

# USC School of Dramatic Arts

## **THTR-555: Directing Fundamentals**

**2.0 Units**

**Fall 2024—Mondays/Wednesdays—10:00AM-11:50AM**

**PED 206**

**Luis Alfaro, Associate Professor**

**JEF 200**

**Office Hour by appointment, Monday-Thursday**

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### **Course Description**

A twice-weekly workshop that provides the basic foundations for the conceptualization and execution of works for the stage.

### **Learning Objectives**

Through class assignments, interviewing guest directors, and a mini-intensive with director Nancy Keystone, students should learn the fundamentals of directing a play. This should include how to analyze a script for production, develop multiple production concepts, and the protocols for how to conduct rehearsals. Students will discuss and learn all the elements that a director must consider understanding and communicate the core essential idea of a play. These elements are tied together in exercises that consider conceptualization, production, presentation.

**Prerequisite(s):** none

### **Course Notes**

This is a letter-based course.

### **Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required**

You must be able to access class assignments and readings using electronics. If needed, there is access to free versions of productions available at [USC Computing Center Laptop Loaner Program](#). If you need software support and/or availability, it can be found here, [Zoom information for students](#), [Brightspace help for students](#), [Software available to USC Campus](#).

### **Required Readings and Supplementary Materials**

*The Empty Space: A Book About the Theatre: Deadly, Holy, Rough, Immediate*

by Peter Brook | Dec 1, 1995

Publisher: Scribner; Reprint edition (December 1, 1995)

Language: English

Paperback: 144 pages

ISBN-10: 0684829576

ISBN-13: 978-0684829579

*The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition*

Paperback – August 1, 2004  
by Anne Bogart (Author), Tina Landau (Author)  
ASIN: 1559362413  
Publisher: Theatre Communications Group; 1st ed edition (August 1, 2004)  
Language: English  
Paperback: 240 pages  
ISBN-10: 0873388283  
ISBN-13: 978-1559362412

*The Theatre and its Double (Theatre Makers)*  
Paperback – February 22, 2024  
by Antonin Artaud (Author), Mark Taylor-Batty (Editor, Translator)  
Publisher: Methuen Drama (February 22, 2024)  
Language: English  
Paperback: 280 pages  
ISBN-10: 1350288713  
ISBN-13: 978-1350288713

## Optional Readings and Supplementary Materials

*Towards a Process of Generous Criticism*  
Liz Lerman  
[professor will provide]

## Description and Assessment of Assignments

Communicate the super objective of a play using directorial theories and concepts used for script, play and actor development.

1. Break down/analyze the technical needs of a show and be able to clearly, critically and creatively make logical decisions on how one should approach the technical areas of a show to communicate the production's message. (Critical Thinking).
2. Use visual, verbal and written methods of research to effectively express the thematic elements of a script to actors and crew. (Creative Expression).
3. Collect, analyze, organize and evaluate information so it can be utilized for the development of the play. (Information Literacy).
4. Identify/analyze both historical and societal issues and the effect they have on the material. (Historical/Societal).

## Participation

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 plays & fellow collaborators work. Class time is impossible to make up - one must be there to participate. Reliability and enthusiasm count.

## Grading Breakdown

**Table 1 Grading Breakdown**

| Student Responsibility  | Point Value | % of Grade |
|-------------------------|-------------|------------|
| Weekly Class Dramaturgy | 100         | 25%        |
| Mid Term Exam           | 100         | 10%        |
| Final Exam              | 100         | 25%        |
| Performance Report      | 100         | 15%        |

|               |     |     |
|---------------|-----|-----|
| Project Paper | 100 | 25% |
|---------------|-----|-----|

## Grading Scale

**Table 2 Course Grading 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                        |

## Assignment Submission Policy

Assignments are presented in the classroom. Therefore, it is expected that you will bring your completed assignments and share them. Assignments should be in standard, single space, 12 pt. Regular submission deadline will be Sunday & Tuesday at MIDNIGHT.

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, will affect your grade.

## Grading Timeline

Your standing will be reflected at Mid-Term and Final.

## 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.

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](#).

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.

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).

### **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.

### **MFA ACTING ATTENDANCE POLICY**

The training at this MFA program is ensemble-based work; therefore, *it is a requirement for the entirety of the ensemble to be present for every class*. Absences will directly affect your grade and standing in the program. A **lateness** will be counted as an absence. A lateness is anything after a 5-minute grace period at the official start time of class. Anything longer than five minutes will result in being locked out of class. *Don't be absent. Don't be late.*

**Absences:** THREE (3) absences will result in a full letter grade demotion. If you miss a total of FIVE (5) classes, you fail the class. Any failed class results in academic probation. Excused and unexcused absences are the same.

**Email records:** All late nesses and absences need to be documented by the student at fault via email. The student must email the specific professor for which class will be missed, as well as David Warshofsky and Natsuko Ohama. If a student is late/absent to class and an email has not been sent in advance, the professor must report these events to David Warshofsky and Natsuko Ohama.

**Lateness:** There is no need to text professors if you are late.

**Illness:** Stay healthy. Illness counts as an absence. Please notify your professor, as well as David Warshofsky and Natsuko Ohama with a doctor’s note.

### Key Calendar Dates

First day of Class: Monday, August 26

Thanksgiving Holiday: Wednesday-Sunday, November 27-December 1

Last Day of Class: Wednesday, December 4

**Table 3 Course schedule**

|                | <b>Topics/Daily Activities</b> | <b>Readings/Preparation</b> | <b>Deliverables</b>  |
|----------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>Week 1</b>  | Getting to Know You            | Agreements                  | Discussion   |
| <b>Week 2</b>  | Beckett                        | Project                     | Presentation   |
| <b>Week 3</b>  | Mud                            | Project                     | Presentation   |
| <b>Week 4</b>  | Mud                            | Project                     | Presentation   |
| <b>Week 5</b>  | Intensive #1                   | Interview                   | Discussion   |
| <b>Week 6</b>  | Guest / Reading                | Project                     | Discussion   |
| <b>Week 7</b>  | Guest / Reading                | Project                     | Discussion   |
| <b>Week 8</b>  | Intensive #2                   | Project                     | Dramaturgy   |
| <b>Week 9</b>  | Guest / Reading                | Project                     | Discussion   |
| <b>Week 10</b> | Guest / Reading                | Project                     | Discussion   |
| <b>Week 11</b> | Intensive #3                   | Project                     | Dramaturgy   |
| <b>Week 12</b> | Guest / Reading                | Project                     | Discussion   |
| <b>Week 13</b> | Guest / Reading                | Project                     | Discussion   |
| <b>Week 14</b> | Intensive #4                   | Presentation                | Dramaturgy   |
| <b>Week 15</b> | Guest / Reading                | Project                     | Discussion   |
| <b>FINAL</b>   |                                |                             | Refer to the final exam schedule in the USC <i>Schedule of Classes</i> at <a href="http://classes.usc.edu">classes.usc.edu</a> . |

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

## **Instructor Bio**

**Luis Alfaro** is a Chicano playwright born and raised in downtown Los Angeles.

He is the 2024 World Theatre Artist for Theatre Communications Group (TCG) and the recipient of the 2024 award in literature from the American Academy of Arts & Letters.

He was the Associate Artistic Director of Center Theatre Group at the Music Center of Los Angeles County (2021-2022, 1995-2005), home of the Mark Taper Forum, Ahmanson & Kirk Douglas Theaters, where he produced over one hundred and fifty 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 is the new director of the MFA in Dramatic Writing program. He was previously on faculty at California Institute of the Arts (Cal-Arts), Writers Program at UCLA Extension and 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.

He is also the recipient of 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 *Imaginistas* Latinx Playwrights at the Los Angeles Theatre Center (2021-); and served on the artistic staff for the Ojai Playwrights Conference (2002-2022).

His plays include *Electricidad*, *Oedipus El Rey*, *Mojada*, *Delano*, *Body of Faith*, *Alleluia the Road*, *Black Butterfly*, *Bruja*, 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 produced at the Magic Theater in San Francisco and is the winner of the prestigious Bay Area 2024 Glickman Prize. The production traveled to the Los Angeles Theatre Center, where it was named one of the nine best productions of the year by the Los Angeles Times and is the winner of the L.A. Stage Raw award in playwriting.

Luis spent two decades in the Los Angeles Poetry and Performance Art communities, where he regularly presented at Highways Performance Space, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions and Beyond Baroque Poetry Center.

His book, *The Greek Trilogy of Luis Alfaro*, is the winner of the prestigious Greek & British Hellenic Prize and licensed by Dramatists Play Service.

He is a local 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, *down-town*, 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 the playwright Maria Irene Fornes, performance artist Scott Kelman, and a product of the Inner-City Cultural Center in downtown Los Angeles.

Upcoming work includes, *Earlimart* (Latino Theatre Company, Los Angeles), *Herakles* (Getty Villa, Malibu), *Aztlán*. (Magic Theater, San Francisco)