INTRODUCTION TO PLAYWRITING

Fall 2020
MWF 11am – 11:50am (via Zoom)

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This is an introductory workshop in writing for the stage. We will look at the craft of playwriting from the perspective of writing from the subconscious and discovering one’s voice through various exercises and through the process of writing 2 one-act plays.

We will read various playwrights throughout the semester as examples of specific craft, and discuss both their plays and their use of playwriting tools.

GENERAL OUTLINE
This workshop will consist of work in three major areas:

1) Playwriting concepts, ideas, terms, and writing exercises. We will discuss, engage, and illustrate our understanding of basic playwriting tools through exercises; which will be completed both in and out of class. Some will be shared with the class for the sake of discussion, others will be emailed to the instructor directly.

2) Readings. You will read assigned plays outside of class and come ready to discuss them in detail; this means there will be no discussion about if you liked them or not; rather thoughtful responses about both the themes of the play and the techniques being used by the playwright.

3) Writing and workshopping of your one-act plays. The majority of this workshop will be dedicated to writing and workshopping your plays. You will be sharing your work with the class and leading discussions about your process.

You must be present in each workshop — present in terms of your written work, present in terms of your participation and listening to your peers, and present by responding to the conversation.

The best presence is to be impacted by something you hear from one of your writing colleagues, and to respond in your subsequent pages

At the end of the semester, you will have at least 2 completed one-act plays.

There are no exams in this course. All writing for the course should be shared on the assigned dates, as well emailed to the instructor. Your second one-act play will serve a final exam and must be completed by the date assigned.
READINGS & TIMELINE

All readings will be shared as PDFs unless otherwise noted. As most of these will come directly from the playwrights themselves, please do not distribute the PDFs outside of this course. Readings subject to change.

Liz Lerman “Critical Response Process”  
José Rivera “36 Assumptions on Playwriting”

Luis Alfaro Oedipus el Rey  
Belarus Free Theater Trash Cuisine / “On Freedom”  
Christopher Chen Caught  
Carla Ching Two Kids That Blow Shit Up  
Marcus Gardley Dance of the Holy Ghosts  
Aleshea Harris On Sugarland  
Young Jean Lee The Shipment  
Amaranta Leyva Peréz Gay – Mía (Mía: All Mine); translated by Carmen Rivera  
Martyna Majok Ironbound / Sanctuary City  
Javier Malpica Our Dad Is In Atlantis; translated by Jorge Cortiñas  
Andrea Thome Pinkolandia  
Melisa Tien The Boyd Show

Dates
1) Week of Aug 23 – first class/syllabus/freewrite  
2) Week of Aug 30 – playwriting concepts/exercises  
3) Week of Sep 6- playwriting concepts/exercises  
4) Week of Sep 13 - workshop  
5) Week of Sep 20 - workshop  
6) Week of Sep 27 - workshop  
7) Week of Oct 4 - workshop  
8) Week of Oct 11 – first one-act due; exact date TBA  
9) Week of Oct 18 - workshop  
10) Week of Oct 25 - workshop  
11) Week of Nov 1 - workshop  
12) Week of Nov 8 - workshop  
13) Week of Nov 15 - workshop  
**Week of Nov 22 – no classes**  
14) Week of Nov 29 – workshop  
15) Week of Dec 6 – final one-act due; exact date TBA (*final class Dec 10*)
GRADING

Attendance 10%
Writing & Participation 40%
First one-act 20%
Second One-Act 30%

All writing must be formatted professionally (this will be covered in class) and on time; any late writing will result in lower grade.

Lack of participation in the class discussions, not reading the assigned plays, will result in a lower grade.

All writing must be original. Plagiarism or the use of any material that is not written by the enrolled student in the course will result in a failing grade in the entire course and disciplinary action.

ATTENDANCE IS CRUCIAL TO THIS COURSE
AND EXCESSIVE ABSENCES WILL RESULT IN A LOWERING OF YOUR GRADE.
- A total of 10 excused and unexcused absences on a MWF class will result in the student receiving a failing grade.
- More than 2 unexcused absences will result in a lowering of your final grade.
(See The Department Attendance Policy.)

This class engages material covering a diverse range of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, and disability. While I encourage you to formulate and express your thoughts and opinions throughout the semester, discriminatory remarks will not be tolerated and may constitute disruptive behavior under the student code of conduct.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) supported in this course:
1. The student will be able to form and articulate a critical analysis and evaluation of a work of theatre.
2. The student will demonstrate an understanding of the component areas of theatrical creation, process, production, performance, and study, and their interrelationships.
3. The student will demonstrate intermediate to advanced competence in one or more theatre specialization(s).

Student Learning Outcomes for this course (with supported PLOs):
Students will be able to:
1. analyze the themes/structure of a play (1),
2. write a play in standard format (1, 2, 3), and
3. understand the process of creating a work for the theatre (1, 3).
**Academic Integrity (A-9.1)**

Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

**Definition of Academic Dishonesty**

Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit.

Please read the complete policy at [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp)

**Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (A-54)**

Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

**Students with Disabilities**

To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to [http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/](http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/).

Students with documented disabilities who need course adaptations or accommodations please make an appointment with me as soon as possible.

**Mental Health and Wellness**

SFA values students’ mental health and the role it plays in academic and overall student success. SFA provides a variety of resources to support students’ mental health and wellness. Many of these resources are free, and all of them are confidential.
**On-campus Resources**

**SFA Counseling Services**  
[www.sfasu.edu/counselingservices](http://www.sfasu.edu/counselingservices)  
Rusk Building, 3rd Floor 936.468.2401

**SFA Human Services Counseling Clinic**  
[www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp](http://www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp)  
Human Services, Room 202 936.468.1041

**Crisis Resources:**  
Burke 24-hour crisis line: 1.800.392.8343  
Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1.800.273.TALK (8255)  
Crisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741-741