



Dramaturgical Perspectives and Approaches
Instructor: Oliver Mayer
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Dramaturgical Perspectives and Approaches (THTR 500 #63170)
2 Units: Fall 2021 – Mondays 5-7:20pm Location: WPH 200
Instructor: Oliver Mayer

Course Description:

Investigates art and craft of dramatic writing initiated/completed in other MFA in Dramatic Writing Courses or that was submitted as a sample for program entry.

Learning Objectives:

Students will form new dramatic scenes each week towards the creation of original plays by semester's end using prompts around the theme of ***betrayal***. Required readings and in-class discussion will further expand our dramaturgical perspectives and approaches, provoking new responses on the page. Each student will also lead discussion at least once during the semester on the subject of ***betrayal***, using texts and/or writing prompts of their own choosing.

Prerequisite(s):

You must be registered in MFA Dramatic Writing.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials:

These books will be available at the USC Bookstore. They can also be purchased online or elsewhere. Supplementary materials (TBD) will be made available online via Blackboard.

Harold Pinter, *BETRAYAL*

Euripides, *THE TROJAN WOMEN*

Eddie Sanchez, *UNMERCIFUL GOOD FORTUNE*

Shakespeare, *TROILUS AND CRESSIDA*

Lorca, *BLOOD WEDDING*

Marlowe, *EDWARD II*

Zury Margarita Ruiz, *WHAT A PIECE OF WORK IS MAN* (I will provide text)

Hampton, *LES LIAISONS DANGEREUSES*

Brian Friel, *TRANSLATIONS*

Tony Kushner, *ANGELS IN AMERICA*

Description and Assessment of Assignments:

Dramatic writing demands an active sense of play. Come each week ready to work. Each assessment or assignment has its own specific description and is distributed across the course to prepare for larger assignments due at semester's end. Please read the texts ahead of time to be able to discuss them with your colleagues, and to better understand the writing prompt that I will give during class time. As we move towards semester's end, you will be presenting me and the class with the summation of your course work, whether the play is finished or not.

Guest Speakers:

When guest playwrights join us in class, do your best to be there. These often work best on Zoom, so when they join us, we will most likely hold class online that week.



Trigger Warnings:

The best plays are triggering. They often deal with distressing material and occasionally use language and imagery that might cause upset. They are pieces of their time and moment, as are yours now. We will analyze why the drama takes plays to dangerous places, and we will do so responsibly and with sensitivity.

Schedule Changes:

Depending on circumstances, the following course schedule may change. It's a living thing.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown:

Monday, August 22: Discussion of betrayal as the semester's theme. In-class writing.

August 29 Discuss *BETRAYAL*. First New Pages presented.

September 5 LABOR DAY, no class.

September 12 Discuss *THE TROJAN WOMEN*. Student-led discussion. Read new scenes.

September 19 Discuss *UNMERCIFUL GOOD FORTUNE*. Student-led discussion. Read new scenes.

September 26 Discuss *WHAT A PIECE OF WORK IS MAN*. Student-led discussion. New scenes.

October 3 Discuss *BLOOD WEDDING*. Student-led discussion. Read new scenes.

October 10 Discuss *EDWARD II*. Student-led discussion. Read new scenes.

October 17 Discuss *ANGELS IN AMERICA*. Read new scenes.

October 24 Discuss *TRANSLATIONS*. Student-led discussion. Read new scenes.

October 31 Getty Villa, *LETTERS FROM THE BLACK SEA*, first rehearsal.

November 7 Getty Villa, *LETTERS FROM THE BLACK SEA*, rehearsal.

November 14 Discuss *LES LIAISONS DANGEREUSES*. Student-led discussion. Read new scenes.

November 21 Play drafts due. Discuss *TROILUS AND CRESSIDA*. Student-led discussion.

November 28 Last class. Original play drafts due. Student-led-discussion.

December 12 Final 4:30-6:30pm. No exceptions.

LETTERS FROM THE BLACK SEA Workshop at The Getty Villa:

I am workshoping a new play at The Getty Villa in Malibu from Monday, Oct 31 through Saturday, November 12. I want to keep rehearsals open. Details to come as we get closer.

Student-led Discussions:

Adi has had some very good ideas over the years, including this one: Following our weekly discussion of the required reading, each of you will have the chance to lead discussion using the tools of your own choosing. These include texts, writing exercises and other prompts. Expect to have around 30 minutes to complete this work.

Class Expectations:

This class demands active participation, discussion, and feedback on a weekly basis. Be prepared to discuss each other's work and to do so with both compassion and insight.

Grading Breakdown:

Grades are based on their individual performance, without reference to the performance of other students (i.e., curving). Participation credit is awarded for in-class work. Grading breakdown is as follows:

Weekly Participation Grade: 15%

Weekly Scene Work: 35%

Completed Draft of New Play: 50%

As for the grades themselves, **A** indicates work of exceptional quality, **A-** indicates work of excellent quality; **B+** indicates work of very good quality, and **B** indicates work of

good quality. I expect no lower grade than that from any of you, but I also do not pass out A grades easily, as they indicate that the work is uncommon and has exceeded expectations.

Assignment Rubrics:

Weekly Writing Assignments will be given both in-class and as homework. You will be expected to be writing and presenting scenes every week. Be prepared to read aloud your work, both for peer review and for my feedback. Absent students should email me or contact their fellow students about missed assignments. These should be read to present at the next class you attend. Grading rubrics align to the assignment description.

Grading Timeline:

We can discuss your grades at any time during the semester, preferably during office hours.

Additional Policies:

Unlike some other classes at SDA, we do not use a great deal of technology in this course. Minimum technical skills on electronic devices is necessary, particularly the ability to share new writing with fellow student playwrights on a weekly basis and to read all required and supplementary material before discussion.

SDA Productions, ISPs, and Extracurricular Activities:

The School of Dramatic Arts presents multiple plays in production and workshop every weekend throughout the school year. We strongly encourage you to attend when you can.

Professional Productions, Workshops, and other Theatrical Events:

There will be countless opportunities to see shows across Los Angeles throughout the school year. Whenever possible, SDA faculty will arrange see shows either in groups or individually. When you see a show, please be ready to discuss it in class.

Missed Classes/Assignments:

SDA productions, ISPs and other extracurricular activities will not excuse you from class work. Speak to me beforehand about potential class absences or other time crunches. Missed or delayed assignments, homework, or lack of class participation will adversely affect your grade unless you let me know about it. Always let me know!

Western Edge Playwrights' Salon (WEPS):

A reminder that these occur on the last Friday of each month from 3-4:30pm. They have been created expressly to give you the chance to meet topflight professional playwrights and others connected to our vocation. Do your utmost to attend and let me know when you cannot.

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: <http://bit.ly/sdasupport>

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 Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

dsp.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.

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>.