

THTR 405m – Performing Identities

630003R/Units: 4

Spring 2024 — MON, WED — 10:00-11:50am

Location: SOS B48

Instructor: Boni B. Alvarez

Office Hours: by appt: TUES, THURS 1:30-3:30pm

Office: MCC 212

Contact Info: bbalvare@usc.edu

(I will reply to your e-mail as soon as I can, but please allow 24 hours for a response.)

Course Assistant: Emily Arancio

Contact Info: arancio@usc.edu

Office Hours: by appt

Course Description

This course explores the live performance medium as a creative means of social redress, personal expression, and cross-cultural communication. It investigates the medium's potential to reflect, critique, construct, and enact a performing artist's emergent identities. Course materials range from performance art, solo shows and contemporary dramatic texts to popular entertainment (film, television, comedy & music). Equal emphasis will be placed on the aesthetic dimension and the sociocultural and historical backgrounds of selected performances.

This course fulfills the university's diversity requirement.

Learning Objectives

- This course increases 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.
- This course deepens 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.
- By increasing their knowledge of an artist's theoretical, historical, and aesthetic foundations across history and cultures, students sharpen their discernment for creative production.
- Through creative assignments and original art making, students expand their knowledge about the creative process.
- Increase the student's understanding of becoming a lifelong supporter or participant in the arts by exposure to creative production in the contemporary environment.

Required Readings

Texts marked with an asterisk (*) have been ordered through the USC Bookstore. All other texts, including supplementary readings, will be distributed via Brightspace.

- Baitz, Jon Robin. *Coq Au Vin*
- Kaufman, MJ. *Masculinity Max*
- *Leguizamo, John. *Freak*
- *O'Hara, Robert. *Barbecue*
- *Orlandersmith, Dael. *Yellowman*

The required readings and in-class films/videos often deal with intense and disturbing subject matter. This course ascribes to the adage that an artist's purpose is to hold up a mirror to the world they live in, illuminating the potential of extreme dramatic situations – those that force us to ponder the fundamentals of human existence. Please consider this syllabus itself an overall content warning and your participation in the course an explicit consent to experiencing difficult and/or troubling art.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

The quality of work in this class is largely determined by the thoroughness of your effort, the ongoing process, and the imagination/critical thought displayed.

Assignment Submission: **NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED.**

Participation – 15%

Students must actively participate in the discussion topics and in-class readings. Students will be evaluated on eagerness to be involved in class activities, and the preparedness & quality of contributions to discussion. Many ideas, positions, and opinions will arise; students should be respectful in the ensuing dialogue, practicing active listening & engagement, and employing empathy.

Artistic Responses – 30% (10% each)

Students will submit 2-3page written responses reflecting on a grouping of works studied throughout the semester. DUE DATES are listed on the Weekly Schedule. More detailed prompts will be distributed.

- Artistic Response #1 – Performance Art
- Artistic Response #2 – Stand-up/Comedy
- Artistic Response #3 – Music

Creative Project – 20%

The Creative Project is a live in-class presentation. (Please consult the instructor regarding the possibility of recorded projects.) Students can choose to present a solo project or pair off with another student; students who work as a creative team will earn the same grade for the assignment.

A written statement, outlining the title, the theme, the artistic motivation, and the performance score of your project must be submitted on the day of presentation. A more detailed prompt on the Creative Project will be provided.

Critical Analysis Paper – 20%

This paper will be a critical analysis of Orlandersmith’s *Yellowman*. Papers must have a thesis and include textual evidence to support your analysis. The paper requires research on the artist (Orlandersmith) and the inclusion of at least two additional sources. A more detailed prompt will be distributed.

Final Assignment – 15%

Considering the works studied over the course of the semester, students will submit a written self-assessment of one’s performative identity. A more detailed prompt will be distributed.

Grading Breakdown

ASSIGNMENT	% of grade
Participation	15
Artistic Responses (3x 10%)	30
Critical Analysis Paper	20
Creative Project	20
Final Assignment	15
TOTAL	100

Grading Scale for SDA: **A** indicates work of excellent quality; **B** of good quality; **C** of average quality; **D** of below average quality; and **F** indicates inadequate work.

- A+: 100-98 A: 97-94 A-: 93-90
- B+: 89-87 B: 86-84 B-: 83-80
- C+: 79-77 C: 76-74 C-: 73-70
- D+: 69-67 D: 66-64 D-: 63-60
- F: 59-0

When a student’s mathematical GPA falls between two grades, the final grade will be weighted towards the higher end of the scale for students whose attendance and participation in class have been excellent or good and toward the lower end for those with average or poor attendance and participation.

Additional Policies

MISSED CLASSES – It is your responsibility to obtain information about missed class discussions and assignments from your colleagues.

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.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

- 1 MON 8/26 Introductions; Course Overview
 WED 8/28 Marina Abramovic: *Long Story Short*; TED Talk
- 2 MON 9/2 **LABOR DAY – NO CLASS**
 WED 9/4 Marina Abramovic (cont): *Finding Your Roots*
- 3 MON 9/9 Tehching Hsieh & Linda Montano: *Rope Piece*
 WED 9/11 Coco Fusco & Guillermo Gomez-Pena: *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West*; *Couple in the Cage*
- 4 MON 9/16 **READ for class: Ruth Behar & Bruce Manheim’s ‘In Dialogue: The Couple in the Cage: A Guatinaui Odyssey’**
 WED 9/18 Jon Robin Baitz’ *Cog Au Vin*
- 5 **SUN 9/22 Artistic Response #1 (Performance Art) – DUE 11:59pm**
 MON 9/23 Stand-up/Comedy
 WED 9/25 Stand-Up/Comedy
- 6 MON 9/30 **READ for class: John Leguizamo’s *Freak***
 WED 10/2 *Freak* (cont)
- 7 **SUN 10/6 Artistic Response #2 (Stand-up/Comedy) – DUE 11:59pm**
 MON 10/7 Dael Orlandersmith’s *Yellowman*
 WED 10/9 *Yellowman* (cont)
- 8 MON 10/14 Jennie Livingston’s *Paris is Burning*
 WED 10/16 *Paris is Burning* (cont)
- 9 MON 10/21 Alex Keshishian and Mark Aldo Miceli’s *Madonna: Truth or Dare*
 WED 10/23 *Madonna: Truth or Dare* (cont); *Vogue* (MTV Music Awards)
- 10 **SUN 10/27 CRITICAL ANALYSIS PAPER - DUE 11:59PM**
 MON 10/28 *RuPaul’s Drag Race* (excerpts)
 WED 10/30 **DUE in-class: Artistic Response #3 (Music)**
- 11 MON 11/4 Robert O’Hara’s *Barbecue*
 WED 11/6 *Barbecue* (cont)
- 12 MON 11/11 **VETERANS DAY – NO CLASS**
 WED 11/13 MJ Kaufman’s *Masculinity Max*
- 13 MON 11/18 *Masculinity Max* (cont)
 WED 11/20 **Creative Presentations – A Group**
- 14 MON 11/25 **Creative Presentations – B Group**
 WED 11/27 **THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO CLASS**
- 15 MON 12/2 **TBD**
 WED 12/4 Course Wrap-up

FINAL ASSIGNMENT DUE - MON 12/16, 8-10am

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website for DSP and contact information: (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies. See the university’s site on Campus Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion + Intimacy in Theater Consent Culture Statement:

Through our pluralistic approach of diverse pedagogies, methodologies, ideologies, and modalities of artistic expression, we invite(engage) and challenge students to expand their breadth and depth of knowledge, complexity, and range of the human experience. Even though we nurture, guide, and challenge our students to embrace the unknown or unfamiliar and step outside of their comfort zones through storytelling/art, we aim to practice effective strategies and offer tools to students mindful of their physical, psychological, social, and emotional wellbeing. In alignment with professional and industry standards, we will integrate core principles and techniques of Intimacy in Theater and Building Cultures of Affirmative Consent. This will provide agency, offer resources and support to the teachers, students, directors, and staff to establish healthy boundaries of consent when working on material that is physically, intimately, or emotionally charged content in both the classroom and production.

SDA Student Support & Reporting Form:

To facilitate a supportive environment of accountability, SDA has created an internal system of reporting for students to address issues/concerns and to offer feedback or suggestions for improvement. This mechanism provides a pathway for reporting and offering feedback without fear of retaliation or judgment. Any submission filed through this form will be reviewed and processed accordingly through SDA Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

To file a report, please visit: <https://bit.ly/SDAstudentreporting>

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services - (213) 740-0776

<https://osas.usc.edu>

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710

campussupport.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.