

# USC School of Dramatic Arts

Dramatic Writing Studio, THTR-566 63256D  
Spring Term – Tuesdays 7:00-9:50pm  
Location: THH 219  
Instructor: Oliver Mayer  
Office: MCC #101C  
Office Hours: by appointment (call or text first).  
Contact Info: [omayer@usc.edu](mailto:omayer@usc.edu), 310 867 9192

## Course Description and Overview:

Investigates gestalt of the student dramatic writer's professional development from the empty page and writing fundamentals to the first-draft script, business affairs, and dramaturgical advancement.

## Learning Objectives:

Students will present new writing towards their NWFs 1,2 and 3 culminations, as well as weekly discussion of required readings that address the theme of *exile*.

## Required Readings:

**PHILOCTETES**, by Sophocles  
**KOKORO (TRUE HEART)**, by Velina Hasu Houston  
**A LESSON FROM ALOES**, by Athol Fugard  
**FIGARO GETS A DIVORCE**, by Odon von Horvath (I will provide)  
**JACK GOES BOATING**, by Bob Glaudini  
**OUR COUNTRY'S GOOD**, by Timberlake Wertenbaker  
**INCENDIARY**, by David Harris (Alessandra, do you have the text?)  
**DIAS Y FLORES**, by Oliver Mayer (in *ENVISIONING THE AMERICAS*, ed. Svich)  
**IRONBOUND**, by Martyna Majok  
**SWOONY PLANET**, by Han Ong (I will provide)  
**THE LA PLAYS 1&2**, by Han Ong (I will provide)

Many titles are available at the USC Bookstore. Supplementary materials will appear on Blackboard. I reserve the right to assign more plays as needed, such as:

**TALES FROM HOLLYWOOD**, by Christopher Hampton  
**ONCE REMOVED**, by Eduardo Machado

## Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments:

Your final grade is up to you. Meeting course requirements does not equal excellence; I am looking for uncommon effort and commitment in each assignment. Dramatic writing demands bravery, chance-taking, and an active sense of play. Students will be evaluated based on individual progress, receiving extended feedback for each assignment. We can discuss grades at any point during my office hours.

**Assignment Rubrics:** *A* indicates work of exceptional quality; *A-/B+* of good quality; *B* of adequate quality; **I expect no lower grade from you.**

**Guest Speakers:**

Expect at least two guests this semester. We will hold class on Zoom for ease.

**Weekly Writing Assignments:** These are given both in-class or as homework. Students must be prepared to read aloud their work, for both peer review and my feedback. Absent students should email me and their fellow students about assignments given in-class and/or as homework. Late assignments (weekly exercises) should be emailed to me at [omayer@usc.edu](mailto:omayer@usc.edu).

**Trigger Warnings:**

The best plays 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.

**Weekly Writing/Discussion Assignments:**

PLEASE DO THE READING. Discussions reflect back onto elements of your original work, and the exercises which come from our discussions are precisely designed to deepen and problematize your new writing. PLEASE DO THE WRITING.

**New Works Festival 1:**

The Dramatic Writing cohort's 1<sup>st</sup> Year writers present their new plays at the New Works Festival 1 (NWF 1), co-produced by Hero Theatre, **Monday, May 1 from 11am-5pm**. The venue is TBA All three NWF 1 plays will be read on the same day. ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY.

**New Works Festival 2:**

The Dramatic Writing cohort's 2<sup>nd</sup> Year writers present their new plays at the New Works Festival 2 (NWF 2), presented at The Cammilleri Theatre on campus, **for two presentations each between April 6-9**. ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY.

**New Works Festival 3:**

The Dramatic Writing cohort's 3<sup>rd</sup> Year writers present their new plays at The New Works Festival 3 (NWF 3), presented at The Scene Dock **between April 20-27** (times TBD). ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY.

**Class Attendance:**

While you are not graded on attendance, you will be graded on participation which requires your being in class. After two absences, excused or not, the third absence will begin to affect your grade. Please be on time.

**Final Exam:**

Final Exam will be given on **Tuesday, May 9<sup>th</sup> at 5pm**.

**Additional Policies:**

We do not use a great deal of technology in this course. That said, please share your new scenes weekly online with me and fellow students, via an agreed-upon format and network.

**Attendance at Play Productions:**

Students will be expected to attend plays, both on campus and off, particularly when available on Zoom or other online entities. Try to attend all available SDA productions this semester, particularly our NWFs 1,2, 3, as well as those by the MFA Acting classes. When you have seen a play, be prepared to discuss it in class.

**Schedule Changes:**

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

**THTR 566 Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown:**

- January 10 Exile. Introduction of themes, in-class writing assignment.**
- January 17 OUR COUNTRY'S GOOD. Read scenes.**
- January 24 PHILOCTETES, by Sophocles. Read scenes.**
- January 31 KOKORO, by Velina Hasu Houston, who will join us. Read scenes.**
- February 7 INCENDIARY. Alessandra leads discussion. Read scenes.**
- February 14 SWOONY PLANET. Read scenes.**
- February 21 IRONBOUND. Adi leads discussion. Read scenes.**
- February 28 A LESSON FROM ALOES. Read scenes.**
- March 7 JACK GOES BOATING. Read scenes.**
- March 14 SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS**
- March 21 FIGARO GETS A DIVORCE. Read scenes.**
- March 28 DIAS Y FLORES (from ENVISIONING THE AMERICAS). Read scenes.**
- April 4 THE LA PLAYS 1&2. Rough drafts of NWF 1 plays due.**
- April 11 Read scenes.**
- April 18 In-class readings of plays by non-SDA MFAs.**
- April 25 Reading drafts of NWF 1 plays due.**
- May 1 NWF 1, Monday 11am-5pm. Attendance mandatory.**
- May 10 Tuesday, 7-9pm FINAL EXAM. Attendance mandatory.**

**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 Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/> . 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/> . Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the Department of Public Safety <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us> . This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage [sarc@usc.edu](mailto:sarc@usc.edu) describes reporting options and other resources.

### **Support Systems:**

#### **Student Counseling Services (SCS) – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call**

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. [engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling](http://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling)

#### **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1 (800) 273-8255**

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

#### **Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) – (213) 740-4900**

**– 24/7 on call.** Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. [engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp](http://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp)

#### **Sexual Assault Resource Center**

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: [sarc.usc.edu](http://sarc.usc.edu)

#### **Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086**

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. [equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu)

#### **Bias Assessment Response and Support**

**Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response.**  
[studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support)

**The Office of Disability Services and Programs**

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. [dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu)

**Student Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710**

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic.  
[studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa)

**Diversity at USC**

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. [diversity.usc.edu](http://diversity.usc.edu)

**USC Emergency Information**

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

**USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-4321 - HSC: (323) 442-1000**

24-hour emergency or to report a crime. Provides overall safety to USC community. [dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)

**USC Libraries: Need to do research but don't know where to start? Searching for a book, article, or data to support your argument? Not sure how to cite a source in your bibliography?**

**Ask a librarian! Research help is available:**

- In person and by phone, chat and email at Ask a Librarian**
- Through research guides and FAQs**
- By contacting your subject librarian**