INTRODUCTION TO PLAYWRITING

Fall 2023
T 3:30pm – 6:15pm (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, however, through various exercises we will incorporate tools of craft which will elevate the student’s playwriting, so it is more effective, engaging, and deeper in its exploration.

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

Students will complete writing exercises both in and outside of class, write responses, as well as write and revise a new one-act play.

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 terms of craft. This means there will be no discussion about if you liked them or not; rather thoughtful responses about both the ideas within the play and the techniques being used by the playwright to explore those ideas.

3) Writing and workshopping of your one-act plays.
   The latter part of this workshop will be dedicated to writing and workshopping your one-acts. 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
There are no exams in this course. All writing for the course should be shared on the assigned dates, no exceptions. Your final 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.
*All readings subject to change.*

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

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 – *Mia (Mia: All Mine)*; translated by Carmen Rivera
Martyna Majok *Sanctuary City, Ironbound*
Javier Malpica *Our Dad Is In Atlantis*; translated by Jorge Cortiñas
Jiehae Park *Peerless*
Melisa Tien *The Boyd Show*

**Dates**
1) Sep 5 – Intros, Syllabus, *Ironbound*
2) Sep 12 – Defining Playwriting/Plays – J. Rivera
3) Sep 19 - María Irene Fornés exercises
4) Sep 26 – Basic Playwriting Terms
5) Oct 3 – Basic Playwriting exercises
7) Oct 17 – Tools of Dialogue exercises
8) Oct 24 – Intro To Workshop – L. Lerman
9) Oct 31 - workshop
10) Nov 7 - workshop
11) Nov 14 - Initial Draft of One-Act due
12) Nov21 – workshop
13) Nov 28 – no class
14) Week of Dec 11 – Final One-Act due, exact date TBA

**GRADING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance/Participation</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing Exercises &amp; Readings</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final One-Act</td>
<td>30%</td>
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ATTENDANCE...
IS CRUCIAL TO THIS COURSE
-TWO unexcused absences will result in a lowering of your final grade.

Attendance and punctuality are non-negotiable when working in the theater. You are, as a group, building a creative community that depends greatly on each other for the development of your work. If one of you is absent—or not fully, generously present—you affect the learning and work of the entire class. Students should arrive on time and be ready to actively think aloud with your fellow writers.

Two unexcused absences will lower your final grade by a level (e.g. A to A-). If there are circumstances that will cause you to miss more than two classes, please speak with me, so we can discuss how best to maintain your engagement with the course. Missing part of the class twice will count as an absence.

Excused absences or lateness must be agreed upon with me, via email, 24 hours BEFORE class. Letting me know you will be absent does not guarantee the absence will be excused. Excused absences will only be allowed due to extreme illness or emergency. Participation in theater productions or other college activities is not a valid excuse to miss class.

Be on time. Not only will late arrivals affect your grade (as will leaving early, or having long absences in the middle of class), but they are disrespectful to your fellow students and instructor, and detrimental to the community we are working hard to create.

ZOOM PROTOCOL
-You are expected to be fully on-camera for the duration of class; no exceptions.

-Any student not professionally on-camera during class will have their Attendance/Participation grade lowered. Please be respectful of your fellow students and their work by being fully present, as if we were all in a classroom together. Just as you wouldn’t lay in bed in classroom, or have a conversation with your roommate, you cannot do so here.

ASSIGNMENTS
-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.
EMOTIONAL TRIGGERS
As this is a creative writing course, we may encounter emotional triggers. If at any point you are uncomfortable because of a triggered response, you may leave the Zoom classroom, and send me an email, so I understand the situation. You are in no way required to remain in a class where you are experiencing emotional triggers.

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
**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