

# USC School of Dramatic Arts

## THTR-500 DRAMATURGICAL PERSPECTIVES AND APPROACHES

Units: 2.0

Spring 2024—Monday—5:00-7:50PM

Location: SOS-B50

Instructor: Luis Alfaro, Associate Professor

Office: JEF Upstairs #207A (Jefferson & McClintock)

Office Hours: By Appointment

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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW**

A weekly workshop investigating the art and craft of dramatic writing initiated/completed in other MFA in Dramatic Writing courses. This can also be a course for initiating work without the pressure of its completion. This course will also focus on the art of rewriting and preparing text for submission and production.

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Students will examine and re-examine work generated in other courses to refine a work into completion. How do I think about my work in parts versus the whole? How do I rewrite a play without starting over completely? We will examine work that is driven by notes from other classes, theaters, and productions. We will examine the work through character. We will examine the work through the dynamics of time, environment, event. We will examine the work through style and tone. We will examine the work through dramatic tension and story.

### **REQUIRED READINGS AND SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS**

*The Presence of the Actor*

Joseph Chaikin

Publisher: Theatre Communications Group (TCG):

ISBN-10: 1559360305 / ISBN-13: 978-1559360302

*Towards a Process of Generous Criticism*

Liz Lerman

[professor will provide]

### **DESCRIPTION OF GRADING CRITERIA AND ASSESSMENT OF ASSIGNMENTS**

This class is process oriented. Finished works are not required. We are looking at the parts that make the whole. Coming in with a draft in the making or that has already been considered elsewhere is ideal. We are focusing on the elements here, so what is essential is your presence.

Assignments are presented in the classroom. Therefore, it is expected that you will bring your completed assignments to class and share them. I am assuming you are typing into your personal computer and either preparing .PDF or printed work to share.

*It is difficult to qualify an artwork, so the discipline and timing of meeting and turning in assignments is important towards your grade. Turning in assignments late or not at all affect your grade.*

**FOR SDA Assignments:** Your written scene work is your ‘paper’. Students are expected to present their work in class. Students will be expected to focus out of class time for the preparation of their work. Class assignments will be regarded as written exams.

**FOR SDA GRADING CRITERIA:** *The grading guidelines shall clearly articulate the specific and expected standards which constitute work of excellent, good, and fair quality regarding the course in question.*

**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.

### **Grading Breakdown**

**The SDA GUIDELINES on GRADING as published elsewhere in this handbook are:**

- *Each course shall contain at least three assignments, projects, exams, papers, or exercises which shall be evaluated during the semester, and which shall provide an analytical record of each student’s progress in the course.*
- *Attendance shall be weighted at no more than 15% as per University Guidelines. Studio Courses must delineate how participation will be graded (in class exercises, scene study, etc.)*
- *There shall be no unexcused absences.*
- *No late assignments, projects, exams, papers, or exercised shall be accepted unless advance extensions have been arranged between the student and the teacher or unless exceptional circumstances occur.*

School of Theatre classes use the University’s grading 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- [Fail Grade for Graduate Credit]

67-70%=D+

66-64%=D

61-63%=D-

Criteria of evaluation will be based on the individual students’ potential for learning and creation, and grades will not be competitively based, i.e., who writes the “best” work in the class.

Students are expected to show up on time; present assignments when they are due and actively participate with in-class dramaturgical analysis and discussion of fellow class work. Class time is impossible to make up - one must be there to participate. Reliability and enthusiasm count.

### **Grade Evaluation**

In-Class Participation/Dramaturgical Analysis/Writing Assignments	80%
Midterm	10%
Final Exam	10%

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

- 4 excused absences and/or lateness for the semester. Late=absence.
- If you are out with COVID you must have tested positive. At home Rapid tests are now the University standard. You do not need to wait for PCR.

***For a specific policy on isolation, we can reference the following should a student test positive:***

### **ISOLATION INSTRUCTIONS**

Current public health guidance is that a full isolation period is 10 days, with a minimum of 5 days. Isolation means you cannot leave your residence (or have guests at your residence), except to seek medical care.

Day Zero (0) is your date your symptoms began, or if you are asymptomatic, the date of your positive test. Day One (1) is the first full day after Day Zero. Isolation instructions:

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/ncoronavirus2019/covidisolation/>

You may end isolation on day 6 with a negative antigen test.

You may meet requirements to end isolation earlier if the following criteria are met:

- You have no fever for 24 hours (without using fever-reducing medicines).
- Your symptoms are improving.
- You are able to take an Antigen/NAAT/LAMP test on Day Five (5) or later, and the results are negative.

**You will receive an automated message from Student Health on the morning of Day Six (6) to let you know how to book an antigen test appointment through MySHR.** Antigen tests are subject to supply availability.

You are required to make a truthful assessment of your condition and complete an attestation.

During days 6-10, you must exercise additional precautions:

- Wear a well-fitting surgical mask or N95 at all times both indoors and outdoors
- Eat alone or outdoors. Individuals dining on campus must use “Grab and Go” options.

If you do not have a negative antigen test on or after day 5, you must isolate for at least 10 days, and for the last 24 hours of isolation, your symptoms must be significantly improved, including no fever. Once you have met the above criteria you may end

isolation and return to campus on Day 11. A repeat or negative test is not needed nor recommended to end isolation after Day 10.

- Half a point marked down once a student reaches their limit per absence/late day per semester. For example: Absence/lateness #5 you have an A- at best. #6 B+ etc.
- Minimum passing grades for graduate credit is a "C". Students who receive a B- in any course will be placed on probation for the following term.

**FINAL EXAMINATION DATE:**

Monday, May 6, 2024, 4:30PM-6:30PM, SOS-B50

***NOTE:** All classes must meet for the Final Examination as established by the University. You may not hold your final examination on the last day of classes.*

**HOLIDAYS**

First Day of Class, Monday, January 8, 2024  
Martin Luther King, Monday, January 15, 2024  
President's Day, Monday, February 19, 2024  
Spring Recess, Sunday & Sunday, March 10-17, 2024  
Last Day of Class, Monday, April 22, 2023

**COURSE SCHEDULE: A WEEKLY BREAKDOWN**

Week #1 - Getting to Know You

[Introductions, agreements, manifestos, beginning the rewriting process. Committing to Liz Lerman process. How do we want to listen and share our work.]

Week #2 – HOLIDAY

Week #3 – Writing – Inspiration, Research

Week #4 – Prompts, Research

Week #5 – Presentation of research, dramaturgy

Week #6 – Expert

Week #7 – HOLIDAY

Week #8 – Writing

Week #9 – Dramaturgy

Week #10 – Scenes

Week #11 – HOLIDAY

Week #12 – It's your session, whole session

Week #13 – It's your session, whole session

Week #14 – Dramaturgy

Week #15 – Reading

### **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 contrasts with 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.

### **SDA PRODUCTIONS, ISPS, AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

SDA productions, ISP's 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**

### **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](https://osas.usc.edu). You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto: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](mailto: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.



## **LUIS ALFARO BIOGRAPHY**

Luis Alfaro is a Chicano playwright born and raised in downtown Los Angeles. He was most recently the Associate Artistic Director of Center Theatre Group at the Music Center of Los Angeles County, home of the Mark Taper Forum, Ahmanson & Kirk Douglas Theaters, where he produced over one hundred new play commissions, productions, workshops, and readings. He is the only playwright in the history of the Kennedy Center to have received two 'Fund for New American Play' awards in the same year. An Associate Professor at the University of Southern California, he was previously on faculty at California Institute of the Arts (Cal-Arts) and in the Writers Program at UCLA Extension. He was a University of California Regents Fellow at U.C. Riverside. He has received fellowships from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, popularly known as a "genius grant", awarded to people who have demonstrated expertise and exceptional creativity in their respective fields; The United States Artists; Ford Foundation Art of Change; Joyce Foundation; Mellon Foundation; PEN America/Laura Pels International Foundation Theater Award for a Master Dramatist, among others. He was the inaugural Playwright-in-Residence for six seasons at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (2013-2019); Playwright's Ensemble at Chicago's Victory Gardens Theatre (2013-2020); Inaugural Latinx Playwrights at the Los Angeles Theatre Center (2021-); and Ojai Playwrights Conference member (2002-2022). His plays include *Electricidad*, *Oedipus El Rey*, *Mojada*, *Delano*, *Body of Faith*, and *Straight as a Line*, which have been seen at regional theaters throughout the United States, Latin America, Canada, and Europe. His most recent play, *The Travelers*, was presented at the Magic Theater in San Francisco and the Los Angeles Theatre Center, where it was named one of the nine best plays of the year by the Los Angeles Times. Luis spent two decades in the Los Angeles Poetry and Performance Art communities. His book, *The Greek Trilogy of Luis Alfaro*, is the winner of the prestigious Greek & British Hellenic Prize. He is an Emmy winner and Emmy nominated for his short film, *Chicanismo*, which was produced by PBS, named Best Experimental Film at the San Antonio CineFestival and Best Short at CineAccion in San Francisco. His recording, *downtown*, released on SST/New Alliance Records, was awarded Best Spoken-Word Release from the National Association of Independent Record Distributors. He was a student of playwright Maria Irene Fornes, performance artist Scott Kelman, and a product of the Inner-City Cultural Center in downtown Los Angeles.