USC School of Dramatic Arts

THTR 125: Text Studies for Production
Fall 2024/62643D: Tues/Thurs 12:00-1:50 pm PDT
Units: 4
Location: Waite Phillips Hall (WPH) B26
    3470 Trousdale Parkway

Instructor: Lena Ford
Student Hours/Additional Instruction:
Monday 2:00-3:00 pm or by appointment.
Contact Info: lenaford@usc.edu

Course Assistant: Kai Zhang
Contact Info: kzhang89@usc.edu

Course Description

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

Course Overview

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 five 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. Our goals for students are:

- To analyze dramatic text in terms of action, conflict, symbolism, language, socio-historical context, and dramatic structure to provide an in-depth study of how plays work.
- To develop the students' ability to uncover how the playwright provides them with the material they need to create a successful production.
- To hone their ability to read and analyze these dramatic works deeply and theatrically in order to see them as dramatic scores.
- To improve their mindfulness of the collaborative relationships between actor, text, theater event, and the audience as expressed in a dramatic text.

Course Notes
Students must check email and Brightspace regularly, which means at least once every 24 hours for email—or when directed by the instructor. Videos will be shown in class. There will be occasional online research. If you are experiencing difficulties with Brightspace, please call 213.740.5555.

Required Readings
- *Wedding Band* by Alice Childress (Samuel French)
- *Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare (Oxford World Classics)
- *Water by the Spoonful* by Quiara Alegría Hudes (TCG)
- *Teenage Dick* by Mike Lew
- *Dry Land* by Ruby Rae Spiegel

Supplementary reading and other materials will be available on Brightspace. All required texts are available for purchase through the bookstore or through online booksellers, such as Amazon.

Assignments and Deadlines

<u>**Dramaturgy**</u>: You will compile a small dramaturgical glossary and analysis for each play we read. These will be prepared and due to in Brightspace at the first class meeting where we begin to discuss the play. Please be able to access the assignment through an electronic device for class discussions.

While you are reading, identify five words/concepts from the text that you do not know. Define each term and in **2-3 sentences** explain how the term illuminates a deeper aspect of the characters, their relationships, or the world of the play.

Include one dramaturgical question to be presented to the class for discussion.

You will be assessed on the following:
1. Length of Entries: The entries are the required length.
2. Appropriateness and Vitality of Entries/Question: The entries define the terms and make serious efforts to explain their relevance to the play. **Due before the start of class.**
(30 pts each)

<u>**Written Assignment #1**</u>: Close Reading of an extract from *Water by the Spoonful.*
700 words. **Due 10/1 by 11:59pm via Turnitin on Brightspace.**

<u>**Midterm**</u>: In-class **Group Presentation** based on a close reading of an extract (to be indicated on the assignment brief) of *Twelfth Night on* **10/22.** Written component is 700 words and **due before start of class 10/22 via email.**

<u>**Written Assignment #2**</u>: Script coverage. Provide "coverage" for *Wedding Band* **OR** *Teenage Dick* as if you were on the play selection committee of a theater, play development conference, or grants agency, using the form supplied. **Due 11/19 via Turnitin on Brightspace.** (Word count will be indicated on assignment brief.)

Final: A 1500-word essay in response to a topic that you select from options provided. Due Tuesday, **12/17th at 5:00 pm via Turnitin on Brightspace. *No late final papers accepted. ***

Assignment Submission Policy
Assignments should be submitted to Turnitin on Brightspace, unless otherwise indicated, before 11:59 pm, Pacific Time on the date due. Please allow a 30-minute buffer for uploading.

Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments

Assignment	% of Grade
1. Written Assignment #1	15%/150
2. Midterm Assignment/Group Presentation	20%/200
3. Written Assignment #2	15%/150
4. Final	25%/250
5. Dramaturgy	15%/150
6. Participation	10%/100
TOTAL:	100%/1000

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
Excellent: A (4) = 100-94; A- (3.7) = 93-90
Good: B+ (3.3) = 89-86; B (3) = 85-84; B- (2.7) = 83-80
Average: C+ (2.3) = 79-76; C (2) = 75-74; C- (1.7) = 73-70
Poor: the D range (1.3-0) = 60s; F (0) = 59 and below

"Excellent" indicates that the student couples clear understanding of the class material with original and creative insight; "Good" means that the student demonstrates a clear understanding of the material; "Average" 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.

The SDA GUIDELINES ONGRADING:
- There shall be three written assignments, five dramaturgical assignments, and a final examination as scheduled by USC.
- Participation shall be weighted at no more than 15% as per University Guidelines.
- ***No late assignments** shall be accepted unless advance extensions have been arranged between the student and the teacher or unless exceptional circumstances

occur. A late penalty may apply if student fails to communicate turning in the assignment late.

- Grades will be posted up to seven (7) days from date of submission.

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 Evaluation
Course evaluations occur at the end of the semester university-wide. This is an important review of your experience in the class. Thank you in advance for your insights and comments.

Health and Participation in Class
If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19, or if you discover that you have been in close contact with others who have symptoms or who have tested positive, you are advised to **complete the contact tracing form in MySHR** (https://usc.edu/myshr). The contact tracing form contains information for positive students to obtain isolation accommodations through the university, and fields to enter email addresses for known close contacts during their infectious period.

Face coverings that cover your nose and mouth to be worn throughout the class session is optional. USC will provide masks (including N95s) upon request. Requests for accommodations related to the face covering policies should be directed to the Office for Student Accessibility Services (https://osas.usc.edu/).

Additional Policies
- You are expected to attend all classes. In the event you must miss a class, please email Kai and me prior to the absence and let us know. Participation contributes to your grade. You are allowed one "free" absence. Subsequent unexcused absences will result in the loss of points for each time you are absent.
- Please do not be late. Three late arrivals will count as one absence.
- Please do not have other applications or web pages open in class unless I ask you to do so for a specific exercise.
- Please do not use phones in class.
- A pattern of off-task behavior will constitute a lack of participation, and the student will receive a "0" for participation on that given week.
- The final exam is required. Please make a note of the final exam on your calendars. **No late final exam papers are accepte**d. If you miss the final submission period on Turnitin in Brightspace, you will receive a grade of "0" for the final exam.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

WEEK 1	8/27	INTRODUCTION Overview of syllabus **Read: Elinor Fuchs- Visit to a Small Planet**
	8/29	Working with the text/Introduction to Dramaturgy Read: *WEDDING BAND* by Alice Childress
WEEK 2	9/3	Background/World of the Play: Wedding Band Dramaturgy #1 due *Wedding Band*
	9/5	Textual analysis: *Wedding Band*
WEEK 3	9/10	Viewing through a social/political lens: *Wedding Band*
	9/12	Character Study*: Wedding Band* **Read: *WATER BY THE SPOONFUL* by Quiara Alegria Hudes**
WEEK 4	9/17	Dramaturgical Analysis: *Water by the Spoonful* Dramaturgy #2 due. Review /Assign Written Assignment #1
	9/19	Critical Analysis: *Water by the Spoonful*
WEEK 5	9/24	In Production: *Water by the Spoonful*
	9/26	Setting/Theatricality: Water by the Spoonful
WEEK 6	10/1	Review *Water by the Spoonful* Written Assignment #1 due Read: *TWELFTH NIGHT* by William Shakespeare
	10/3	Exploring Shakespeare: Twelfth Night Dramaturgy #3 due Review/Assign MIDTERM groups
WEEK 7	10/8	Working with the Text: *Twelfth Night*
	10/10	NO CLASS
WEEK 8	10/15	Delivering Lines: *Twelfth Night*
	10/17	Exploring Scenes: *Twelfth Night*
WEEK 9	10/22	**MIDTERM: In-class group presentations/Midterm papers due**
	10/24	Exploring Scenes: *Twelfth Night*
WEEK 10	10/29	Read: *TEENAGE DICK* by Michael Lew Dramaturigical Review: *Teenage Dick.* Dramaturgy #4 due.
	10/31	Working with the Text: *Teenage Dick* Assign/Review Written Assignment #2.
WEEK 11	11/5	Exploring Scenes: *Teenage Dick*
	11/7	Theatricality: *Teenage Dick*
WEEK 12	11/12	Scene Study: *Teenage Dick* Read: *DRY LAND* by Ruby Rae Spiegel
	11/14	Dramaturgical Review*: Dry Land.* Dramaturgy #5 due.

WEEK 13	11/19	Viewing text through a social/political lens: *Dry Land* Written Assignment #2 due.
	11/21	Exploring Scenes: *Dry Land*
WEEK 14	11/26	Characters and Setting: *Dry Land*
	11/28	THANKSGIVING BREAK– NO CLASS
WEEK 15	12/3	Finish *Dry Land* Final Paper Review
	12/5	Elevator Pitch: Prep for Final Paper
WEEK 16		Final Exam Week Final Paper due **Tuesday, 12/17th at 5:00 PM (PDT)**

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

Sharing of Course Materials Outside of the Learning Environment
SCampus Section 11.12(B)
Distribution or use of notes or recordings based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study is a violation of the USC Student Conduct Code. This includes, but is not limited to, providing materials for distribution by services publishing class notes. 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. (SeeSection C.1 Class Notes Policy)

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.

Statement for Students with Disabilities
Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from OSAS. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. OSAS is located in GFS 120 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website for OSAS and contact information: (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 814-4618 (Video Phone), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@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.

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 Brightspace, teleconferencing, and other technologies. See the university's site on Campus Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

Student Basic Needs
Resources for students regarding food, housing, finances, COVID-19 support, and technology support. https://studentbasicneeds.usc.edu/

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 and 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.