

**THTR 574b 63240D Dramatic Writing
Across Media for Playwrights**

Fall 2023 Thursday 8:00 - 9:50pm

Location: McClintock, Room 102 (Conference Room)
1010 W. Jefferson Blvd., Los Angeles

Instructor: Inda Craig-Galván

Office: I am available by appointment. Contact me via email or phone, at least 24 hours in advance to schedule a meeting.

Office Hours: By appointment only.

Contact Info: craiggal@usc.edu; 818-310-8837

www.indacraig-galvan.com

Emails and calls will receive a reply within 48 hours.

IT Help: USC Information Technology Services

<http://itservices.usc.edu> School of Dramatic Arts – Mr. Prakash Shirke. Contact Info: shirke@usc.edu; 213-740-1288.

Course Description

Catalogue description: *Intensive overview of career paths for playwrights in a wide array of media as they exist now, and as new opportunities arise.*

There are several career paths in a variety of media that allow writers to apply their playwriting and dramaturgical skills. This course seeks to introduce early career playwrights to established and emerging career opportunities. Each week will provide a concentrated exploration into a different media form. Some of the media examined include fiction podcasts, audio plays, writing for live-action television, animation writing, video games, and interactive media. We will also look at dramaturgy, both in theatre and as an essential tool for working in other media.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, participants will create one **Story/Character Worksheet** for a new project from one of the medium covered during the semester. Additionally, students will create one **Outline** for a short-form project of the writer's choosing from the media forms introduced. **Weekly in-class assignments** will give students safe-space practice in each of the topics covered.

Both of these projects intersect with the learning objectives of the MFADW in which students pursue a level of mastery of the elements of dramatic writing, including:

- Character development, focusing particularly on creating unique, multidimensional characters;
- Creation of the world of the piece;
- Story development, including an understanding of progressive action and the nature of conflict;
- Distinctive dialogue, including knowledge of the difference between dialogue and conversation, plus an ability to wield language to create rhythm, pace, sound, to produce emotional expression.
- Metaphor and imagery to expand subtext and the internal life of the play.
- A distinctive and authentic voice and vision;
- Point of view—the playwright's own and that of the writing project;
- Mood, tone, atmosphere, environment;
- Research and a wide range of tools for preparation;
- Assessment and revision.

Prerequisite(s): THTR 574A

Course Notes

Supplemental reading materials, including articles relevant to the course and worksheets, will be posted on Blackboard.

As part of this course's section on dramaturgy, **9/7/2023** has been designated as time for the graduate writing students to attend SDA performance rehearsals and to work on dramaturgical research.

There will be no class 10/12 (Fall Recess). There will be no class 11/23/2023 (Thanksgiving Day).

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Illuminating the World of the Play, written by Amy Steele. [Link to article](#) here and available on Blackboard. *Story/Character Worksheet* handout. Available on Blackboard.

Evil Eye original audio play, written by Madhuri Shekar. Available on [Audible](#).

a hit dog will holler (play), written by Inda Craig-Galván. Distributed in class.

a hit dog will holler podcast Episodes 1-4, written by Inda Craig-Galván. Available on [Radiotopia.fm](#), [apple podcasts](#).

Chicago Party Aunt Ep 101, written by Chris Witaske, Jon Barinholtz, Katie Rich. Available on Netflix.

Optional Readings and Supplementary Materials

Backwards & Forwards, written by David Ball. Available in Kindle & paperback format on [Amazon](#).

Mountaintop LA Theatre Works cast performance, written by Katori Hall. Available on [Audible](#).

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Weekly in-class writing assignments – Each week we will examine a different medium by viewing/listening to/engaging with examples from each. We will then write and share our work in class, in the vein of that week's medium. We are not striving for perfection, because writing is rewriting. These assignments will be graded on artistic exploration within the format and style of the week's topic.

Story/Character Document and Revision – Following our exploration of television pilot writing, you will create a Story/Character Document based on the Worksheet found on Blackboard. The Document is due 10/5. We will discuss and offer feedback in class 10/19, then you will revise your Document. The Revision is due 10/26.

Outline for Short-Form Project and Revision – Toward the end of the semester, you will have done a concentrated study of various media in which you can utilize your playwriting and dramaturgical skills. Select one format, and create an Outline for this short-form project. For live-action television and animated television, for example, a 5-10 minute final product is the goal to have in mind. Same for an audio play. For a 6-episode fiction podcast, focus only on the pilot episode. You will only be taking this project to the outline stage during this course. The Outline is due 11/9. We will discuss and offer feedback in class 11/16, then you will revise your Outline. The Revision is due as part of your final exam, 12/12.

Participation

This course is modeled as a professional, artistic workshop. Your dramaturgical peer feedback is vital to your cohort and is equally important for the development of your own work. The collaborative nature of theatre – and the other media this course covers – necessitates active participation. Your sharing of ideas, questions, input, and in-class work will be considered as part of your participation grade.

Special Note

All students enrolled in MFADW are required to attend program events. This includes all of the New Works Festival events (NWF I, II, and III), Western Edge Playwrights' Salon events, and the student orientation held in late August. While some of these dates are not yet solidified, please put the times/dates in your calendar as soon as you can. Because we are monitoring professional development in every course that you take,

and in the MFADW overall, your participation in these program events will have a direct impact on your annual review. Please make any and all travel plans for after the New Works Festival III.

Grading Breakdown

Your grade will be based on multiple components: the inquiry into various media, formats, and structures; weekly in-class assignments, critical analysis (which includes reading and discussion of assigned texts and media, as well as other participants' work); the development of your two projects including writing and revising; and completion of your Document and Outline. Please bear in mind that you earn your grade based on the timely completion of your work, plus the quality of your work. Late assignments are marked down, approximately 5 points.

Components of the overall grade are weighted as follows:

Assessment Tool	% of Grade
Dramaturgical Feedback for Peers	20
Weekly In-Class Assignments	10
Critical Analysis of Media Materials	10
Story/Character Document	10
Story/Character Revised Document	15
Outline	15
Revised Outline	20
TOTAL	100

Grading Scale for SDA: **A** indicates work of excellent quality; **B** of good quality; **C** of acceptable quality; **D** of below average quality; and **F** indicates inadequate work.

USC GRADING SCALE

Overall grading is determined on the following scale:

96-100%=A 95-91%=A-

88-90%=B+ 85-87%=B 81-84%=B-

78-80%=C+ 75-77%= C 71-74%= C-

67-70%=D+ 66-64%=D 61-63%=D- F = 60 and below

[Failing Grade for Graduate Credit = C-]

- “Excellent” indicates that the student couples clear understanding of the class material with original and creative insight, as demonstrated by their work; “Good” means that the student demonstrates a clear understanding of the material and has done the work well; “Acceptable” indicates that the student demonstrates a general understanding of the material but with some gaps; “Poor” indicates that there are identifiable gaps in the student’s understanding of the class material; “Failure” is the result of the student not having completed his or her assignments coupled with poor understanding of the material.
- When the average 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 good, and will be weighted toward the negative end of the scale for those with poor attendance and participation.

Assignment Submission Policy

The first drafts of the Story/Character Worksheet and Outline are to be submitted via email to the professor and classmates so we may all give dramaturgical feedback. The revisions of each are to be submitted only to the professor via Blackboard.

Due dates: Story/Character Worksheet is due **10/5/2023** with revisions due **10/26/2023**; Outline is due **11/9/2023** with your revised final project (Outline) due **12/12/2023**.

In-class assignments will be read aloud and critiqued. A laptop computer with internet access is helpful for each student to share these in-class assignments. Students may hand-write the in-class work, but be prepared to share for others to read aloud.

Grading Timeline

Assignments will be graded with feedback one week after they're submitted.

Attendance

Do your best to be present for all classes. If you are going to be absent, please notify the professor as soon as possible. If you are feeling ill, take care of yourself and, again, notify the professor that you will be absent. It is your responsibility—and SOLELY YOUR RESPONSIBILITY—to make up work you have missed and to obtain information about missed class discussions or missed assignments from your classmates or Blackboard.

Classroom Norms

We will use the Liz Lehrman [method for critical response](#) steps: 1. Statements of meaning; 2. Artist as questioner; and 3. Neutral questions. Let's strive to always be respectful in tone and in our non-verbal communication. Let's ask questions for clarification and for further understanding. And let's only say what we truly believe.

Zoom Etiquette

Should we need to hold class over Zoom, please respect the following guidelines:

- Whenever possible, use your computer to log-in to the class rather than your phone. This will help us with the quality of visuals and audio, and will present fewer problems when sharing screens.
- Your camera must be on at all times, unless you are requested to hide video.
- Please use ear buds or headphones if you are in an environment with distracting noise.
- When not speaking (for example, during a reading of a scene, when you are not playing a role), please mute your microphone. During discussions feel free to leave your mic on, but remember to take turns speaking as Zoom isn't great with voice overlap.
- Remember that you are in class, therefore behavior appropriate to class should be followed.
- You may use your devices for research that enhances the discussion during class, but please stay attuned to what is going on while engaged in research.
- Remember: the class session is being recorded. This includes the chat.

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 the creation of original dramatic works and the use of 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. If only the AMPTP took this course...

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 with me as the instructor to offer any feedback on the course.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

	Topics/Daily Activities	Deliverable	Readings and Homework
Week 1 Aug. 24	Course overview; intro of the Story/Character Worksheet		Read Amy Steele's Dramaturgy article (Blackboard); Read <i>Backwards & Forwards</i> Part 1
Week 2 Aug. 31	Dramaturgy: the role of the dramaturg; practices in other media	Discussion of Dramaturgy article; <i>Backwards & Forwards Part 1</i>	Read <i>Backwards & Forwards</i> Part 2
Week 3 Sept. 7	Dramaturgy in the rehearsal room		Listen to <i>Evil Eye</i> by Madhuri Shekar; Optional: Listen to <i>Mountaintop</i> cast recording by Katori Hall
Week 4 Sept. 14	Audio plays: the what and how; adaptation v. original for audio	Discussion of <i>Backwards & Forwards Part 2</i> ; Discussion of <i>Evil Eye</i>	Listen to Episodes 1 - 4 of <i>a hit dog will holler</i> podcast by Inda Craig-Galván; Read <i>a hit dog will holler</i> play by Inda Craig-Galván
Week 5 Sept. 21	Fiction podcasts: what you see v. what you hear and how to write around/through it	Discussion of <i>a hit dog will holler</i> adaptation from play for live theatre to audio podcast	Prepare to discuss 2 ideas for short-form writing for final project
Week 6 Sept. 28	Television: a crash course in staffing, formats, samples, pilot writing		Write first draft of Story/Character Document
Week 7 Oct. 5	Television (and film) Part 2: Agents v. managers	Turn in Story/Character Document	Read your classmates' Story/Character Documents
Week 8 Oct. 12	No class - Fall Recess		Watch Episode 1 of <i>Chicago Party Aunt</i>
Week 9 Oct. 19	Feedback Session 1; Animation for TV and film	In-class dramaturgical feedback on Story/Character Docs; Discuss <i>Chicago Party Aunt</i>	Revise Story/Character Document
Week 10 Oct. 26	Outlining for TV, film, and anything not theatre	Turn in Revised Story/Character Document Pitch; Discuss final project ideas	Begin work on Outline
Week 11 Nov. 2	Video games: why are so many playwrights writing video games?	Discuss stumbling blocks on the road to Outline	Continue work on Outline to turn in 11/9
Week 12 Nov. 9	"New" media: what that means today	Turn in Outline	Read your classmates' Outlines
Week 13 Nov. 16	Feedback Session 2	In-class dramaturgical feedback on Outlines	Revise Outline
Week 14 Nov. 23	No class - Thanksgiving		
Week 15 Nov. 30	Alternate paths to theatre production		Continue to revise Outline
FINALS WEEK Dec. 12		Turn in Revised Outline	

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. 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>.

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. [The Office of Student Accessibility Services](http://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b) (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.

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 IX 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.

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>
