

THEA 405 Scriptwriting

Trimester 2 2015

13 July to 15 November 2015

30 Points



Long Ago, Long Ago by Cassandra Tse and *Spirits* by Sepelini Mua'au

IMPORTANT DATES

Teaching dates: 13 July to 16 October 2015

Mid-Trimester break: 24 August to 6 September 2015

Last assessment item due: 9 October 2015

Withdrawal dates:

Refer to www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/withdrawals-refunds. If you cannot complete an assignment or sit a test or examination, refer to www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats.

CLASS TIMES AND LOCATIONS

Mondays 10am-12:50pm 77 Fairlie Terrace, room 208

NAMES AND CONTACT DETAILS

Course Coordinator	Lori Leigh	lori.leigh@vuw.ac.nz	04 463 6712	FT77 304
Course Administrator	Cathy McCullagh	cathy.mccullagh@vuw.ac.nz	04 463 5359	FT83 202

COMMUNICATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Any additional information for this course will be posted on Blackboard or communicated via email. If you are uncertain about any elements relating to classes and course assignments, please email Lori Leigh for advice. If you are not going to use the Victoria email address set up for you, you **must** set a forward from the Victoria email system to the email address you do use.

PRESCRIPTION

This course provides both a theoretical and a practical approach to writing scripts for the theatre. Particular topics covered are myth and story, dramatic and scenographic mise-en-scene, spoken dialogue, and both narrative and organic dramaturgy. Study is made of playscripts and theatre works in performance. Students pursue individual study of selected writers, and compile portfolios of their own original writing, including a full-length script.

COURSE CONTENT

This is a creative course employing a number of touchstone topics with which to work into and through the broader perspectives of script creation, paying particular attention to dramatic and narrative structure, action, and dialogue.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES (CLOS)

Students who pass this course should be able to:

- 1) Understand and apply the fundamentals of playwriting, such as dramatic structure(s), action, and character, to develop scripts.
- 2) Develop personal scriptwriting skills both in the area of locating and opening out ideas and in the habit of writing frequently and consistently.
- 3) Work with collaborators in performance processes in relation to dramaturgical principles.
- 4) Be familiar with the process of giving and receiving constructive feedback in a creative workshop environment.
- 5) Understand the process of rewriting, revision, and drafts.
- 6) Analyse work by contemporary playwrights, identifying strategies and dramaturgy employed and how it relates to her/his own writing practice

TEACHING FORMAT

Weekly open seminars, plus one-on-one meetings where needed.

MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS

In addition to achieving an overall pass mark of 50%, students must:

- attend a minimum of 9 (out of 12) weekly class sessions unless excused by the course coordinator with a medical certificate or other appropriate documentation. Course coordinator to be given prior notice of intended absence.

WORKLOAD

The expected workload for a 30-point course is 300 hours over the trimester or 20 hours per teaching week.

At Honours level, it is expected that students will attend every seminar; if you expect to be absent from a class seminar, please contact the course coordinator in advance if possible. Seminars are held 3 hours per week. The remaining time (17 hours per week) will be spent reading class materials (plays and assigned reading) including scripts of peers (4 hours) feedback to your writing partner (1 hour), and developing and completing the assignments that are spread evenly through the length of the course (11 hours). This time includes preparing your working (printing, etc.) for workshopping. It should be noted here that a principle in the learning will be the idea of drafting, i.e., completing second/third versions of a creative assignment.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment items and workload per item	%	CLO(s)	Due date
Writing Portfolio: In this assignment, students will complete short writing exercises (1-10 pages) throughout the term focussing on various tools of playwriting such as action, conflict, characterisation, dialogue, impulse. The prompts will be posted on the THEA 405 Blackboard site or assigned in class. These assignments will be written in Standard Manuscript Formatting, brought into class to be shared, and submitted to the lecturer in class.	25%	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	As per schedule in course programme
Playwright's Presentation and Report: In this assignment, students will select and research a play by a contemporary playwright and present on the playwright, as well as the selected play's dramaturgy (construction, structure, and form of the play as well as theatrical/theoretical/social/historical contexts). A short report (1 page typed) will be submitted in class the day of the assigned presentation detailing her/his findings and reflecting how the work relates to her/his own	25%	1, 2, 6	As per schedule in course programme

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writing. More detailed information on the Playwright’s Presentation and Report Assignment Sheet.			
Script: Students will work on a script and submit a minimum of 30 pages of writing as a final project (either as a complete short play or part of a full-length play). Students will workshop their writing in class (on assigned days) and receive feedback from both the instructor and peers to aid in the process. A final draft of the project will be submitted in hard copy.	40%	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	Friday 9 OCT 5pm, via Blackboard
Workshop/ Feedback Report: You will be assigned a writing partner. This assessment includes reading of peers’ scripts and constructive criticism of work presented. You will be marked on the quality of your critique of your peers’ writing (your skills and vocabulary to analyse—assess “what works”—in terms of new writing). A one page Report is submitted.	10%	1, 3, 4	Report due Wednesday 23 SEPT 5pm, via Blackboard

Marking Criteria: These assignments will be based on (1) the quality, imagination, and originality of the piece presented, (2) the sense that each assignment conveys of elements of thought and craft that have been presented as components within the teaching, and (3) the drafting and workshop process including development through successful incorporation of feedback. All assignments must be typed, properly formatted, and free of spelling, grammar, and typographical errors. Samples of standard manuscript format will be posted on the THEA 405 Blackboard site. Further details on these assignments, including relation of assessment to objectives, will be available early in the course.

Though students will be assessed individually for all assignment work, informal collaborations between students will be invited and encouraged outside the formal class times.

Please note: Marks for Honours level assignments and final course grades are not finalised until feedback from the external examiner has been considered. Honours grades gained in individual courses remain provisional until the overall final classification made by the Honours programme examination committee.

SUBMISSION AND RETURN OF WORK

Work provided for assessment in this course may be checked for academic integrity by Turnitin the online plagiarism prevention tool.

Electronic assignments are submitted as a MS Word file through Blackboard. How to name your file and step-by-step instructions can be found on Blackboard in the “Assignments and Turnitin” section.

Your marked assignment will be found on Blackboard in the same section.

Since this is an Honours Course you should also:

- Email your assignments as a MS Word file to theatre@vuw.ac.nz .

EXTENSIONS AND PENALTIES

Extensions

In exceptional and unforeseen circumstances an extension may be granted. To apply for an extension, email your Course Coordinator before the assignment is due. If granted, your Course Coordinator will inform you of the new due date. Tutors cannot grant extensions. **No assignment with or without an extension will be accepted after Monday 26 October 2015.**

Penalties

Work submitted after the deadline will be penalised by a 2.5 percent deduction from your total mark per work day. Late work also receives only minimal comments from your marker.

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT AND/OR ADDITIONAL EXPENSES

Additional expenses for this course include the cost of printing and photocopying scripts.

SET TEXTS

Spencer, Stuart. *The Playwright's Guidebook*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2002.

You can order textbooks online at www.vicbooks.co.nz or can email an order or enquiry to enquiries@vicbooks.co.nz.

There will be additional set readings posted on the THEA 405 Blackboard site.

As in the course programme, students will be required to read plays over the course of the trimester (selected and sourced by the students) aligning with the scheduled Playwright's Presentations (Assignment 2). It is the student's responsibility to obtain the texts of these plays.

RECOMMENDED READING

Additional readings will be distributed in class or posted on the course Blackboard site. You are, of course, encouraged to read and see plays throughout the trimester.

CLASS REPRESENTATIVE

The class representative provides a useful way to communicate feedback to the teaching staff during the course. A class representative will be selected at the first lecture of the course. Students may like to write the Class Rep's name and details in this box:

Class Rep name and contact details:

STUDENT FEEDBACK

Student feedback on this course was high so no major changes have been made to the course. Important course information is now posted on Blackboard, in assignment sheets, and reviewed orally in workshop.

Student feedback on University courses may be found at

www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback_display.php.

In week six or seven of the trimester your class representative will be invited to a meeting with the Programme staff. In week five your class representative will ask the class for any feedback on this course to discuss at this meeting.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

The information above is specific to this course. There is other important information that students must familiarise themselves with, including:

- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/integrity-plagiarism
- Aegrotats: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats
- Academic Progress: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/academic-progress (including restrictions and non-engagement)
- Dates and deadlines: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/dates
- FHSS Student and Academic Services Office: www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/student-admin
- Grades: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/grades
- Resolving academic issues: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications
- Special passes: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications
- Statutes and policies including the Student Conduct Statute:
www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/strategy
- Student support: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/support
- Students with disabilities: www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/disability
- Student Charter: www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/student-charter
- Student Contract: www.victoria.ac.nz/study/apply-enrol/terms-conditions/student-contract
- Subject Librarians: <http://library.victoria.ac.nz/library-v2/find-your-subject-librarian>
- Turnitin: www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin
- University structure: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/structure
- Victoria graduate profile: www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/graduate-profile
- VUWSA: www.vuwsa.org.nz
- School website: www.victoria.ac.nz/seftms

THEA 405 COURSE PROGRAMME

Week 1	13 July	Course Introduction: WoManifestos and Manifestos
Week 2	20 July	Beginning to write: Reading due- PG pp.1-21, 297-300; '36 Assumptions' WE #1 DUE (all WE due via Blackboard and in workshop)
Week 3	27 July	Dramatic Action and Conflict: Reading due- PG pp.21-72 PP #1 and WE #2 DUE
Week 4	3 August	Structure/Anti-structure: Reading due- PG pp.73-106 & 'When is a Play Not a Drama' PP #2 and WE #3 DUE
Week 5	10 August	Creating Character & Dialogue: Reading due- PG pp. 170-202 PP #3 and WE #4 DUE
Week 6	17 August	Ideas/Pitches for Plays: Reading due- PG pp.126-169 PP #4 DUE
Mid Trimester Break: Monday 24 August to Sunday 6 September 2015		
Week 7	7 September	Playwright's Workshop PP #6 DUE
Week 8	14 September	Playwright's Workshop
Week 9	21 September	Playwright's Workshop FEEDBACK REPORT DUE, Wednesday 23 September by 5PM via Blackboard
Week 10	28 September	Playwright's Workshop
Week 11	5 October	Playwright's Workshop FINAL SCRIPT DUE, Friday 9 October by 5PM via Blackboard
Week 12	12 October	Playwright's Workshop

WE= Writing Exercise & PG= *The Playwright's Guidebook* (set text)