

**THTR 401- Contemporary Theatre in a Changing World**

**Units: 4**

**2023 Spring Semester- Tues, Thurs- 2-3:50pm**

**Location: ZCH 360**

**Instructor: Ken Sawyer**

**Office Hours: Appointment Only**

**Contact Info: [kdsawyer@usc.edu](mailto:kdsawyer@usc.edu)**

**Course Description**

This course delves into the boundary-pushing field of contemporary theatre and the artists who are creative pioneers in this ever-changing world. This class will primarily explore international theatre makers from the past ten years. Lectures will utilize various works which students will analyze and dissect in order to gain an understanding of the working methods, creative decisions, strategies and visions of the respective artists. The course will explore how contemporary theatre makers have evolved in practice as artists as well as explore how contemporary theatre can spark a dialogue to address many social issues.

**Learning Objectives**

- To analyze a collection of contemporary theatre styles and forms of content
- To apply theatrical analysis when exploring varying themes and perspectives
- To critically discuss and study the evolution of theatre from a socio-political context
- To develop research skills and critical thinking when approaching contemporary theatre

**Required Readings and Supplementary Materials**

All readings and viewings will be provided the week before.

**Description and Assessment of Assignments**

Work to be completed includes weekly readings, research/critical writing, presentations, viewing, an interview with a contemporary theatre maker, and a final project portfolio that critically reflects your perspective on that production.

**PARTICIPATION (15%)**

This course is primarily a discussion course and requires active involvement from the students. Kindly be aware that attendance does not equate to participation. You are expected to come to class prepared with your own thoughts and questions.

**RESEARCH & WRITTEN ARTICLES (15%)**

Specific topics with instructions will be handed out throughout the semester for these research projects and written articles. These will usually be reflective of what we have discussed that particular week.

#### PRESENTATION (20%)

Performance and visual incorporation is strongly encouraged. This is your opportunity to reflect on what we have discussed in class and present your research and findings to your classmates in a creatively unique fashion that demonstrates your own personal critical thinking. Students will work in small groups of 2-3. These small groups will be divided into Group A and Group B. More detailed information will be provided in class.

#### ARTIST INTERVIEW ARTICLE (15%)

Find a contemporary theatre maker whose work you feel passionate about. Do not choose your artist arbitrarily. Do your research and find artists who are creating works that you may not have encountered before. Create a list of ten questions that you can ask this theatre maker. Set up and conduct an interview and complete the interview in article form.

#### FINAL DRAMATURGICAL PORTFOLIO (25%)

A written dramaturgical analysis on a particular production we have discussed or that you have seen. 2500 word minimum. More detailed information will be provided.

#### QUESTION OF THE DAY (10%)

Each class in the first ten minutes we will have a question relating to your artistic opinions, a current theatrical work, or a current event that might alter stories told in the arts. You must be present and answer this question to gain point for that day.

### Grading Breakdown

Students will be graded on a range of assignments and activities as listed below.

Assessment Tool (assignments)	Points	% of Grade
Participation	100	15
Research & Written Articles	100	15
Presentation	100	20
Artist Interview	100	15
Daily Question	100	10
Final Dramaturgical Portfolio	100	25
		TOTAL 600 100

### Grading Scale (Example)

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

## Assignment Submission Policy

All assignments are to be submitted by the deadline via email or Blackboard when instructed.

## 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).*

## Additional Policies

**Absences/Tardiness** No absences or tardies are allowed, however I will allow each student two “mental health” days. These days may be scheduled in advance or may be taken with 24 hour notice. However due to the nature of the class you must make sure that any colleagues impacted by your absence are notified and that alternate arrangements are made so that the available partners can continue their assignments in your absence.

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	
Week 1	Intros Casting in a Modern World  Queer and activist theatre Casting Special Guest: Jon Imparato		



<b>Week 5</b>	<p>The Art of The Solo Show Special Guest: D' Lo</p> <p>The Art of the Solo Show Special Guest: Sam Harris</p>	<i>Reading TBD</i>	
<b>Week 6</b>	<p>MIDTERM – Written Portion and Visual Group Project</p> <p>PRESENTATION OF VISUAL GROUP PROJECTS</p>		
<b>Week 7</b>	<p>Physical Theatre Verbal vs. Nonverbal Mime, Clown, Kabuki, etc. in Contemporary Theatre</p> <p>PUSH Physical Theatre Group Don't Blame Anyone – Multimedia Opera by PUSH Physical Theatre Group</p>	<p>READ <a href="#">The Body (Through the Body by Dymphna Callery)</a> – to be posted on Blackboard WATCH clips on Jacques Lecoq Group Exercise: Scripted Activity</p> <p>READ <a href="#">No Se Culpe a Nadie by Julio Cortazar</a> READ <a href="#">review on Don't Blame Anyone</a> Group Exercise: Nonverbal Devising</p>	
<b>Week 8</b>	<p>Censorship and the Deconstruction of Censorship in Contemporary Theatre Self-Censorship in Contemporary Theatre</p> <p>Special guest: Tom Jacobson On playwriting The Car Plays</p>	<p>READ <a href="#">Broken Pencils and Crouching Dictators: Issues of Censorship in Contemporary Argentine Theatre by Jean Graham-Jones (Theatre Journal)</a></p>	
<b>Week 9</b>	<p>Circus and Performance Art The Works of De La Guarda</p> <p>Special guests: Che Rae Adams and Vincent Paterson On creating a Cirque Show</p>		
<b>Week 10</b>	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>		

<b>Week 11</b>	<p>Interactive Theatre What is Interactive?</p> <p>Immersive Theatre</p>	<p>READ <a href="#">Interactive Theatre: Drama as Social Intervention</a> by JW Somers (Music and Arts in Action)</p> <p>READ <a href="#">On Immersive Theatre</a> by Gareth White (Theatre Research International)</p> <p>READ <a href="#">Punchdrunk</a> by Josephine Machon</p>	
<b>Week 12</b>	<p>Dance Theatre The Works of Matthew Bourne</p> <p>Special guests: Stephanie Batton Bland (Punchdrunk) Toni Basil On Dance Theatre</p>		
<b>Week 13</b>	<b>TBD</b>		
<b>Week 14</b>	<p>Technology and How it Relates to Contemporary Theatre</p> <p>Zoom Theatre</p>	<p>Group Exercise: VR Exercise TBA</p> <p>READ <a href="#">How Immersive Virtual Reality Theatre Pushes the Limits of Storytelling</a> by Kathryn Yu (No Proscenium)</p>	
<b>Week 15</b>	<p>The Future of Contemporary Theatre</p> <p>Conclusions &amp; Review Where do you see theatre going from here?</p>	Group Discussion & Open Dialogue	
<b>FINAL</b>			

## **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](http://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](mailto: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.

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### **Equity, Diversity & Inclusion + Intimacy in Theater Consent Culture Statement:**

Through our pluralistic approach of diverse pedagogies, methodologies, ideologies, and modalities of artistic expression, we invite(engage) and challenge students to expand their breadth and depth of knowledge, complexity, and range of the human experience. Even though we nurture, guide, and challenge our students to embrace the unknown or unfamiliar and step outside of their comfort zones through storytelling/art, we aim to practice effective strategies and offer tools to students mindful of their physical, psychological, social, and emotional wellbeing. In alignment with professional and industry standards, we will integrate core principles and techniques of Intimacy in Theater and Building Cultures of Affirmative Consent. This will provide agency, offer resources and support to the teachers, students, directors, and staff to establish healthy boundaries of consent when working on material that is physically, intimately, or emotionally charged content in both the classroom and production.

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### **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>

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### **Support Systems:**

*Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call*  
[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://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](http://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](http://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](https://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](https://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](https://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](https://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.