

# Script Analysis

## Syllabus

THEA 3322/Spring 2021

T/TR: 12:00-1:20

**Instructor:** Georgina Hernández Escobar, MFA she/her/hers uses: (G. Escobar)

**E-mail:** ghernandez9@utep.edu

**Office & Hours:** M W 10:00 am - 12:00pm. 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*.)

**Course Design:** We will meet ONLINE synchronous via [THIS ZOOM ROOM](#)

[ <https://utep-edu.zoom.us/j/82107358666?pwd=dEpMbDRFcDR3TEwoSFYoVm1Pd2FoQT09> ]

Meeting ID: 821 0735 8666

Passcode: 917093abc

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://utepscriptanalysis.weebly.com>

**Readings:** You will be actively reading 20-100 pages 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.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

- *Backwards & Forwards: A Technical Manual for Reading Plays* by David Ball (bookstore)
- *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare (bookstore/online)
- *Do It For Uma* by Seayoung Yim (available on PDF from instructor)
- *Sweat* by Lynn Nottage (bookstore)
- *Riverdale* Pilot Episode (available on PDF from instructor)
- *Lysistrata* by Aristophanes (bookstore or online)
- *The Matrix* or *True Grit* screenplays (available on PDF from instructor)

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

## 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:

1000-900 = A	899-800= B	799-700 = C	699-600 = D	599 and Below = F
200 points:	Participation (in class)			
50 points:	Oral Quiz (in class)			
200 points:	Debate (in class)			
200 points:	Letter of Support			
150 points:	Show Review			
200 points:	Short Play Adaptation			

## TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

The course content is delivered via the Internet through [Zoom](#), Blackboard, our [WEBSITE](#) 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](http://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](mailto: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](http://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.

**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.**

### ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Attendance in this course is determined by participation in the exercises, discussions, readings, and other in-class learning activities. Your participation is important to building a community of art makers. Participation will be determined by completion of the following activities:

- Reading/Viewing all course materials to ensure understanding of assignment requirements
- Oral Quiz on Syllabus and other prompts to discuss our reading/viewing materials.
- Participation in the IN CLASS Debate, reading exercises and dramaturgy projects.

Because these activities are designed to contribute to your learning each week, they cannot be made up after their due date has passed.

## EXCUSED ABSENCES AND/OR COURSE DROP POLICY

This is a theatre course. Your participation is crucial. I expect participation with webcam and microphone. The sessions will NOT be recorded for your privacy. Try to be there! You will grow and learn from being present at each of our classes. Do know that lack of participation and unexcused or previously discussed absences WILL have an effect on your grade. **IT IS NOT MY RESPONSIBILITY TO DROP YOU**, you must do that yourself.

Make-up work will be given *only* in the case of *documented* emergency. Note that make-up work may be in a different format than the original work, given the theatrical dynamic of liveness, this may require more intense preparation.

## CLASS POLICIES

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 one's 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](mailto: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.

### **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](http://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.

## ASSIGNMENT BREAKDOWN

### Participation

In order to earn full credit you must complete all reading assignments and attend our **Tuesday and Thursday 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 (4) online absences, your grade will be affected.

### Debate

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.

### Letter of Support

For the midterm assignment, you will write a 3-4 page "Letter of Support" for a character from *Sweat* 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.

### Short Play Adaptation

For the final assignment, you will create a 10-30 page stage inspired by/adaptation of either the film *The Matrix* or *True Grit*. You will be expected to use your analytical skills to justify your choices about which beats to include and how to extrapolate the skeleton of the piece based on your theme, spine, and overall vision.

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## Tentative Class Schedule:

UPDATED: 01/11/2021

**Please note that as things evolve and pop-up online and beyond, this syllabus will be subject to change to implement as many contemporary events/opportunities as possible for us to fulfill our objectives.**

### WEEK 1: TOOLKIT

- T 1/19: Syllabus Review, Course Orientation, Website Review.
- TR 1/21: **ORAL QUIZ** in RE Syllabus. Lecture: “What is analysis? Who are we analyzing? Why should we analyze?” + Creating a common language for our course.
- HW:** Read p. 9-36 *Backwards & Forwards*

### WEEK 2: SHAPE

- T 1/26: Lecture “Shape” + Discuss **Part One: Shape** (pp. 9-36) of *Backwards & Forwards*
- TR 1/28: Lecture “Stasis, Intrusion, Obstacle & Conflict”, IN CLASS breakout rooms exercise on breaking stasis.

### WEEK 3: METHODS

- T 2/2: NO CLASS - **HW:** Read (pp. 37-78) of *Backwards & Forwards*
- TR 2/4: Discuss **Part Two: Methods** (pp.37-78), w. Breakout rooms to create your own dramatic methodology formula.

### WEEK 4: TRICKS OF THE TRADE

- T 2/9: Lecture “Creating character & Trial of The Missing Persons” + discussion on character construction.
- HW:** Read (pp. 79-95) of *Backwards & Forwards*
- TR 2/11: Discuss **Part Three: Tricks of The Trade** (pp. 79-95), in class exercise.

### WEEK 5: CONTEXT & HISTORIC LENS

- T 2/16: Lecture “Context and the Historical Lens” + discussion on the role of historian as analyst.
- HW:** Read *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare
- TR 2/18: IN CLASS reading assignment: **Do it For Uma** by Seayoung Kim
- HW:** Finish reading *Do It For Uma*

## WEEK 6: TOOLKIT IN ACTION

- T 2/23: Review guidelines for Breakout Groups *Hamlet v. Uma* (Form, Theme, Character, Theatricality)
- TR 2/25: Breakout Groups *Hamlet v. Uma*

## WEEK 7: THE DEBATE

- T 3/2: IN CLASS **DEBATE**; *Hamlet v. Uma*
- TR 3/4: IN CLASS **DEBATE**; **CLOSING ARGUMENTS** + in class responses to DEBATE as part of your grade.

## WEEK 8: CASE FOR CHARACTER

- T 3/9 Lecture & Discussion on “Letter of Support Assignment” on justifying character, given circumstances and imagined circumstances.

**HW:** Read *Sweat* by Lynn Nottage

- TR 3/11 NO CLASS — WRITING DAY

**MIDTERM “LETTER OF SUPPORT” DUE Friday March 12<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 pm MST**

## WEEK 9: SPRING BREAK

- T 3/16: SPRING BREAK
- TR 3/18: SPRING BREAK

## WEEK 10: NEW PLAY ANALYSIS

- T 3/23: Lecture “New Play Analysis and Contemporary Dramaturgy,” IN CLASS hunting for reviews/dramaturgy kits w. Breakout rooms.
- TR 3/25: Read & Discuss Excerpts “Critical Response Process” by Liz Lerman (in “readings” section of website), + making your own creative response/creative dramaturgy cheat sheet.

## WEEK 11: MULTIPLATFORM DRAMATURGY

- T 3/30: Formulaic Writing Analysis (TV, Screenplay, 10-minute play); IN CLASS reading *Riverdale* pilot episode.
- TR 4/1: IN CLASS reading *Riverdale* pilot episode + Discuss formula.

WEEK 12: CRITIC v. ANALYSIS

- T 4/6: Breakout Groups: The worst critic in the world + New Play Development (10-minute play exercises)
- TR 4/8: New Play Development (10-minute play exercises) CONT'D
- HW:** Read a film review of your picking (available online)

WEEK 13: ADAPTATION

- T 4/13: Adaptation lecture + start reading/watching *Lysistrata*
- TR 4/15: *Lysistrata* CONT'D, + guidelines for SHOW REVIEW assignment

**“SHOW REVIEW” DUE Sunday April 20<sup>th</sup> @ 11:59 pm MST**

WEEK 14: ANALYSIS IN DESIGN & DIRECTION

- T 4/20: In Class Viewing/or Reading of 1<sup>st</sup> half of: *True Grit* + Director Discussion
- TR 4/22: In Class Viewing/or Reading of 1<sup>st</sup> half of: *The Matrix* + Design Discussion

WEEK 15: ONE-ON-ONE

- T 4/27: Discussion + Final Assignment/Adaptation Overview
- TR 4/29: One-on-One Meetings

WEEK 16: FINAL PROJECT

- T 5/4 One-on-One Meetings
- TR 5/6 Discussion: Take Away, Reflections, and collected vocabulary for class.

**FINAL ADAPTATION DUE on TUESDAY May 11<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 pm MST**