Playwriting I
Syllabus
THEA 3320/Fall 2021   T/TR: 3:00-4:20

Instructor: Georgina Hernández Escobar, M.F.A.   she/her/hers   uses: (G. Escobar)

E-mail: gherandez9@utep.edu ; gesco33@gmail.com

Office & Hours: Prospect Hall #126. Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:00-1:00pm. BY APPOINTMENT ONLY. Please send me an e-mail, make sure that you identify yourself and CLEARLY state your concern.

Course Description: This course will cover the principles of dramatic writing from plot, storyline, character, character arcs, and dialogue towards the successful discovery, construction, and completion of one (1) 10-minute play and one (1) One Act play. The course will be part lecture (Chalk Talk), part incubator (Lab) and will combine theory and practice to culminate in a 2021’s Playwrights’ Reading of New Plays where playwrights will have the opportunity to hear their work read out loud and in front of an audience.

Course Objectives: The primary goal of this course is to know and apply the principles of dramatic writing and to begin to shape voice and process towards developing the craft of playwriting. By the end of this course, the student will be able to recognize the organizational principles of building a play and be familiar with the playwright’s toolkit and the use of each tool at every phase of the writing process. This class is your compass in knowing how to take a story from an idea to a first reading.

Chalk Talk & The Lab: For our purposes, I am calling our meeting times “Chalk Talk” and “The Lab.” The Chalk Talk refers to a day in which you can expect a lecture, a conversation, a processing of information, a gathering and bottling of clouds. We walk together (figuratively and literally when and if able) on the journey of your writing and these are the days we talk about what we know and don't know together. The Lab is about doing. These are the days on which your writing prompts will be activated, we will write together, read our work out loud, and share work together. Most of your participation grade will be adjudicated from your work during Lab days.

NOTE: Writing prompts will be given IN CLASS ONLY. They are not graded but you must be present to receive them. I will not email the prompt, nor will I read any of your prompt assignments if you do not complete them in class.

Transparency in Flexibility: The times are changing and so is our craft. I believe in decolonizing our classroom as much as possible and with that in mind, nothing that I put forth is set in stone. As we progress through the course, be prepared to change direction of reading assignments or shape of the overall course. If we collectively agree to focus our attention elsewhere, we can actively reformat the shape of this course. You cannot demand to change the shape of the course based on your sensibilities alone, rather, you can exercise your analytical skills to justify why we should. Should your argument be fact-rich and evidence worthy and should the class agree, we will take a vote and move forward accordingly.

This course is designed using a class WEBSITE alongside Black Board for easy access to all reading materials, assignments, lecture notes, and other course materials. These are broken down into modular formats where each week is “packaged” as a single module (specifically on Black Board.)

Class website: https://utepplaywrights.weebly.com
TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Course content is delivered via the Internet through the Blackboard learning management system. Ensure your UTEP e-mail account is working and that you have access to the Web and a stable web browser. Google Chrome and Mozilla Firefox are the best browsers for Blackboard; other browsers may cause complications. When having technical difficulties, update your browser, clear your cache, or try switching to another browser.

If you do not have a word-processing software, you can download Word and other Microsoft Office programs (including Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and more) for free via UTEP’s Microsoft Office Portal. Click the following link for more information about Microsoft Office 365 and follow the instructions.

IMPORTANT: If you encounter technical difficulties beyond your scope of troubleshooting, please contact the UTEP Help Desk as they are trained specifically in assisting with technological needs of students. Please do not contact me for this type of assistance. The Help Desk is much better equipped than I am to assist you!

NON-TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

You will need to always bring the required texts to class as we address them, and have reliable note-taking tools (laptops, pen & paper, doodle board, sketchbook, et al.)

STATEMENT REGARDING COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS

Please stay home if you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as possible, so that we can work on appropriate accommodations. If you have tested positive for COVID-19, you are encouraged to report your results to covidaction@utep.edu, so that the Dean of Students Office can provide you with support and help with communication with your professors. The Student Health Center is equipped to provide COVID 19 testing.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that people in areas of substantial or high COVID-19 transmission wear face masks when indoors in groups of people. The best way that Miners can take care of Miners is to get the vaccine. If you still need the vaccine, it is widely available in the El Paso area, and will be available at no charge on campus during the first week of classes. For more information about the current rates, testing, and vaccinations, please visit epstrong.org

Please note that if COVID-19 conditions deteriorate in the City of El Paso, all course and lab activities may be transitioned to remote delivery.
### GRADING

Assignments (that are not in-class assignments) will be assessed according to rubrics. You can find these rubrics at the end of each assignment guideline sheet the professor provides.

**Grade Distribution:**

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<th>Score Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>1000-900</td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>899-800</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>799-700</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>699-600</td>
<td>D</td>
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<td>Below 699</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>200 points</td>
<td>Participation (in class)</td>
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<tr>
<td>100 points</td>
<td>Premise Worksheet</td>
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<tr>
<td>100 points</td>
<td>Character Worksheet</td>
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<td>100 points</td>
<td>Voice &amp; Dialogue Worksheet</td>
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<tr>
<td>200 points</td>
<td>10-Minute Play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 points</td>
<td>Plot &amp; Outline or Treatment</td>
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<tr>
<td>200 points</td>
<td>One Act Play or TV Pilot (30 pages max)</td>
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**LATE WORK WILL RECEIVE POINT DEDUCTIONS**—IT IS THE STUDENT’S RESPONSIBILITY TO PLAN IN ORDER TO GET WORK IN ON TIME. COMPUTER ISSUES ARE NOT YOUR INSTRUCTOR’S RESPONSIBILITY; PLAN AHEAD.

### REQUIRED TEXTS

- *Writing Dialogue for Scripts* by Rib Davis

Any additional reading(s) of online articles will be posted on Black Board and available to you with enough time to complete the reading assignment.

### ASSIGNMENT BREAKDOWN

**Participation**

200 points

This is a writer’s room. Your participation is not about YOU. Your participation grade is about collective accountability. Writing is a personal practice that often (and more so currently) happens in collaboration. Though we will not be collaborating on a script together, we are all members of this 2021 Playwrights Room. We will be reading each other’s work. Come prepared to listen, to work, to push yourself out of your comfort zone and grow. Your participation grade is not about you simply showing up, it’s about your growth and collaboration during our Lab days and your overall commitment towards process and growth.

**Premise Worksheet**

100 points

This is where you will show us the map or destination of your one-act play or TV Pilot (herein “your play/pilot”). What is it that you want to say? What statement do you want to make? What is your play/pilot about? If it’s a play/pilot about love, what kind of love and why? The premise sheet will also include a synopsis and a rough character breakdown of your primary characters as well as its time and setting. It’s our first glimpse at the story as a whole. *(One page, 12 pt. Times New Roman, Single Spaced, Template)*.
Character Worksheet
100 points
This is where you will show us who is driving your play/pilot and why. You will breakdown your characters by archetypes and dive deep in investigating and defining their journey through the play/pilot. You will use a companion “journey worksheet” to help identify and add for each of your primary characters. (2-4 page, 12 pt. Times New Roman, Single Spaced, Template “journey worksheet”).

Voice & Dialogue Worksheet
100 points
This is where you show us the musicality and voice behind your play/pilot. Who is telling this story and how? What are the languages (semiotic, musical, linguistic, et al) that tell your story? What does it sound like? You will discuss genre and style in this worksheet. (One page, 12 pt. Times New Roman, Single Spaced, Template).

10-Minute Play
200 points
Your 10-minute stage play (not a television pilot) will be about a collective theme or idea. This is not an excerpt, this is not a scene, this is not an unfinished piece: it is a 10-minute play and it will be crafted according to Gary Garrison’s Perfect 10 as reviewed in class.

Plot & Outline or Treatment
100
We will return to the work on your play/pilot and formulate a tight outline or treatment based on chosen structure and master plot. This assignment will be a clear overview of your play/pilot. (2-3 page, 12 pt. Times New Roman, Single Spaced, Template).

One Act Play or 30 min. TV Pilot
200
The reading-ready pages of your One Act/TV Pilot consist of a full three-act structured play/pilot from 20-30 pages long based on the work compiled throughout the semester. The One Act Play will be read out loud on FINALS day (or TBA) in front of an invited audience and cast & directed by your professor to allow you to hear your work out loud and take notes and feedback for rewrites after the culmination of our course.

INSTRUCTOR BIO
Georgina H. Escobar is a playwright and director who employs multiple mediums to create and define the Latinx aesthetic as Sci-Femme and Frontera Funk in creating impossible narratives for the stage. She has participated in residencies including the MacDowell Colony, the Djerassi Artists Residency and is a recipient of the Theatre For Young Audiences National Award from the Kennedy Center. Her work has been exhibited throughout the USA and participated in festivals internationally (Denmark, Sweden). Her plays have made Steppenwolf's "The Mix" List, the Kilroy's List, Finalist at the National Playwrights Conference at the O'Neill and the Clubbed Thumb Biennial Commission. Artistic partners and presenters have included Gregory Hancock Dance Theatre, Primary Stages, Two River, INTAR, Clubbed Thumb, Lincoln Center, Milagro, Aurora Theatre, and Bushwick Starr, among others. She serves on the Board of Marfa Live Arts, is on Advisory Committee for the Latinx Theatre Commons, and an active steering committee member for the Climate Commons for Theatre and Performance. www.georginaescobar.com

ABOUT THE NAME
UTEP has me as Georgina Hernandez because that is my legal name. As of 2012, I have adopted my mother’s maiden name, Escobar, to honor her death and legacy. Until 2022 when I can officially change my name on my passport, I am legally Hernandez, but professionally and to everyone in the arts I am Escobar. 😊

A NOTE ON DIFFICULT SUBJECTS
Let us agree that when difficult subjects arise in work that we read, watch, and write, we will lean into exploring these issues, rather than shutting the discussion down. YOU ARE IN A SAFE SPACE. If the subject matter should ever arise concern for you or your wellbeing my goal is that we can discuss it in a circular fashion, with peer leadership, and with collective generosity.
Tentative Class Schedule:
UPDATED: 8/16/2021

WEEK 1: INSPIRATION
T  8/24:  Syllabus Review, Course Orientation, Writing Commitments.
TR  8/26:  THE LAB: Memory (things as they were), Status Quo (things as they are) and Foreshadowing (things as they can be/should be/might be).

WEEK 2: PREMISE
T  8/31:  CHALK TALK: How to start a play or TV Pilot: Where do I start? The paradox of originality & The Zeitgeist.
  • HW: Complete Premise Worksheet.

WEEK 3: CHARACTER
T  9/7:  CHALK TALK: Premise Worksheet DUE IN CLASS + Discussion + Archetypes.
TR  9/9:  THE LAB: At Tension prompts, Character Construction (costume/prop shopping), Archetypes prompt.
  • HW: Continue Reading Writing Dialogue for Scripts

WEEK 4: DEEPENING THE WELL
T  9/14:  CHALK TALK: Who are the characters? Whose story are we following? Why do we care? Wants, needs & obstacles.
  • HW: Complete Character Worksheet.
TR  9/16:  THE LAB: Character Worksheet DUE IN CLASS + Prompt The Unexpected Flaw/Virtue
  • HW: Continue Reading Writing Dialogue for Scripts

WEEK 5: STRUCTURES & FRACTALS
T  9/21:  CHALK TALK: Discuss existing structures (Aristotle, Freitag, Campbell) and three act structures.
TR  9/23:  THE LAB: Prompts on Fractals, and on Beginning/Middle/End fractals.
  • HW: Continue Reading Writing Dialogue for Scripts

WEEK 6: DIALOGUE AND HARMONY (ONLINE)
T  9/28:  ONLINE: Breakout groups discuss Writing Dialogue for Scripts
Weekly Schedule:

### WEEK 7: GENRE & STYLE

**T 10/5: CHALK TALK:** Discussing *Writing Dialogue for Scripts* collectively.

- **HW:** Complete Voice & Dialogue Worksheet.

**TR 10/7: THE LAB:** *Voice & Dialogue Worksheet DUE IN CLASS* + Prompt stage directions style breakdown & plasticity of the page.

### WEEK 8: 10 MINUTE PLAY

**T 10/12: CHALK TALK:** 10-minute play structure (Gary Garrison review) + Discussing Common Theme.

**TR 10/14: THE LAB —** Prompt The Most Important Scene for play/pilot + Common Theme 10-minute play discovery.

### WEEK 9: 10 MINUTE PLAY CONT’D

**T 10/19: CHALK TALK:** On genres and style and their function.

**TR 10/21: NO CLASS — WRITING DAY (10 MINUTE PLAY)**

- **HW:** Complete 10-minute play

### WEEK 10: HEARING YOUR WORK OUT LOUD

**T 10/26: READING:** *10 Minute DUE IN CLASS* + Collective Reading & Notes.

**TR 10/28 READING:** Collective Reading + Reviewing KCACTF Guidelines & Submissions.

- **HW:** Submit 10-minute play to KCACTF Region 6 (for extra credit)

### WEEK 11: REWRITES

**T 11/2: CHALK TALK:** Discussion of plays (themes, character, dialogue, form) + takeaway + rewrite discussion.

**TR 11/4: THE LAB:** Work on your rewrites, notes, and revisions for a 10-minute play.

### WEEK 12: THE PLAY/PILOT

**T 11/9: CHALK TALK:** Plot & Outline/Treatment lecture

**TR 11/11 THE LAB:** Pictorial imagination & aural freedom (your 1st scene/opening image)

- **HW:** Complete Plot & Outline/Treatment Assignment.
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<tr>
<th>DAY</th>
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<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>11/16</td>
<td>CHALK TALK: <strong>Plot &amp; Outline/Treatment DUE IN CLASS</strong> + index card/charting mechs.</td>
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| TR  | 11/18| THE LAB: Exploring the Point of No Return/Public Private Moment in your play/TV Pilot  
- **HW:** Writing play/pilot |
| T   | 11/23| CHALK TALK: Identifying your personal writing process, the toolkit, and working with deadlines. |
| TR  | 11/25| NO CLASS — THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY  
- **HW:** Writing play/pilot |
| T   | 11/30| CHALK TALK: Creating a showcase format for new play festival. (Vote on 2 hrs 30 minutes of content for showcase to feature 10 minute and One Act/Pilots shows) |
| TR  | 12/2 | THE LAB: Finalizing graphics and details for Finals Showcase + confirm casting. |
| T   | 12/7 | **One Act Play/TV Pilot DUE OVER EMAIL by 5:00 p.m. (MT)** |
| TR  | 12/9 | FINAL SHOWCASE PERFORMANCE, 4:00 pm – 6:45 pm |

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**WEEK 15: YOUR READING**

**T 11/30** CHALK TALK: Creating a showcase format for new play festival. (Vote on 2 hrs 30 minutes of content for showcase to feature 10 minute and One Act/Pilots shows)

**TR 12/2** THE LAB: Finalizing graphics and details for Finals Showcase + confirm casting.

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**FINALS WEEK**

**T 12/7** **One Act Play/TV Pilot DUE OVER EMAIL by 5:00 p.m. (MT)**

**TR 12/9** FINAL SHOWCASE PERFORMANCE, 4:00 pm – 6:45 pm
CLASS POLICIES

Punctuality/Attendance: Punctuality is a necessity in theatre. As such, punctuality is necessary in this course. TEN minutes after the class start time, the doors will close; please DO NOT interrupt the class after the doors have been closed. Do not knock or try the door; chances are someone will be talking at that time and it is very disrespectful to interrupt. Also, if you need to leave class early, please let the instructor know—notification does not equal excuse, but it is the respectful thing to do. Attendance will not be taken regularly. It is each student’s responsibility to attend class. All class/group activities will count towards the final grade. Every student may miss two classes without providing an explanation and without suffering repercussions (i.e. I neither want nor need to know why you were not able to come to class). Choose your freebies wisely and plan ahead; emergencies with family, cars, and health may happen later in the semester. If there are extenuating circumstances, make sure that you notify your instructor immediately. As your two lowest class participation/quiz grades are dropped there is NO make-up work in this class. Class should only be missed due to EMERGENCIES; you signed up for the course with full knowledge of the date/time. Be aware that freebies ONLY apply to class participation/quiz grades!

Academic Dishonesty: Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another person's as ones' own. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Violations will be taken seriously and will be referred to the Office of Student Life for possible disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions. Academic dishonesty is an assault on the basic integrity and meaning of a university. Cheating, plagiarism, and collusion in dishonest activities are serious acts which erode the university's educational and research roles and cheapen the learning experience not only for the perpetrators, but also for the entire community. It is expected that UTEP students will understand and subscribe to the ideal of academic integrity and that they will be willing to bear individual responsibility for their work. Materials (written or otherwise) submitted to fulfill academic requirements must represent a student's own efforts. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Violations will be referred to the Office of Student Life for possible disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions (http://issweb.utep.edu/home/media/SampleOnlineCourseSyllabus.pdf). Any form of academic dishonesty will NOT be tolerated in this course. I do read all of your papers and expect the work you submit to be ORIGINAL work.

Students with disabilities: I will make any reasonable accommodations for students with limitations due to disabilities, including learning disabilities. If you have a documented disability and require specific accommodations, you will need to contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services in the East Union Bldg., Room 106 within the first two weeks of classes. The Center for Accommodations and Support Services can also be reached in the following ways:

Web: http://www.utep.edu/cass
Phone: (915) 747-5148 voice or TTY
Fax: (915) 747-8712
E-Mail: cass@utep.edu

Please see me personally before or after class in the first two weeks or make an appointment, to discuss any special needs you might have even if I have the letter from CASS.

Title IX

The Department of Theatre and Dance is dedicated to providing its students with a learning environment that is rigorous, respectful, supportive and nurturing so that they can engage in the free exchange of ideas and commit themselves fully to the study of their discipline. To that end this course is committed to enforcing University policies prohibiting all forms of sexual misconduct as well as discrimination on the basis of sex and gender. Detailed information regarding these policies and the resources that are available to students through the Title IX office.