

**THTR 500 – Dramaturgical Perspectives and Approaches**

63223R/Units: 2

Spring 2025 — MON — 6:00-8:50pm

**Location: MCC 102**

**Instructor: Boni B. Alvarez**

**Office Hours:** by appt: MON, WED – 12:00-2:00pm

**Office:** MCC 212

**Contact Info:** bbalvare@usc.edu

(I will reply as soon as I can, but please allow 24 hours for a response.)

**Course Description**

This course typically investigates the art and craft of dramatic writing initiated and/or completed in other MFA Dramatic Writing courses or that were submitted for program entry.

In this semester's iteration, the course will use the work of playwright Paula Vogel as a point-of-departure in the creation of a new full-length play.

**Learning Objectives**

- Through readings and analysis of plays by Paula Vogel, students will strengthen their skills in cultivating and implementing their lived experiences in their work.
- Through a truncated Paula Vogel style Bake-off, students will experience the writing of the first draft of a new play in a condensed amount of time.
- Through prompts and writing exercises, students will explore possible 'ingredients' (characters, subjects, story, themes, etc.) for a new play.
- Students will complete an early draft of a new full-length dramatic work for the stage and subsequently assess its needs for revision in future development.
- Students will collectively build and nurture a fertile and safe space for the ensemble of writers.

**Required Readings**

Texts marked with an asterisk (\*) have been ordered through the USC Bookstore. Other texts will be distributed via Brightspace.

- Vogel, Paula. *Baltimore Waltz*
- \*Vogel, Paula. *How I Learned to Drive*
- \*Vogel, Paula. *Mother Play*

## **Description and Assessment of Assignments**

The work required for this course is creative, towards the goal of creating art. Works of art are subjective and difficult to qualify. Your grade in this course will largely be determined by the thoroughness of your effort and your engagement in process.

### **Participation – 15%**

Students must actively participate in the discussion topics, demonstrate preparedness of the assigned readings, and practice engaged volunteerism for in-class readings. In a playwriting workshop, active listening & engagement are imperative – students should be respectful and generous when offering and receiving feedback.

Empathy is a requirement for this course. Any playwright worth their salt has something important to say about the world we collectively inhabit. It is imperative we nurture a creative safe space, one in which everyone feels secure sharing and revealing themselves, and in which everyone is comfortable taking artistic risks. Behavior that endangers the creative space will adversely affect your participation grade.

### **Bake-Off Preparation – 20% Total**

Students will be assessed on the depth of the written exercises in preparation for the Bake-off:

1. Found Object Monologue
2. Scene of transgression
3. Scene of climax
4. Opening scene

### **Post Bake-Off Workshop – 30%**

Students will be assessed on the pages presented post Bake-off – length of excerpts will vary depending on scheduled workshop dates (40-70pages).

### **Completed Draft – 30%**

Students will submit a completed draft of their new plays. Plays will be assessed on their overall as a full-length piece of theater.

### **Final Assignment – 5%**

In a 1-page Artistic Statement (modeled after professional statements required by development organizations – ie: O’Neill; Playwrights Center; Bay Area Playwrights Festival), students will evaluate the draft of their dramatic work and identify areas for development, further exploration, and revision.

### **Grading Breakdown**

<b>ASSIGNMENT</b>	<b>% of grade</b>
Participation	15
Bake-Off Prep (4 exercises)	20

Bake-Off Draft	30
Completed Draft	30
Final Statement	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

**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 *failing grade for graduate credit
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.

#### **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.

<u>WK</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>WEEKLY SCHEDULE</u>
1	1/13	<b>The playwright in the play</b> Introductions; course overview Vogel's <i>Baltimore Waltz</i>
2	1/20	<b>MLK HOLIDAY – NO CLASS</b>
3	1/27	<b>Ritual</b> Found Object Monologues DUE READ for class: Vogel's <i>How I Learned to Drive</i>
4	2/3	<b>Reckonings</b> Scenes of transgression DUE READ for class: Vogel's <i>Mother Play</i>
5	2/10	Scenes of climax DUE
6	2/17	<b>PRESIDENTS' DAY – NO CLASS</b>
7	2/24	Opening scenes DUE
<b>SAT 3/1</b>		<b>Bake-off 10:30am-4:30pm</b>
8	3/3	Workshop – (Writers 1-3 – 40pages)
9	3/10	Workshop – (Writers 4-6 – 40 pages)
	3/17	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>
10	3/24	<b>NO CLASS</b>
11	3/31	Workshop – (Writers 7 & 8 – 60-70 pages)
12	4/7	Workshop – (Writers 9 & 10 – 60-70 pages)
13	4/14	Workshop
14	4/21	Workshop
15	4/28	Workshop
<b>FINAL</b>	<b>MON 5/12 – 7:00-9:00pm</b>	

## 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](http://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](mailto: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.

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### 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.

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### 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>

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### Support Systems:

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

[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](http://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*

[suicidpreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidpreventionlifeline.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](http://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](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://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](http://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.