



THTR125

Text Studies for Production

Fall 2024

Units: 4

Time M, W 12:00 -1:50 pm

Location: SOS B37

Instructor: Melinda C. Finberg

Office: MCC 212

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2 pm – 3 pm and by appointment. I know students' availability may not line up with any times I schedule, so just contact me to set up a mutually convenient time. I want to meet with you.

Contact Info: finberg@usc.edu Emails will be responded to within 48 hours – and generally much sooner.

Teaching Assistant:

Office:

Office Hours:

Contact Info:

IT Help:

Hours of Service: 24/7

Contact Info: 213-740-5555

Course Description

This course encourages students to take initiative and develop independent, analytical thinking about dramatic texts through close and careful reading. We 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.

- 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 5 plays, three of which are common to all sections of THTR 125 and two texts which vary per section.

Learning Objectives

The course is designed to equip students with basic analytical tools and interpretive perspectives that will enhance learning in all future SDA courses including acting, dramatic writing, directing, and tech/design:

- Apply theories of dramatic action to analyze a play's structure moment by moment.
- Perform close readings of dramatic scenes or passages by using all the material the playwright supplies in the script in addition to researching the history and details of the scene's setting and the actions of the scene.
- Analyze both verse and prose text
- Develop mindfulness of the collaborative relationships between actor, text, theatre event, and the audience as expressed in a dramatic text.
- Create Script Coverages for use by literary offices and agents

Prerequisite(s): None

Course Notes

This course will be graded with letter grades. Links to required videos will be posted on Brightspace Any Powerpoints I show will also be made available on Brightspace.

I reserve the right to make changes in the syllabus in order to accommodate the needs of the class.

Communication

Our primary form of out-of-class communication will be email. I will post general class information on the Announcements page of Brightspace.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

A WiFi connection is necessary to access material and submit assignments on Blackboard.

The class's primary source of sharing online information is Blackboard, which you can access with your USC account. Here are links for information for the [USC Computing Center Laptop Loaner Program](#), Information for software support and availability: [Zoom information for students](#), [Brightspace help for students](#), [Software available to USC Campus.](#)]

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Susan Glaspell, *Trifles*

Alice Childress, *Wedding Band*
William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*
August Wilson, *Gem of the Ocean*
Quiara Alegria Hudes, *Water by the Spoonful*
David Ball, *Backwards and Forwards*
Elinor Fuchs, "Visit to a Small Planet"

Plays will be available at the University Book Store. With the exception *Gem of the Ocean* and *Backwards and Forwards* (which are available through standard online booksellers,) all readings will be available on Blackboard, online through the library, or on ARES, the USC online course reserves. We will be needing *Backwards and Forwards* very quickly, so please get hold of that asap. There is one copy on Reserve at Leavey Library.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Short/Creative Assignments

There are 10 of these assignments and each is only worth 4 points. They are designed as low stress assignments to develop your skills and creative responses. They should be submitted on Brightspace as directed by their due date. Late assignments will not be accepted.

Dramaturgical Glossaries: For each play we read, you will prepare a Brightspace entry that will include identifying a minimum of 5 words or concepts from the text that you don't know. Define each term, and in 2 or 3 sentences, explain how the term illuminates a deeper aspect of the characters, their relationships, or the world of the play. **These will need to be turned in by the morning we begin a new play.** Use the *Oxford English Dictionary* as your primary resource. It is available on the library databases. See Brightspace for more details.

World of the Play assignments: Based on Elinor Fuchs's exercise "Journey to a Small Planet," these exercises will ask you to use words and/or pictures to describe specific aspects of what the "planet" of the play is. An opportunity for you to consider the staging, design, and theatricality of a scene and convey your ideas. Submit these on Brightspace

"Domino" assignments

Based on our readings and discussions of the processes in David Ball's *Backwards and Forwards*, trace the actions of a scene, moment by moment, to see how one action triggers another, which triggers another, etc. in a precise and inevitable line to the conclusion of the scene or play or from the conclusion to the first moment. Submit on Brightspace.

Short Verse Analysis

As we begin studying Shakespearean verse, there will be an opportunity for a short practice exercise to check and make sure you are understanding the process. Submit on Turnitin.

Major Assignments

Assignment 1: Close Reading of an extract from Alice Childress’s *The Wedding Band*. Due Date: Tuesday, 10/5 on Brightspace under Assignments, by 11:59 pm, 750 words. (This assignment may be rewritten for re-evaluation with the permission of the Instructor)

Assignment 2: Write a scene/script coverage. This is an exercise in “selling” a play to a Literary Manager for inclusion in a season. I have provided a template and examples on Brightspace. We will discuss and practice in class. (This assignment may be rewritten for re-evaluation with the permission of the Instructor. Due Date: Tuesday, 10/26 on Brightspace by 11:59 pm, 1000 words maximum)

Assignment 3: Close Reading of verse extract from *Twelfth Night*. Due Date: Tuesday, 11/16 on Brightspace under Assignments, by 11:59 pm 750 words. Assignment may NOT be rewritten, but there will be a practice reading before the assignment.

Final Project: This can take the form of a design, acting/directing, or dramaturgical project. I will provide prompts after you have submitted your script coverage. This will be your final exam and will be due by your exam date and time. No extensions possible. The “Stage Manager” for each group will submit the written and visual work of the team on Turnitin before or immediately after the presentation. Of the 15% the project is worth, 10% will consist of your group grade and 5% will consist of your individual grade. They will be added together and averaged.

Participation

Class participation includes taking part in class discussions, engaging with group learning in break-out sessions, responding to prompts submitted on the Discussion Board or Journal pages of Brightspace that contribute to class discussions or group work. It also includes observing Netiquette and helping to make the class a comfortable place for all to express different opinions.

Grading Breakdown

Assignment	Points	Percentage of Grade
Short/Creative Assignments	40	40%
5 Dramaturgical Glossaries for each play 4pts each	20	
World of the Play <i>Trifles</i>	4	
Domino Assignment <i>Trifles</i>	4	
World of Play <i>Wedding Band</i> – Reflection on life during Spanish Flu	4	
Short Verse Analysis	4	
World of the play <i>Gem of the Ocean</i> Reflection on Journey to the City of Bones	4	
Close Reading	100	10%
Verse Close Reading	100	10%

Script Coverage	100	10%
Final Project	100	15%
Class Participation	100	15%
TOTAL	540	100%

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

A	94-100
A-	90-93
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

Assignment Rubrics

Rubrics will be posted on the Brightspace Assignments page underneath the Assignment description

Assignment Submission Policy

Assignments should be submitted to Assignments, and for backup to Turnitin, on Brightspace, unless otherwise indicated, before 11:59 pm of the due date

Grading Timeline

Grades will be released and comments will be available two weeks after the due date.

Additional Policies

- Please refrain from using technology during class for anything other than classwork.
- We will be taking a short break in the middle of class. That time is not only a “bio” break but a time to relax and check in with each other informally.
- Remember, our primary goal is to learn from each other and creating a learning community relies on consistent commitment from each of us.

Attendance

- No portion of your grade will be awarded for class attendance, but unexcused absences can be the basis for lowering grades in Class Participation. Excused absences include illness, student athletes with approved Travel Request Letters, other students with departmental letters indicating a need to provide service to the School, and students who give advance notice of religious observation.
- Students are responsible for material covered on days they are absent. Please contact me if you have any difficulties with this.

Common Ground Rules for Class

In our meetings:

- Listen actively and attentively.
- Respect each other's views
- Respect others' rights to hold opinions and beliefs that differ from your own.
- Ask questions when you do not understand; do not assume you know what others are thinking.
- It's OK to ask a question that you think may be unsophisticated or uninformed
- If you are offended by anything said during discussion, acknowledge it immediately.
- If you think something is missing from the conversation, don't wait for someone else to say it; say it yourself
- Refer to the text to support your ideas.
- Support good ideas that other people have, even if they are different from your own.
- Recognize and/or remember that we have different backgrounds.
- We all make mistakes at times. You may correct someone (including me) as long as you do so respectfully.
- Trust that people are always doing the best they can.

Zoom Etiquette

Should we need to have class via Zoom, common ground rules for class still apply. In addition:

- Mute when you are not speaking and raise your hand when you wish me to call on you
- Keep your camera on, unless you have contacted me before class to explain why you cannot do so

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.
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- *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.

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 could result in outcomes such as a grade penalty or as a failing grade on the assignment or in the course, and disciplinary action such as 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 on AI Generators

Since creating, 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 limited to generating ideas. Using AI generated text in writing your assignments is prohibited in this course, will be identified as plagiarism, and will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

You should also be aware that AI text generation tools may present incorrect information, biased responses, and incomplete analyses; thus they are not prepared to produce text that meets the standards of this course. To adhere to our university values, you must cite any AI-generated material (e.g., text, images, etc.) included or referenced in your work **and provide the prompts used to generate the content**. Using an AI tool to generate content without proper attribution will be treated as plagiarism and reported to the Office of Academic Integrity. Please review the instructions in each assignment for more details on how and when to use AI Generators for your submissions.

Please ask me if you are unsure about what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Group work. Unless specifically designated as a 'group project,' all assignments are expected to be completed individually.

If found responsible for an academic violation, students may be assigned university outcomes, such as suspension or expulsion from the university, and grade penalties, such as an "F" grade on the assignment, exam, and/or in the course.

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 relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Course Evaluations

Course evaluation occurs at the end of the semester university-wide. It is an important review of students' experience in the class. The process and intent of the end-of-semester evaluation should be provided. A [mid-semester evaluation](#) will be provided for early course correction.

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*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: A Weekly Breakdown

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverables/ Due Dates
Week 1 8/26 - 28	Intro <i>Trifles</i>	Elinor Fuchs "Visit to a Small Planet" Glaspell, <i>Trifles</i>	Dramaturgical Glossary due 8/28 Using words and/or images, and Elinor Fuchs's approach and create a description of the "small planet" of <i>Trifles</i> . Due Wednesday, 9/4 on Brightspace
Week 2 9/2- 4	Labor Day – no class <i>Trifles</i>	Ball, <i>Backwards and Forwards</i> , Part 1, "Shape"	Ball's domino theory. Describe the sequence of dominoes falling (or, standing back up) in <i>Trifles</i> from when Mr. Hale says he has got the horses ready to the end. Due Wednesday, 9/9 on Brightspace
Week 3 9/9 - 11	<i>Trifles</i> <i>Trifles</i>	<i>Backwards and Forwards</i> , Part 3, "Tricks of the Trade"	
Week 4 9/16 - 18	<i>Wedding Band</i> <i>Wedding Band</i>	Childress, <i>Wedding Band Backwards and Forwards</i> , Part 2, "Methods"	Dramaturgical Glossary due Monday, 9/16 on Brightspace

Week 5 9/23 - 25	<i>Wedding Band</i>		Assign Reflection on life during Spanish flu epidemic Due Monday, 9/23 on Brightspace Assign Close Reading on Wedding Band. Due Wednesday, 10/9 on Brightspace
Week 6 9/30 – 10/2	<i>Wedding Band</i>	<i>Water by the Spoonful</i>	
Week 7 10/7- 9 Fall Break 10/10-10/11	<i>Water by the Spoonful</i>		Dramaturgical Glossary due Monday, 10/7 on Brightspace Close Reading on <i>Wedding Band</i> due Thursday, 10/9 on Brightspace Assign Script Coverage. Due Monday, 10/28 on Brightspace
Week 8 10/14 - 16	<i>Water by the Spoonful</i>		
Week 9 10/21 - 23	<i>Water by the Spoonful</i> <i>Twelfth Night</i>	<i>Twelfth Night</i>	
Week 10 10/28 - 30	Analyzing verse <i>Twelfth Night</i> <i>Twelfth Night</i>		Script Coverage Due Monday, 10/28 on Brightspace Dramaturgical Glossary due Wednesday, 10/30 in Journal
Week 11 11/4– 11/6	<i>Twelfth Night</i> <i>Twelfth Night</i>		Verse Analysis of short passage from sonnet or <i>Twelfth Night</i> Due Wednesday 11/20 on Brightspace Assign close reading from <i>Twelfth Night</i> . Due Wednesday 11/16
Week 12 11/11 – Veterans’Day no class 11/13	<i>Twelfth Night</i>	<i>Gem of the Ocean</i>	Dramaturgical Glossary due Monday 11/13 on Brightspace

Week 13 11/18 - 20	<i>Gem of the Ocean</i>	Article by Teneice Johnson	Verse Analysis from <i>Twelfth Night</i>. Due Wednesday 11/20 on Brightspace
Week 14 11/25 Thanksgiving break 11/27 - 28	<i>Gem of the Ocean</i>		Assign Reflection on Journey to the City of Bones, Due Wednesday, 12/4
Week 15 12/2 - 4	<i>Gem of the Ocean</i> Review, Summing up		
FINAL	Group Presentations	No extensions possible	Date: check date and time of the final for this class, consult the USC <i>Schedule of Classes</i> at classes.usc.edu .

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 Disability Accommodations 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 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

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

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.
