainability. Finish <i>Song of Extinction</i> and <i>Sixth Extinction</i> . <i>Practicum:</i> Focused Research with Integrity

WEEK 4 1/31-2/2	Class 7 Class 8	THE CHISERA The Worlds (Past and Present, Fictional and Non-) of <i>The Chisera</i> Assignment 1 due. Begin presentations.
WEEK 5 2/7-2/9	Class 9 Class 10	Water Is Life: <i>The Chisera</i> and rain shadow videos. Intro to Midterm (Sample Proposal). Continue presentations. <i>Practicum:</i> Purpose, Intention, Audience, Action Reminder: Blog Posts!
WEEK 6 2/14-2/16	Class 11 Class 12	Rain, Drought, Floods, Desert: Finish <i>The Chisera</i> . What is Deep Ecology? Introduction to Arne Naess and a Joyful Action. <i>Practicum:</i> Inspiration and Brainstorming- First Phases of Creating/Making an Engagement Project
WEEK 7 2/21-2/23	Class 13 Class 14	HURRICANE DIANE No meeting: President's Day. Intro to the source material (<i>The Bacchae</i>). <i>Hurricane Diane</i> plus comedy & Issues. <i>Practicum:</i> Assessing Needs and Goals Nature, the Natural, the Sustainable in <i>Hurricane Diane</i> . Turn in and present MIDTERM Sample Proposals
WEEK 8 2/28-3/2	Class 15 Class 16	Continue presentation of Midterm Proposals. <i>Practicum:</i> What Matters To You? Assign Assignment 2 FORWARD and THE CHILDREN Global and Local Issues: <i>Forward</i> and <i>The Children</i> . Whistleblowers and Heroes: <i>The Children</i> .
WEEK 9 3/7-3/9	Class 17 Class 18	Whistleblowers and Heroes: <i>The Children</i> <i>Practicum:</i> Working with Creative Exercises and Vision Boards
		NO CLASS 3/13 to 3/19 SPRING BREAK
WEEK 10 3/21-3/23	Class 19 Class 20	HEROES AND SAINTS Covert Action, The Supernatural, Theatricality: <i>Heroes and Saints</i> . The People: Like or Love – <i>Heroes and Saints</i> Written Assignment 2 Due Finish <i>Heroes and Saints</i> <i>Practicum:</i> Present Exercises and Vision Boards
WEEK 11 3/28-3/30	Class 21 Class 22	Continue: Present Exercises, Vision Boards, for Final Project <i>Practicum:</i> Options - Style, Approach, Adaptability MR. BURNS Post-Apocalypse: Begin <i>Mr. Burns</i> Reminder: Prepare for Final Projects
WEEK 12 4/4-4/6	Class 23 Class 24	<i>Mr. Burns</i> and Communication: How do we figure it out? And how does pop culture figure into everything? Check in: Final Projects. Work-in-progress reports.

WEEK 13 4/11-4/13	Class 25 Class 26	Continue <i>Mr. Burns</i> . Bio-regionalism - An overview.
WEEK 14 4/18-4/20	Class 27 Class 28	<i>The plays, all of them: Breath, Wind, Water, Life, Magic, Imagination.</i> How it all works. Begin Final Project works-in-progress presentations.
WEEK 15 4/25-4/27	Class 29 Class 30	Present Final Project works-in-progress, part 2 Present Final Project works-in-progress, part 3.

Final Examination Date:

Friday, 5/6/2022 11 am – 1 pm. Please note: *The University schedules the Final Exams long before the semester begins. The date and time are determined by USC and cannot be changed. Please mark your calendar now.*

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 Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from OSAS. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. OSAS is located in GFS 120 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website for OSAS and contact information: (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 814-4618 (Video 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. If you are feeling ill or if you have been exposed to someone with the virus, please stay home to protect others. SDA will work to assist you and help you 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.