

**THTR 125 – Text Studies for Production**

62640R/Units: 4

Fall 2023 — TUES, THURS — 10-11:50am

**Location: SOS B47**

**Instructor: Boni B. Alvarez**

**Office Hours:** by appt: TUES, THURS 12-1:30pm

**Office:** MCC 212

**Contact Info:** bbalvare@usc.edu

(I will reply to your e-mail as soon as I can, but please allow 24 hours for a response.)

**Course Assistant: Marisa Caddick**

**Contact Info:** mcaddick@usc.edu

**Office Hours:** by appt

**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.

**Course Overview**

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 five plays, three of which are common to all sections of THTR 125 and two texts which vary per section.
- The course is designed to equip students with basic analytical tools that will enhance learning in all future SDA courses including acting, dramatic writing, directing, and tech/design.

**Learning Objectives**

- Students will develop a personal toolbox for interpreting and analyzing plays by exploring different strategies of analysis and research.

- To analyze a dramatic text in terms of action, conflict, symbolism, language, socio-historical context, and dramatic structure to provide an in-depth study of how plays work.
- To develop the students' ability to uncover 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 theatrically in order to see them as dramatic scores.
- To improve their mindfulness of the collaborative relationships between actor, text, theater event, and the audience as expressed in a dramatic text.

### **Required Readings**

Texts have been ordered through the USC Bookstore.

- Childress, Alice. *Wedding Band*
- Hudes, Quiara Alegria. *Water by the Spoonful*
- \*Park, Jiehae. *Peerless* - \* this text will be distributed electronically
- Shakespeare, William. *Twelfth Night*
- Yew, Chay. *Porcelain*

Many of the required readings deal with intense and disturbing subject matter. This course ascribes to the adage that a playwright's artistic purpose is to hold up a mirror to the world they live in, illuminating the potential of extreme dramatic situations – those that force us to ponder the fundamentals of human existence. Please consider this syllabus itself an overall content warning and your participation in the course an explicit consent to experiencing difficult and/or troubling art.

### **Description of Assignments**

#### **Participation – 15%**

Students will be evaluated on eagerness of involvement in class exercises, and the quality of contributions to discussion. Students must demonstrate preparedness of the assigned readings and short assignments.

Many ideas, positions, and opinions will arise; students should be respectful in the ensuing discussions, practicing active listening & engagement, and employ empathy.

#### **Close Reading – 15%**

A 700-word analysis of an assigned extract from *Porcelain*.

#### **Midterm – 15%**

The midterm is a close reading of an extract from *Twelfth Night*.

### **Inspiration Board – Group Presentation – 20%**

Groups will deliver a 25-30-minute presentation on their assigned dramaturgical inspiration board. Groups must submit a written outline on the day of presentation. More detailed guidelines will be distributed.

- *Group 1 – Porcelain – World of the Play*
- *Group 2 – Twelfth Night – Character*
- *Group 3 – Peerless – Soundscape*
- *Group 4 – Water by the Spoonful – Theatricality*

### **Script Coverage – 15%**

Provide an analysis for *Peerless* as if you were on the play selection committee of a theater. A form will be distributed for this assignment.

### **Final Paper – 20%**

A 1500-word essay in response to an assigned topic from *Water by the Spoonful*.

### **Grading Breakdown**

<b>ASSIGNMENT</b>	<b>% of grade</b>
Participation	15
Close Reading	15
Midterm	15
Group Presentation - Inspiration Board	20
Script Coverage	15
Final Assignment	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

**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.

### **Additional Policies**

Assignment Submission: **NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED.**

**MISSED CLASSES – It is your responsibility to obtain information about missed class discussions and assignments from your colleagues.**

Classroom Etiquette:

- Please do not have other applications or web pages open in class unless I ask you to do so for a specific exercise.
- Please do not use phones in class.

**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.

## Course Schedule: Weekly Breakdown

WEEK 1	TUES 8/22	Introductions; syllabus overview; Fuchs' 'Visit to a Small Planet'
		<b>WEDDING BAND</b>
	THURS 8/24	<i>Wedding Band</i>
WEEK 2	TUES 8/29	World of the play – group research
	THURS 8/31	Character – tracking arcs; mood boards
WEEK 3	TUES 9/5	Examining structure
	THURS 9/7	<i>Wedding Band</i> wrap-up
		<b>PORCELAIN</b>
WEEK 4	TUES 9/12	Working with the text: language; Chorus
	THURS 9/14	Character – tracking arcs
WEEK 5	TUES 9/19	<b>Group 1 Presentation – World of the Play</b> ; assign Close Reading
	THURS 9/21	Exploring theatricality; metaphor
WEEK 6	TUES 9/26	<i>Porcelain</i> wrap-up
		<b>TWELFTH NIGHT</b>
	THURS 9/28	<i>Twelfth Night</i> reading
WEEK 7	TUES 10/3	<i>Twelfth Night</i> reading (cont)
	THURS 10/5	World of the play – setting; sights & sounds; mood & tone
	SAT 10/7	<b>DUE - Close Reading Assignment – 11am</b>
WEEK 8	TUES 10/10	<b>Group 2 Presentation – Character</b> ; assign Midterm
	THURS 10/12	<b>FALL RECESS – NO CLASS</b>
WEEK 9	TUES 10/17	Working with the text: language
	THURS 10/19	Working with the text: language (cont)
WEEK 10	TUES 10/24	<i>Twelfth Night</i> wrap-up
		<b>PEERLESS</b>
	THURS 10/26	Adaptation – source material; Character – Shakespearean pursuits
	SAT 10/21	<b>DUE – Midterm – 11am</b>
WEEK 11	TUES 10/31	Character Soundtrack Assignment DUE in-class
	THURS 11/2	<b>Group 3 Presentation – Soundscape</b> ; assign Script Coverage
WEEK 12	TUES 11/7	Working with the text: comparing language with <i>Macbeth</i>
	THURS 11/9	<i>Peerless</i> wrap-up
	SAT 11/11	<b>DUE – Script Coverage – 11am</b>
		<b>WATER BY THE SPOONFUL</b>
WEEK 13	TUES 11/14	<i>Water by the Spoonful</i> reading
	THURS 11/16	World of the play – real, romanticized, magical
WEEK 14	TUES 11/21	<b>Group 4 Presentation – Theatricality</b>
	THURS 11/23	<b>THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO CLASS</b>
WEEK 15	TUES 11/28	Working with the text – scenes of climax
	THURS 11/30	<i>Water by the Spoonful</i> wrap-up; Assign Final
<b>FINAL</b>	<b>THURS 12/7</b>	<b>FINAL ASSIGNMENT DUE 1:00pm</b>

## 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 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](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](http://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](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://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](http://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.