

GESM 111g: Seminar in the Arts

The Theatre SCene

Units: 4

Fall 2024

Tuesdays/Thursdays 2:00-3:50PM

Location: THH 203

Instructor: Dr. Emily Roxworthy

Office: DAB 405

Office Hours: Tuesdays 4:00-5:00PM

Contact Info: roxworth@usc.edu, 619-301-0151 cell

Course Description:

The art of conceptualizing, designing, building, rehearsing, and staging a theatrical production for a live audience involves intense collaboration between multidisciplinary artists and entrepreneurs. Using the wealth of plays and musicals performed on the USC campus and in our surrounding communities, this course immerses students from any major and background in the process of bringing a script to life onstage. Students will read four (4) scripts—four being produced for the USC School of Dramatic Arts (SDA's) mainstage season on campus, one being produced by a USC Independent Student Production (ISP) company—and learn how they were conceptualized, designed, built, rehearsed, and staged. Guest artists from the relevant productions will visit class and students will also attend the four performances, ideally with their classmates and professor. The course culminates in students casting one of our assigned scripts themselves (Fantasy Football-style) and coming up with their own concept for producing a play or musical of their choice.

Learning Objectives:

1. **Analysis:** Increase the student's ability to analyze creative endeavors, including describing them with appropriate vocabulary, examining their formal elements, and engaging in research to understand their contexts.
2. **Making:** Expand the student's knowledge about the creative process, as exemplified by specific works studied and, in many cases, by the student's own creative expression.
3. **Connectivity:** Deepen the student's appreciation of the connections between creative endeavors and the concurrent political, religious, and social conditions; show how these endeavors fulfill cultural functions or fill cultural needs.
4. **Engagement:** Increase the student's understanding of why people become lifelong supporters and participants in the arts through exposure to creative production in the contemporary environment.

The learning objectives will be achieved by studying the following texts in performance:

She Loves Me:

In a 1930s European perfumery, two salesclerks constantly spar and can't find common ground. But little do they know the anonymous pen pals they have both been falling for happen to be each other! Will love continue to blossom once their identities are finally revealed? Considered by many to be the most charming musical ever written, *She Loves Me* is a witty and romantic musical comedy from the creators of *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Cabaret*.

The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton Under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade (Marat/Sade for short):

Set in the historic French asylum where the Marquis de Sade often performed plays with his fellow inmates during their imprisonment, this play-within-a-play presents the final days of the French Revolution for the asylum's visiting director and his upper-class family. Their portrayal sheds a chilling light on the complexities of revolution and the fragility of the human mind, and the audience is forced to confront uncomfortable questions about mental illness, leadership and the true nature of freedom. Peter Weiss' Tony Award-winning masterpiece uses song and story to create a political parable that is a deep examination of human suffering and class struggle that still resonates deeply today.

As You Like It (Taub):

Tony Winner Shaina Taub and Laurie Woolery's musical adaptation of William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* is a community-centric tale of utopian Arden, filled with feuding families and mistaken identity, featuring an original folk-pop score. Forced from their homes, Orlando, Duke Senior, his daughter Rosalind, and niece Celia escape to the Forest of Arden, a magical place of transformation and self-discovery, where all are welcomed and embraced. Lost amidst the trees, the refugees find acceptance under the stars.

Seven Guitars:

This 1940s installment of August Wilson's 10-play American Century Cycle (the fifth in the series) begins in the backyard of a Pittsburgh tenement in 1948, where friends gather to mourn a blues guitarist and singer who died just as his career was on the verge of taking off.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

This is a discussion-based class but a personal computer with internet connection will be required for outside work and occasionally for class participation but only when explicitly allowed by the instructor. Phones are not be used in class unless advanced permission is given by the instructor. If necessary, please take advantage of the [USC Computing Center Laptop Loaner Program](#). USC Technology Support links that might be helpful for our class include: [Zoom information for students](#), [Brightspace help for students](#), [Software available to USC Campus](#).

Preparation (Required Readings and Supplementary Materials):

You will be reading these four scripts (ordered at the USC Bookstore):

- She Loves Me***, book by Joe Masteroff, music by Jerry Bock, lyrics by Sheldon Harnick (1963) (can provide PDF)
- The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton Under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade (Marat/Sade for short)*** by Peter Weiss (1963) <https://www.dramaticpublishing.com/marat-sade>
- As You Like It: A Musical Adaptation*** by Shaina Taub and Laurie Woolery (2022) <https://www.concordtheatricals.com/s/65819/as-you-like-it-taub>
- Seven Guitars*** by August Wilson (1995) <https://a.co/d/6QdYPfz>

You will be reading chapters from this textbook (available for purchase on Amazon.com):

- The Art of Theatre*** (4th edition) by William Missouri Downs, Lou Anne Wright, Erik Ramsey (2018)

You will also be assigned online articles and videos as indicated in the course schedule.

Deliverables (Assignments):

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Participation	150	15%
Performance Analyses (6)	300	30%
The World of the Play (2)	150	15%
Staging Paper	200	20%
Final Project	200	20%
TOTAL	1000	100%

Assignment Submission Policy

Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are due to Brightspace before the start of class on the date listed. No late work will be accepted unless agreed to IN ADVANCE by the professor.

Grading Timeline

All papers will be returned graded within two weeks of due dates.

Assignment Descriptions:

PARTICIPATION 15%

Objective: Participation includes active listening, respect for the class and various opinions, and engaging with the material, students, guests, and professor.

Attendance during seminar and at the six (6) required theatrical productions is mandatory. This course is largely discussion-based. It is up to you to come to class prepared to engage in lively conversation and respectful debate. There are many forms of meaningful participation, including insightful questions and active listening. If you tend to feel uncomfortable speaking in class, see me so we can work out a participation strategy. The class will also be visited by members of the production teams, casts, and professors from USC's SDA. This is an opportunity for students to ask questions and learn directly from with artists about the theatre-making process. Students are expected to engage with these guests and to prepare ahead of class with questions.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSES 30%

1-2 PAGES EACH

Objective: These response papers are designed for you to practice analyzing performance.

Students view six (6) theatrical productions this semester and write a one-page review of each. These are meant to be your close readings of the productions, so no additional sources are to be used. **Due dates noted in course schedule below.**

THE WORLD OF THE PLAY 15%

SUBMITTED IN CLASS AFTER PRESENTATION

Objective: These creative assignments help students learn the artistic process by conceptualizing the imagined "world" of a play or musical.

Students complete two (2) creative assignments that emulate processes that directors, designers, and actors undertake in bringing a text to life onstage:

1. The world of *She Loves Me*: Create a handwritten letter that Amalia or George might have sent each other at some point in their correspondence and then present this letter in class, explaining the significance of your choices (you will not be asked to read the text aloud, but should be prepared to explain your choice of paper type/size, formatting, and topics). **Due in class 9/24.**
2. The world of *Marat/Sade*: Using images from printed magazines and/or printed images from online, compile a collage that visualizes your inspiration for either a scenic design or costume design of this play. How do you imagine the asylum would look onstage? How do you imagine the patients would look and dress? Keep in mind that theatrical productions can be set in places and times different

than the ones originally imagined by the author (playwright). Like the handwritten letter, students will be asked to explain their collages to the class. **Due in class 10/8.**

STAGING PAPER 20% -----5-6 PAGES

Objective: This is a paper in which you will use critical analysis of the text to support performance and production choices.

Select one of these plays/musicals— *Marat/Sade*, *She Loves Me*, or *As You Like: A Musical Adaptation*—and cast it using actors whose work you have seen on stage, television or film. Your paper consists of explaining your casting choices based on the characteristics of each actor, their previous roles, and what they'd bring to the role. You must cast at least six roles and explain why each actor is your ideal choice for a particular role, supporting your choices with examples from the script as well as specific details about each actor and their work. **Due before class 11/26.**

FINAL PROJECT 20% -----6-7 PAGES

Objective: The final project will demonstrate your critical, creative, and analytical understanding of the production cycle for a play or musical.

For their final project, you will be asked to select a play or musical that was not studied in our course, conduct your own research, and then write a paper describing how you would approach producing it. What is the text about and what message or experience would you hope audiences get from its production? Where would you want to stage it and why? What type of collaborators would you seek? You must present an original thesis statement and use at least three (3) additional scholarly sources to support your argument. **Due in our final exam slot.**

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

Letter grade	Corresponding numerical point range
A	95-100
A-	90-94
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

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

This course aims to develop creative, analytical, and critical thinking skills. Therefore, 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 text, code, or other content 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 relation to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. Distributing course material without the instructor's permission will be presumed to be an intentional act to facilitate or enable academic dishonesty and is strictly prohibited. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

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.

Academic dishonesty has a far-reaching impact and is considered a serious offense against the university. Violations will result in a grade penalty, such as a failing grade on the assignment or in the course, and disciplinary action from the university itself, such as suspension or even expulsion.

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](#).

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Course Evaluations

University-wide course evaluation occurs at the end of the semester. It is an important review of your learning in this GESM and this anonymous feedback will be used to refine this course for future students. Please take the time to complete your evaluation for this course!

Course Schedule

Week 1 Introductions

8/27 first meeting

8/29 Preparation: read "Grown-Up Theatre Kids Run the World" (requires login – free through USC)
<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/20/style/grown-up-theater-kids.html>

Week 2 How to Read a Script ("Drama")

9/3 Preparation: read chapter 1 of *The Art of Theatre* (4th ed.)

9/5 Preparation: read *She Loves Me*

Week 3 How to Watch a Show ("Theatre")

9/10 Tour of SDA theatre spaces led by members of SDA's production/theatre management team

Preparation: read chapters 4 and 11 of *The Art of Theatre* (4th ed.)
extra credit - review *She Loves Me*, picture it in production (i.e. on stage)

9/12 Guest artist visit: SDA's mainstage production of *She Loves Me* (Bing Theatre 9/26-29)

Preparation: download/print and read two reviews of previous *She Loves Me* productions, one professional and one college/university

Week 4 Getting Ready to Attend *She Loves Me*

9/17 Guest artist visit: 2023 Independent Student Production (ISP) of *She Loves Me*

Preparation: read chapters 8 of *The Art of Theatre* (4th ed.); watch the 1978 BBC television adaptation of *She Loves Me* (YouTube)

9/19 Guest artist visit: student actors from SDA's 2024 mainstage production of *She Loves Me*

Preparation: read chapter 7 of *The Art of Theatre* (4th ed.)

Week 5 Opening Week of *She Loves Me*

9/24 Guest artist visit: the scenic design team from SDA's *She Loves Me*

Preparation: read chapter 9 of *The Art of Theatre* (4th ed.)

Deliverable: **"World of the Play" assignment #1 presented and handed in**

9/26 Guest artist visit: stage managing SDA's *She Loves Me*

Preparation: read chapter 5 of *The Art of Theatre* (4th ed.)

AFTER CLASS: attend *She Loves Me* opening night together at the Bing Theatre

Week 6 Reading *Marat/Sade*

10/1 Preparation: read Act I of *Marat/Sade*

10/3 Preparation: read Act II of *Marat/Sade*

Deliverable: **Performance Analysis #1 due**

Week 7 *Marat/Sade* in Performance*

10/8 Preparation: read chapter 2 of *The Art of Theatre* (4th ed.); watch 1967 film adaptation of *Marat/Sade*, directed by Peter Brook (YouTube)

Deliverable: **"World of the Play" assignment #2 presented and handed in**

10/10 NO CLASS (Fall Recess)

Week 8 Getting Ready to See *Marat/Sade*

10/15 Preparation: read chapter 3 of *The Art of Theatre* (4th ed.)

10/17 Guest artist visit: directing *Marat/Sade*

Preparation: read chapter 17 of *The Art of Theatre* (4th ed.)

Week 9 Closing of *Marat/Sade*

10/21 See 7:30pm performance of *Marat/Sade* at DAB Sanctuary Theatre

10/22 Discuss production of *Marat/Sade*

10/24 – Guest artist visit: the process of dramatic writing

Preparation: read chapter 17 of *The Art of Theatre* (4th ed.)

Deliverable: **Performance Analysis #2 due**

Week 10 Reading *As You Like It: A Musical Adaptation*

10/29 Preparation: read first half of *As You Like It* (Taub)

10/31 Preparation: read second half of *As You Like It* (Taub)

Week 11 Attending SDA's production of *As You Like It* (Taub)

11/4 See 7:30pm performance of *As You Like It: A Musical Adaptation* at the Bing Theatre

11/5 Preparation: download/print and read two reviews of previous *As You Like It* (Taub) productions, one professional and one college/university

11/7 Guest artist visit: directing a musical

Week 12 Prepare to See an August Wilson Play

11/12 Preparation: read Act I of *Seven Guitars* by August Wilson

11/14 Preparation: read Act II of *Seven Guitars* by August Wilson

AFTER CLASS: attend the Black Arts Collective's *Seven Guitars* together at the Scene Dock Theatre

Week 13 Debrief *Seven Guitars* Production

11/19 Guest artist visit: students from the Black Arts Collective (BAC)

Preparation: download/print and read two reviews of previous *Seven Guitars* productions, one professional and one college/university

11/21 ZOOM CLASS Guest artist visit: casting a play or musical
Hong Kong trip 11/19 after class or 11/20 through Monday

Week 14 Debrief Staging Paper

11/26 No preparation – discuss process of writing your staging papers

Deliverable: **Staging Paper due to Brightspace before you come to class**

11/28 NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING

Week 15 Preparing Final Projects and Course Wrap-Up

12/3 ZOOM CLASS

12/5 Last day of class

FINALS WEEK

12/12

Deliverable: **Final Project due**

SDA's Equity, Diversity & Inclusion + Intimacy in Theatre 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>

Statement on University Academic 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.

Student Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress:

To be eligible for certain kinds of financial aid, students are required to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) toward their degree objectives. Visit the Financial Aid Office webpage for undergraduate- and graduate-level SAP eligibility requirements and the appeals process.

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 consists 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) 740-2500

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.