

THTR 366 – Playwriting II

63078R/Units: 4

Spring 2022 — MON, WED — 8:00-9:50am

Location: MCC 106

Instructor: Boni B. Alvarez

Office Hours: by appt: MON 12-2

Office: MCC 214

Contact Info: bbalvare@usc.edu

(I will reply as soon as I can, but please allow 36 hours for a response.)

Course Description

This course is a continuation of the work begun in Playwriting I. A twice-weekly workshop delving deeper into the elements of dramatic writing for the stage via writing exercises, reading and presentation of scenes, and extensive in-class analysis and dramaturgy.

Prerequisite: THTR 365

Learning Objectives

- Through exploratory exercises, students cultivate their individual playwright's voice, while building and nurturing a fertile and safe space for their cohort/ensemble of writers.
- Through weekly writing exercises, students strengthen their command of dramatic elements: character; setting; story; conflict; language; metaphor; subtext; tone; theatricality.
- Students will deepen their revision skills by their active engagement in workshop and feedback sessions.
- This course strengthens the students' abilities of critical analysis through the reading and discussion of contemporary plays.
- Students will complete a first draft of a new full-length dramatic work for the stage.

Required Readings

Texts will be distributed electronically.

- Jacobs-Jenkins, Branden. *Neighbors*
- MacDonald, Maya. *Brunch*
- Nguyen, Qui. *Vietgone*
- Scheer, Alexis. *Our Dear Dead Drug Lord*

Description and Assessment of Assignments

The work required for this course is creative, towards the goal of creating art. Works of art are subjective and difficult to qualify. Your grade in this course will largely be determined by the thoroughness of your effort, your engagement in process, and the imagination displayed in the exercises and pages submitted.

Participation – 15%

Students must actively participate in the discussion topics, demonstrate preparedness of the assigned readings, and practice engaged volunteerism for in-class readings. In a playwriting workshop, active listening & engagement are imperative – students should be respectful and generous when offering and receiving feedback.

Empathy is a requirement for this course. Any playwright worth their salt has something important to say about the world we collectively inhabit. It is imperative we nurture a creative safe space, one in which everyone feels secure sharing and revealing themselves, and in which everyone is comfortable taking artistic risks. Behavior that endangers the creative space will adversely affect your participation grade.

Building Block Assignments – 25%

These assignments are exercises used to help unearth your individual artistic voice and unlock the play you are trying to write. These assignments draw from autobiography, other dramatic works, and other fields – new media, fine art, music.

- Character Monologue – 5pts
- Playwright's Pitch – 5pts
- Setting Scene – 5pts
- Scene of Climax – 5pts
- End Scene – 5pts

Workshop Pages – 45%

There are 9 designated class sessions for the workshop of new pages; each workshop session has a value of 5 points. To earn full points, students must bring in the minimum number of pages required for each designated session. Students are allowed to bring in scenes more than once, only if significant revisions have been made.

Final First Draft – 15%

Students will submit a first draft of a new play constituting a full evening of theater. While pages and lengths vary, the course operates under the notion that a full evening of theater constitutes at least 70-80 minutes.

Grading Breakdown

ASSIGNMENT	% of grade
Participation	15
Building Block Assignments	25
Workshop Pages	45
Final First Draft	15
TOTAL	100

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.

A+: 100-98	A: 97-94	A-: 93-90
B+: 89-87	B: 86-84	B-: 83-80
C+: 79-77	C: 76-74	C-: 73-70
D+: 69-67	D: 66-64	D-: 63-60
F: 59-0		

When a student's mathematical GPA falls between two grades, the final grade will be weighted towards the higher end of the scale for students whose attendance and participation in class have been excellent or good and toward the lower end for those with average or poor attendance and participation.

Assignment Submission Policy

NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED.

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.

Additional Policies (for online meetings)

Camera Policy

This course has a "camera-on" policy. Class dynamics are substantially compromised without the ability to see the people in class. For privacy concerns, students may use virtual backgrounds. If there are other challenges and concerns, please contact the professor.

Time Zone Accommodations

USC considers the hours from **7:00am to 10:00pm**, in the local time zone for each student, as

reasonable times for students to attend synchronous sessions. Students facing obstacles to their learning as a result of time zone differences should contact the professor.

Recording Online Classes

USC policy requires that all classes conducted online be recorded. ITS has set up Zoom to automatically record and transcribe class sessions, which are then made available in Blackboard. Students should review their responsibilities towards the appropriate use and handling of these recordings under existing SCampus policies regarding class notes (<https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-c/>). Students are not permitted to create their own class recordings. Violations of these policies will be met with the appropriate disciplinary sanction. Zoom recordings will be retained in the cloud until the end of the semester, at which point they will be deleted.

<u>WK</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>WEEKLY SCHEDULE</u>
1 Unearthing Your Voice		
	MON 1/10	Introductions; Down the YouTube hole
	WED 1/12	Art – a picture can say a thousand words
		<u>Music – the soundtracks of our lives</u>
2		
	MON 1/17	MLK HOLIDAY – NO CLASS
	WED 1/19	<u>Writers’ self-inventory</u>
3 Creating Character		
	MON 1/24	Scheer’s <i>Our Dear Dead Drug Lord</i>
	WED 1/26	<u>Character</u>
4		
	MON 1/31	Character (cont) Character Monologue DUE
	WED 2/2	<u>Character (cont)</u>
5		
	MON 2/7	MacDonald’s <i>Brunch</i>
	WED 2/9	Playwright’s Pitch DUE
6 World of the Play		
	MON 2/14	Setting Setting Scene DUE
	WED 2/16	<u>Tone/Mood & Theatricality; Nguyen’s <i>Vietgone</i></u>
7		
	MON 2/21	PRESIDENTS’ DAY – NO CLASS
	WED 2/23	<u>Tone/Mood & Theatricality (cont)</u>
8 Workshop		
	MON 2/28	<u>Group A – 12-15 Pages DUE</u>
	WED 3/2	<u>Group B – 12-15 Pages DUE</u>
9		
	MON 3/7	<u>Group A – 12-15 Pages DUE</u>
	WED 3/9	<u>Group B – 12-15 Pages DUE</u>
	MON 3/14	SPRING BREAK
	WED 3/16	SPRING BREAK
10 Plotting & Story Arcs		
	MON 3/21	Jacobs-Jenkins’ <i>Neighbors</i>
	WED 3/23	Scene of Climax DUE
11		
	MON 3/28	<i>Neighbors</i> (cont)
	WED 3/30	End Scene DUE
12 Workshop (cont)		
	MON 4/4	<u>Workshop Pages (7-10)</u>
	WED 4/6	<u>Workshop Pages (7-10)</u>
13		
	MON 4/11	<u>Workshop Pages (7-10)</u>
	WED 4/13	<u>Workshop Pages (7-10)</u>
14		
	MON 4/18	<u>Workshop Pages (7-10)</u>
	WED 4/20	<u>Workshop Pages (7-10)</u>
15		
	MON 4/25	<u>Workshop Pages (7-10)</u>
	WED 4/27	<u>Wrap-up</u>
FINAL	MON 5/9	11am-1pm

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.

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.