

THTR 465 – Playwriting III

63090R/Units: 4

Spring 2024 — TUES, THURS — 4:00-5:50pm

Location: DMC 207

Instructor: Boni B. Alvarez

Office Hours: by appt: TUES, THURS 11am-12:30pm

Office: MCC 212

Contact Info: bbalvare@usc.edu

(I will reply as soon as I can, but please allow 24 hours for a response.)

Course Description

This course is the continuation of the work begun in Playwriting II. A twice-weekly workshop delving deeper into the elements of dramatic writing for the stage via writing exercises, reading and presentation of scenes, and extensive in-class analysis and dramaturgy.

Prerequisite: THTR 366

Learning Objectives

- Through exploratory exercises, students cultivate and sharpen their individual playwright's voice.
- Through readings of contemporary plays and essays on playwriting, students learn how to use their lived experiences in their work.
- Students will collectively build and nurture a fertile and safe space for the ensemble of writers.
- Students will complete a first draft of a new full-length dramatic work for the stage.
- Through weekly workshop and feedback sessions, students strengthen their command of revision.
- Through the experience of salon-style readings, students will learn how to engage actors in the development of their plays. Subsequently, they will develop skills of self-assessment – identifying what is working, what needs expansion, and the problem areas of their plays.

Required Readings

Texts marked with an asterisk (*) have been ordered through the USC Bookstore. All other texts will be distributed via Blackboard.

- Alvarez, Boni B. *Ruby, Tragically Rotund*

- Diaz, Noah. *Richard & Jane & Dick & Sally*
- Jacobs-Jenkins, Branden. *Neighbors*
- *O'Brien, Dan. *A Story That Happens: On Playwriting, Childhood & Other Traumas*
- *Vogel, Paula. *How I Learned to Drive*

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Assignment Submission Policy

NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED.

The work required for this course is creative, towards the goal of creating art. Works of art are subjective and difficult to qualify. Your grade in this course will largely be determined by the thoroughness of your effort, your engagement in process, and the imagination displayed in the exercises and pages submitted.

Participation – 15%

Students must actively participate in the discussion topics, demonstrate preparedness of the assigned readings, and practice engaged volunteerism for in-class readings. In a playwriting workshop, active listening & engagement are imperative – students should be respectful and generous when offering and receiving feedback.

Empathy is a requirement for this course. Any playwright worth their salt has something important to say about the world we collectively inhabit. It is imperative we nurture a creative safe space, one in which everyone feels secure sharing and revealing themselves, and in which everyone is comfortable taking artistic risks. Behavior that endangers the creative space will adversely affect your participation grade.

Bake-Off Preparation – 20%

Students will be assessed on the depth of the exercises in preparation for the bake-off (Painting & Music exercise; Character exploration; Play Pitch; Character Monologues).

Bake-Off Draft – 25%

Modeled after Paula Vogel's Bake-Off, students will complete a draft of a new full-length play in an expanded version of a bake-off.

Revised Draft – 30%

Students will submit a revised draft of their new plays. Plays will be assessed on the overall depth and quality of revisions. To earn full points, students must demonstrate a professional degree of commitment to in-class exercises leading up to the play's second reading.

Final Assignment – 10%

In a 1-page Artistic Statement (modeled after professional statements required by development organizations – ie: O'Neill; Playwrights Center; Bay Area Playwrights

Festival), students will evaluate the draft of their dramatic work and identify areas for development, further exploration, and revision.

Grading Breakdown

ASSIGNMENT	% of grade
Participation	15
Bake-Off Prep (4 exercises)	20
Bake-Off Draft	25
Revised Draft	30
Final Statement	10
TOTAL	100

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.

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.

<u>WK/DATE</u>	<u>WEEKLY SCHEDULE</u>
1 TUES 1/9	Building a workshop ensemble Getting to know you - Storytelling; Down the YouTube Hole; Syllabus review
THURS 1/11	Artistic sources of inspiration Paintings – a picture can say a thousand words; Music – the soundtracks of our lives
2 TUES 1/16	Where are you in your play? <i>Alvarez's Ruby, Tragically Rotund;</i> <i>O'Brien's <u>A Story That Happens</u></i>
THURS 1/18	Turning trauma into candy <i>Vogel's <u>How I Learned to Drive</u>;</i> <i>O'Brien's <u>A Story That Happens (cont)</u></i>
3 TUES 1/23	World of the play: settings, locations & rules of the world <i>Diaz's <u>Richard & Jane & Dick & Sally</u>;</i> <i>O'Brien's <u>A Story That Happens (cont)</u></i>
THURS 1/25	Theatricality <i>Jacobs-Jenkins' <u>Neighbors</u></i> Character: Who's showing themselves?
4 TUES 1/30	NO CLASS
THURS 2/1	Prophecies, Conjurings & Reckonings Play Pitches DUE – What's calling to be written?
5 TUES 2/6	Exploratory Character Monologues DUE
THURS 2/8	Character Exploration (cont)
SAT 2/11	Bake-Off – 10:30am-6:30pm
6 TUES 2/13	NO CLASS
THURS 2/15	NO CLASS
SAT 2/17	Bake-Off Draft DUE – noon
7 TUES 2/20	Playwright feedback session
THURS 2/22	Workshop: new pages Reading Prep – Identifying points of interest and investigation; prepare questions for creative team
8 TUES 2/27	Playwright 1 – Salon Reading (via Zoom) DRAFT DUE – SUN 2/25 @noon
THURS 2/29	Playwright 2 – Salon Reading (via Zoom) DRAFT DUE – MON 2/26 @noon
9 TUES 3/5	Playwright 3 – Salon Reading (via Zoom) DRAFT DUE – SUN 3/3 @noon
THURS 3/7	Post Reading Debrief
TUES 3/12	SPRING BREAK
THURS 3/14	SPRING BREAK
10 TUES 3/19	Workshop: openings, scenes of climax & endings
THURS 3/21	Workshop: openings, scenes of climax & endings (cont)
11 TUES 3/26	Workshop: openings, scenes of climax & endings (cont)
THURS 3/28	Workshop: new pages/revisions
12 TUES 4/2	Workshop: new pages/revisions (cont)
THURS 4/4	Workshop: new scenes, THE UNEXPECTED

13	TUES 4/9	NO CLASS	
	THURS 4/11	Workshop: new pages/revisions	
14	TUES 4/16	Playwright 1 – Reading (via Zoom)	DRAFT DUE – SUN 4/14 @ noon
	THURS 4/18	Playwright 2 – Reading (via Zoom)	DRAFT DUE – MON 4/15 @noon
15	TUES 4/23	Playwright 3 – Reading (via Zoom)	DRAFT DUE – SUN 4/21 @noon
	THURS 4/25	Post Reading Debrief & Feedback	
	THURS 5/2	4:30-6:30pm	FINAL

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>.

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.

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.

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

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

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

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, 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

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

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

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, 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

Non-emergency assistance or information.