

THTR 125 Textual Analysis for Production
Section 62639R
Units: 4
Fall 2023—Monday/Wednesday—Time: 12:00 – 1:50pm
Location: SOS B37

Instructor: Laurie Fisher, Ph.D.
Office: Virtual Appointments on Zoom
Link to virtual office:
<https://usc.zoom.us/j/8278187355>
Office Hours: Tuesday and Wednesday 9-10 am, and by appointment
Contact Info: ldfisher@usc.edu

Course Assistant: Benjamin Wendel
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IT Help: Customer Support Center
Contact Info: consult.usc.edu; 24-hr phone help: 213-740-5555

Welcome to THTR 125: Textual Analysis for Production!

Course Description

This course encourages students to take initiative and develop independent, analytical thinking about dramatic texts through close and careful reading. This course will focus on learning techniques for taking a script and transforming it into a stage production. Using a range of plays as source material, we will explore how to take a play apart to understand how it is put together and works as theatre. We will practice the dramaturgical methodologies actors, directors, and designers need to employ prior to rehearsal to understand the bones of a dramatic text and flesh it out into a production score. By the time we conclude, students should feel confident that they can approach any dramatic text they encounter and know how to begin exploring it on its own terms.

The course is structured as a seminar in which student discussion and analysis are primary.

- Students are encouraged to engage not only with peers in their respective sections but also with those in other sections.
- The course is taught by faculty from various areas within SDA, who meet to share teaching strategies and resources.
- The reading list comprises 5 plays, three of which are common to all sections of THTR 125 and two texts which vary per section.

Learning Objectives

The course is designed to equip students with basic analytical tools and interpretive perspectives that will enhance learning in all future SDA courses including acting, dramatic writing, directing, and tech/design:

- To offer students an in-depth study of how dramatic texts work
- To develop their ability to discover how the author provides them with the material they need to create a successful production
- To hone their ability to read and analyze these dramatic works deeply and to see them as dramatic scores
- To improve their mindfulness of the collaborative relationships between actor, text, theatre event, and the audience as expressed in a dramatic text.

Course Notes

This course will be taught entirely in person. However, there is a chance that one or more students will need to access the class online for one or more sessions, with prior approval, due to illness. In that case, we will consider recording the class sessions. Also, we are living in unusual times, so please know that I will work with you regarding any hardships that arise. We are all in this together, and together we will make the class a positive, safe learning environment.

Please check Blackboard daily for any class announcements or updates on assignments. PowerPoint lecture slides will occasionally be used, and they will be posted on Blackboard after the class session. We will be viewing videos throughout the semester, and I will provide links for you to access any media.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Desktop or laptop with up-to-date version of Zoom is required for all students.

USC Technology Support Links:

Blackboard Help for Students: <https://studentblackboardhelp.usc.edu>

IT Help: Customer Support Center; consult@usc.edu; 24-hour phone help: 213-740-5555

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials (all materials available at USC Bookstore, on Amazon, or through USC Libraries)

Wedding Band by Alice Childress (PDF on Blackboard and hard copy available in USC Bookstore)

Twelfth Night by William Shakespeare (Folger edition: ISBN 978-0-7434-8277-6)

Water by the Spoonful by Quiara Alegría Hudes (Theater Communications Group)

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? by Edward Albee (ISBN 978-0451158710)

Wonderland by Chay Yew (in the collection *The Hyphenated American*)

Various handouts (posted on Blackboard)

Description of Assignments

Assignment 1: Close Reading of an excerpt of *Wedding Band*. Due on Blackboard Turnitin under Assignments, by 11:59 pm on date specified, 750 words. (This assignment may be rewritten for re-evaluation with the permission of the Instructor.)

Midterm: Close Reading of an excerpt of *Twelfth Night*. Due on Blackboard Turnitin under Assignments, by 11:59 pm on date specified, 750 words. Assignment may NOT be rewritten.

Assignment 2: Creative assignment. You will provide a design for a production (with explanatory notes), an actor's journal, an essay that focuses on historical background, or write-up of a different dramaturgical concern. I will offer detailed suggestions in class. Due on Blackboard Turnitin under Assignments, by 11:59 pm on date specified.

In-class exercises and homework– quizzes, outlines, group documents, and other short writing assignments. These assignments must be turned in on time and cannot be made up or rewritten.

Final Exam: Comparative essay exploring specific thematic and dramaturgical considerations from different works studied. 1,500 words. Due on Blackboard Turnitin under Assignments, on the date scheduled for the final exam.

Grading Breakdown

Assignment /Assessment Breakdown	% of Grade
Writing Assignment 1	15%
Midterm	20%
Writing Assignment 2	20%
Final	20%
Class Exercises	10%
Participation	15%
TOTAL	100%

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

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	94-100
A-	90-93
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

“Excellent” means that clear understanding of the class material is coupled with original and creative insight; “good” means that the class material has been understood clearly; “average” means that the class material has been generally understood, but gaps in understanding remain; “poor” means that there are identifiable gaps in the understanding of class material; “failure” means that gaps in the completion of work is coupled with poor understanding of class material.

When the mathematical GPA 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 excellent or good and toward the negative end of the scale for those with average or poor attendance and participation.

Assignment Rubrics

Rubrics will be posted on Blackboard with each assignment.

Assignment Submission Policy

All assignments will be uploaded to Blackboard. Specific instructions for each assignment will be given in class. As a general rule, no late work will be accepted. However, if illness or emergency interferes with the completion of an assignment, please contact me at least 24 hours prior to the due date, and I will try to work something out with you.

Grading Timeline

Grading and feedback on formal assignments will generally be given within two weeks of turn-in date. For shorter assignments, turnaround will be within a week.

Communication policies

PLEASE NOTE: These policies are for in-person classes and for any necessary online sessions: Please send me an email, in advance, if you are prevented from attending a class. Also, while time constraints make it impossible for me to review full essay drafts by email, I am happy to respond to specific questions about an assignment. I will usually respond within 24 hours, depending upon when the request is sent and how much grading I happen to be facing at that point of time. Please note: I will not answer questions regarding a formal assignment less than one day before the assignment is due. In addition, if you email me after 6pm during the week, I probably won't respond until the following day, and if you email me on a weekend, I might not respond until Monday morning—again, depending on my workload. Please check all relevant handouts and emails before emailing me a question. I'm happy to help however I can, provided that you do not already have the answers at your disposal.

Course evaluation

Course evaluation occurs at the end of the semester university-wide. It is an important review of students' experience in the class. You should expect to receive an email update once the system has launched to provide your feedback on this course. In addition, you are always welcome to connect with me as the instructor to offer any feedback on the course.

Additional Policies and Expectations

Participation is a large factor in each student's success, and in the success of the course overall. Participation is more than just attending each class session. The expectation is that you will engage with the texts, with the professor, and with each other: show up to class having completed the homework and with ideas or questions for discussion.

CONTENT WARNING: Please consider this syllabus a "content warning" and gauge your receptibility to controversial artworks before you join the class. Your voluntary participation in the course constitutes an explicit consent to experiencing difficult and/or troubling art.

Please note that, as a group, we will be reading selections of scenes aloud in class in order to delve more deeply into the texts and to fully receive the theatrical impression—to hear how the text sounds in a space. These readings are not intended to be either performances or acting exercises. We approach these readings with the express purpose of critical analysis that offers us a deeper exploration of the text within an academic setting.

Hybrid Mode Considerations: This class is being taught live, in person. However, as the semester progresses, we might find the need to go online for a class session or for a more extended period of time. In that case, please use the following rules for Zoom:

Zoom Etiquette:

Please do the following in order for the class to run as smoothly as possible:

- Keep your camera view on unless I instruct you to do otherwise. PLEASE NOTE: if you are having connectivity issues, you may turn off your camera, or call in to the session without video. Please ask me if you need any assistance.
- Keep your mic muted unless you are speaking
- Use the "raise hand" function when you want to speak, unless we are reading scenes aloud or in breakout groups
- Feel free to also use the group chat function to add comments or ask questions
- Refrain from texting or using private chats during the class session

Academic Integrity

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see the [student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Policy for the use of AI Generators

Since creating, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course, all assignments should be prepared by the student working individually or in groups. Students may not have another person or entity complete any substantive portion of the assignment. Developing strong competencies in these areas will prepare you for a competitive workplace. Therefore, using AI-generated tools is prohibited in this course, will be identified as plagiarism, and will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. 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. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Following is a general outline of how the course will unfold. Please note that the schedule is subject to change according to the specific needs of the class.

(SEE NEXT PAGE)

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings/Preparation	Deliverables
Week 1 8/21	8/21 Course Introduction; Intro to Theatrical Analysis 8/23 Elinor Fuchs, “Visit to a Small Planet”; Susan Glaspell’s <i>Trifles</i>	 <u>Read</u> Elinor Fuchs “Visit to a Small Planet”; Susan Glaspell, <i>Trifles</i>	 DUE 8/25: Student info sheet (email to me at ldfisher@usc.edu);
Week 2 8/28	8/28 The world of the play: <i>Trifles</i> 8/30 The world of the play II; clues; David Ball, <i>Backwards and Forwards</i> Intro to <i>Wedding Band</i>	Susan Glaspell, <i>Trifles</i> <i>Trifles</i>	DUE 8/28: create a map of the world of Glaspell’s <i>Trifles</i> ; upload to Blackboard
Week 3 9/4	9/4 NO CLASS— LABOR DAY 9/6 <i>Wedding Band</i> Background and World of the Play	<u>Read</u> <i>Wedding Band</i> (the entire play) for class on 9/6	
Week 4 9/11	9/11 <i>Wedding Band</i> : Act 1 9/13 <i>Wedding Band</i> Characters and thematic concerns Act 2 Writing Assignment 1: Close Reading guidelines; Intro to Writing Assignment 1.	 <u>Read</u> Uta Hagen handout and write up a characterization (details in class)	
Week 5 9/18	9/18 <i>Twelfth Night</i> Staging; Language Writing Assignment 1: principles of academic writing 9/20 <i>Twelfth Night</i> ; Writing Assignment 1 Rough Draft editing	<i>Twelfth Night</i> (<u>read</u> entire play and be prepared to discuss Act I) <i>Twelfth Night</i> (Act II); <u>Rough draft</u> of Writing Assignment 1 due	 9/20 Rough draft of Writing Assignment 1 due Writing Assignment 1 due 9/24

<p>Week 6 9/25</p>	<p>9/25 Action; Adaptation; intro to group project</p> <p>9/27 Midterm Discussion and Guidelines</p>	<p><i>Twelfth Night</i> (Act III)</p> <p><i>Twelfth Night</i> (Act IV and V) Prep group scene</p>	
<p>Week 7 10/2</p>	<p>10/2 Intro to Theater of the Absurd and its legacy; Background on Edward Albee; Setting the stage</p> <p>10/4 Scene exploration: creating characters</p>	<p>Read Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</p>	
<p>Week 8 10/9</p>	<p>10/9 Games</p> <p>10/11 Hyperreality</p>	<p><i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</i> View Mike Nichols film (available on course reserves)</p> <p>Read Umberto Eco's "Travels in Hyperreality"</p>	<p>Midterm essay due 10/11 (we will discuss this in class)</p> <p><i>Fall Break 10/12 to 10/13</i></p>
<p>Week 9 10/16</p>	<p>10/16 Historical background and considerations; cultural influence; social concerns; the world of the play;</p> <p>10/18 Historical and social considerations, cont'd; Assignment 2 guidelines and discussion</p>	<p>Read Wonderland</p>	
<p>Week 10 10/23</p>	<p>10/23 Scene explorations; Discuss articles</p> <p>10/25 TBD</p>	<p><i>Wonderland</i></p> <p>10/23 Read USC US-China Institute article "Behind the Curtains: The Evolution and Impact of Asian Americans in Theatre" and American Theatre article—interview with Chay Yew: "Break the Table and Build a New One"</p>	
<p>Week 11 10/30</p>	<p>10/30 Staging</p> <p>11/1 Intro to Hudes and to <i>Water by the Spoonful</i></p>	<p><i>Wonderland</i></p>	

Week 12 11/6	11/6 The world of the play; stage and set design; 11/8 TBD	Read <i>Water by the Spoonful</i>	
Week 13 11/13	11/13 <i>Water by the Spoonful</i> : History, time, and music 11/15 TBD	<i>Water by the Spoonful</i> : Read “How to Stage a Latinx Play in the 21 st Century” (PDF on Blackboard); View videos: Hudes interviews (See list on Blackboard in <i>Water by the Spoonful</i> materials folder)	Writing Assignment 2 due 11/13
Week 14 11/20	11/20 <i>Water by the Spoonful</i> 11/22 NO CLASS— THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY	<i>Water by the Spoonful</i>	
Week 15 11/27	11/27 Semester review: making connections 11/29 Final class session; final exam review; course evaluations	<i>Final Review prep</i>	
FINAL			Refer to the final exam schedule in the USC <i>Schedule of Classes</i> at classes.usc.edu .

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.

Academic Conduct, Accommodations, and Support Systems

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More

information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

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.

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

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

[*988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline*](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)*](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[*Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)*](#) - (213) 740-5086

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

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101

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

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) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.