

Script Analysis

Syllabus

THEA 3322/Fall 2020

T/TR: 9:00-10:20

Instructor: Georgina Hernández Escobar, MFA

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Office & Hours: MW 11:30-1:30pm. BY APPOINTMENT ONLY. Please send me an e-mail, make sure that you identify yourself and CLEARLY state your concern.

Course Description: This is a course about questions, shapes, and craft. Stories from theatre, film, and television all use a set of questions, shapes, and craft to create particular dramatic effects and meaning. By understanding how questions and shape form dramatic writing, you will expand your own storytelling toolbox and gain greater control over your craft.

Course Objectives: This course will ask you to read actively and with a curiosity-driven veracity so as to grasp not only meaning and playwright intention, but to also theorize on impact. It will allow you to access a dramatic text from a variety of angles and allow you to intelligibly translate the written word to dramatic interpretation. Like a detective or a prosecutor, you will be asked to defend your position as if the playwright, character, theme, or essence were on trial, and will reinforce the idea that “to **recognize** that the playwright has a plan is not to forgo your own creativity,” and that “to **discover** the plan is to ignite imagination in a way that is useful in creating a coherent production.” (Joseph Haj, Artistic Director *Guthrie Theatre*.)

Readings: You will be actively reading 20-100 on some weeks. Whether it’s a play, an article, or a chapter from the book, you will engage with each reading assignment by taking notes and bringing the day’s assigned texts to class (and if not possible, be sure to bring your detailed notes on those texts.) Also, bring your ever-growing collection of notes and writing to every session. Did I mention notes? Take copious amounts.

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.

ONLINE REQUIREMENTS

The course content is delivered via the Internet through [Zoom](#), Blackboard, and email. Here are some things to remember:

- 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.
- You will need to have access to a computer/laptop, a webcam, and a headphone/microphone combo. You will need to download or update the following software: Microsoft Office, Adobe Acrobat Reader, Windows Media Player, QuickTime, and Java. Check that your computer hardware and software are up-to-date and able to access all parts of the course.
- 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!

STATEMENT REGARDING COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS

You must STAY AT HOME and REPORT if you

1. Have been diagnosed with COVID- 19
2. Are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, or
3. Have had recent contact with a person who has received a positive coronavirus test.

Reports should be made at [screening.utep.edu](#). If you know anyone who should report any of these three criteria, encourage them to report. If the individual cannot report, you can report on their behalf by sending an email to COVIDaction@utep.edu.

For each day that you attend campus—for any reason—you must complete the questions on the UTEP screening website ([screening.utep.edu](#)) prior to arriving on campus. The website will verify if you are permitted to come to campus. Under no circumstances should anyone come to class when feeling ill or exhibiting any of the known COVID-19 symptoms. If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as possible, and alternative instruction will be provided. Students are advised to minimize the number of encounters with others to avoid infection.

Wear face coverings when in common areas of campus or when others are present. You must wear a face covering over your nose and mouth at all times in this class. If you choose not to wear a face covering, you may not enter the classroom. If you remove your face covering, you will be asked to put it on or leave the classroom. Students who refuse to wear a face covering and follow preventive COVID-19 guidelines will be dismissed from the class and will be subject to disciplinary action according to Section 1.2.3 *Health and Safety* and Section 1.2.2.5 *Disruptions* in the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures.

GRADING*

The components of your grade are....

- 15% Participation
- 20% Online Debate
- 30% Midterm
- 35% Final

***I DO NOT DROP STUDENTS FROM A CLASS—THAT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY. ALSO, KEEP TRACK OF YOUR OWN ATTENDANCE AS I CERTAINLY WILL.**

GRADE BREAKDOWN

- 90-100: A
- 80-89: B
- 70-79: C
- 60-69: D
- 0-60: F

- **LATE WORK IS NOT ACCEPTED**—IT IS THE STUDENT’S REPOSIBILITY TO PLAN IN ORDER TO GET WORK IN ON TIME. COMPUTER ISSUES ARE NOT YOUR INSTRUCTOR’S RESPONSIBILITY; **PLAN AHEAD.**

REQUIRED TEXTS

- *Backwards & Forwards: A Technical Manual for Reading Plays* by David Ball
- *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare
- *Into The Beautiful North* Adapted for the Stage by Karen Zacarias (available on PDF from instructor)
- A Contemporary Play TBD (available on PDF from instructor)
- *The Truman Show: Shooting Scirpt*” by Andrew Niccol

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

ASSIGNMENT BREAKDOWN

Participation (15%)

In order to earn full credit you must complete all reading assignments and attend our **once a week synchronous online class** prepared to discuss them. Throughout the semester I will call on you to answer questions about various reading assignments. This is how I will hold you accountable for the assigned readings. If our in-class interactions reveal that you have not sufficiently read the texts, or you exceed (3) online absences, your grade will be affected.

Online Debate (20%)

For the debate part of your participation grade you will engage in an online debate with your peers based on evidence shaped from the analysis and notes after watching two different adaptations of *Hamlet*. You will be asked to defend one adaptation based on your analysis and will be able to convince us as to why your chosen version is superior.

Midterm

(30%)

For the midterm assignment, you will write a 3-4 page “Letter of Support” for a character from *Into The Beautiful North* for an imaginary immigration application. The Letter of Support will be graded based on your script analysis work and based on character. You will receive a sample Letter of Support and a rubric on blackboard and will receive lecture/instructions ONE week prior to the due date.

Final

(35%)

For the final assignment, you will create a 5-10 page designer/director’s concept pitch deck in which you adapt the film *The Truman Show* to the stage. You will be expected to use your analytical skills to justify your design and directorial choices for translating the film to the stage and expected to utilize the language and tools created and gathered throughout the course to successfully complete it.

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: 8/17/2020

WEEK 1: TOOLKIT

- T 8/25: ONLINE MEETING: Syllabus Review, Course Orientation, Part-Time Synchronous Format.
- TR 8/27: Read/Watch: contemporary article/essay + videos on Week 1: Toolkit folder on BlackBoard.

WEEK 2: SHAPE

- T 9/1: ONLINE MEETING: What is analysis? Who are we analyzing? Why should we analyze?
+ Creating a common language for our course.
- TR 9/3: Read: **Part One: Shape** (pp. 9-36) of *Backwards & Forwards*

WEEK 3: METHODS

- T 9/8: ONLINE MEETING: Discuss Reading + Oral Quiz on Stasis, Intrusion, Obstacle & Conflict.
- TR 9/10: Read: **Part Two: Methods** (pp. 37-78) of *Backwards & Forwards*

WEEK 4: TRICKS OF THE TRADE

- T 9/15: ONLINE MEETING: Discuss Reading + Trial of “The Missing Persons” (Character)
- TR 9/17: Read: **Part Three: Tricks of The Trade** (pp. 79-95) of *Backwards & Forwards*

WEEK 5: CONTEXT & HISTORIC LENS

- T 9/22: ONLINE MEETING: Discuss Reading + Hamlet in History Lecture (Form)
- TR 9/24: Read: *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare

WEEK 6: TOOLKIT IN ACTION

- T 9/29: ONLINE MEETING: Breakout Groups *Hamlet* (Form, Theme, Character, Theatricality)
- TR 10/1: Watch: *Hamlet (2000)* feat. Ethan Hawke & *Ophelia (2018)* dir. Claire McCarthy

WEEK 7: THE DEBATE

- T 10/6: ONLINE MEETING: Breakout Groups: Discuss debate & evidence for your chosen adaptation
+ **Present to CLASS (20%)** w/closing argument to a jury.
- TR 10/8: ONLINE MEETING: Lecture on Letter of Support Assignment + Read: *Into The Beautiful North*

WEEK 8: CASE FOR CHARACTER

T 10/13 NO CLASS — WRITING DAY

TR 10/15 NO CLASS — **MIDTERM “LETTER OF SUPPORT” DUE (30%) at 11:59 pm MST**

WEEK 9: NEW PLAY ANALYSIS

T 10/20 ONLINE MEETING: Conversation and Lecture on New Play Analysis and Contemporary Dramaturgy

TR 10/22 Read: Excerpt “**Critical Response Process**” by Liz Lerman (on PDF via BlackBoard)

WEEK 10: CREATIVE DRAMATURGY

T 10/27 ONLINE MEETING: Discussion Liz Lerman technique + making our own creative response/creative dramaturgy cheat sheet.

TR 10/29 Read: **Contemporary Play** TBD (on PDF via BlackBoard)

WEEK 11: CRITIC v. ANALYSIS

T 11/3: ONLINE MEETING: Breakout Groups: The worst critic in the world + New Play Development

TR 11/5: Read: A **film REVIEW** of your picking (available online)

WEEK 12: ADAPTATION

T 11/10: Read: *The Truman Show: Shooting Script*

TR 11/12 ONLINE MEETING: Discuss film reviews + Adaptation Lecture

WEEK 13: ANALYSIS IN DESIGN & DIRECTION

T 11/17 ONLINE MEETING: Discussion *The Truman Show* + Final Assignment/Pitch Deck Overview

TR 11/19 NO CLASS — WRITING DAY

WEEK 14: ONE-ON-ONE

T 11/24 One-On-One Meetings (optional)

TR 11/26 NO CLASS — THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

WEEK 15: THE PITCH DECK

T 12/1 WRITING DAY

TR 12/3 **FINAL “DESIGNER/DIRECTOR PITCH DECK” DUE (35%) at 11:59 pm MST**

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.