

Theatre 307 – Theatre History and Drama, Modern-Contemporary Research Paper and Presentation

THE PROJECT: All projects will require extensive library research and will culminate in a 6-8 page paper and a 6-10 minute presentation to the class. The project is an opportunity for you to develop a particular area of expertise in theatre history by exploring that area in a more in-depth fashion than we will have time as a class. Presentations and due dates for papers will be staggered throughout the semester to allow students to be able to share their findings with the class.

For this project you will be doing what professional researchers do in Theatre and Performance Studies: selecting a research question, gathering and analyzing information, drawing conclusions, and discussing your findings.

We will treat the project as a *critical inquiry*. Critical inquiry is a process that involves formulating and reformulating productive questions, seeking out and evaluating rival responses to those questions, gathering and interpreting relevant information, and arguing (both orally and in writing) for a particular understanding of that information. Your final paper will offer not merely a report of information, but a critical argument about the significance of that information.

All students must meet with the instructor after you have done some preliminary research. Available topics are listed below. We will choose topics in random order at the second class meeting, so please prepare yourself by reviewing potential topics and choosing four to five potential selections:

Filippo Marinetti	Jean Genet	Julie Taymor	Theatre of the Oppressed
Guillaume Apollinaire	Jean Paul Sartre	George C. Wolfe	Athol Fugard
Thornton Wilder	Peter Weiss	Martha Clarke	Sarah Kane
Georg Kaiser	John Osborne	Joanne Akalaitis	Dario Fo
Orson Welles	Environmental Theatre	Karen Finley	Ingmar Bergman
George Pierce Baker	Franco Zeffirelli	Signature Theatre Co.	Adrian Noble
Lillian Hellman	Neil Simon	Holly Hughes	Andrei Serban
Clifford Odets	Jean-Louis Barrault	Manhattan Theatre Club	Richard Eyre
Florenz Ziegfeld	José Quintero	Laurie Anderson	Peter Stein
T.S. Eliot	Friedrich Dürrenmatt	Trevor Nunn	Deborah Warner
Noël Coward	Peter Shaffer	Tim Miller	Peter Zadek
Tyrone Guthrie	Arena Stage	Robert Falls	Sam Mendes
Harley Granville-Barker	Edward Bond	Spalding Gray	Peter Handke
Ernst Toller	Mark Taper Forum	Ridiculous Theatrical Co.	The Donmar Warehouse
Rachel Crothers	Peter Hall	Bill Irwin	Heiner Müller
“Method” acting in the U.S.	Ossie Davis	Split Britches	Old Vic
	Alan Schneider	Eric Bogosian	Timberlake Wertenbaker
		El Teatro Campesino	Athol Fugard
		Spiderwoman Collective	Martin McDonagh
		Sarah Jones	Tadashi Suzuki
			David Hare

THE PAPER: A 6-8 page paper (double-spaced, 12 point font, **one inch** margins) is required from each student and is due no later than the day that you give your class presentation. The paper should outline your findings on the topic in a clear, well-organized manner, and should demonstrate that you have analyzed and synthesized the material within the context of topics relevant to the course. The audience for your paper is a scholarly audience: me. Therefore you should construct your research process accordingly. By following the steps listed below, you will improve your odds of success with this project:

1. Once you have been assigned your topic, begin with some preliminary research to identify sources of information and begin to get some ideas for a research question.
2. Create a research question based on the topic. The question should be appropriate for an 8 page research paper. It should be NARROW and not TOO BROAD, CHALLENGING and not TOO BLAND, GROUNDED and not TOO SPECULATIVE. See: <http://dianahacker.com/pocket/> for practice and examples.

3. Search for more sources and review all sources for possible and plausible answers to your research question. Be an active reader of material related to your essay by taking notes. This will help you remember more details when you work on the essay.
4. Based on the findings from your research, write a thesis statement that presents a position or provides a plausible answer to your research question.
5. Using your notes, pick out the best points of evidence from your findings that support your thesis.
6. Group the common points of evidence together in an outline so that your argument will flow easily and smoothly throughout the essay.
7. Your outline should provide the following structure:

I. Introduction

Lay out a clear introduction to the essay. Tell us what you'll be doing in the paper. Create a thesis statement that presents some overall point of view or argument that you'll be trying to make with the essay. Include your thesis sentence towards the end of the introduction as a way of leading into the body.

II. Body

The body of your paper should contain all the evidence and analysis that substantiates the viewpoint expressed in the thesis. This would include specific examples and evidence from textual and authoritarian sources. The more specific, well-reasoned, and analytical this section is, the more successful the essay will be. Choose the best three to five points of evidence that you have to support your thesis, and outline each point in a separate paragraph. Introduce the evidence with a topic sentence, address the issues you want to address surrounding that evidence, *then explain exactly how it demonstrates the validity of your overall thesis as presented in the introduction*. Don't just give facts, but explain the evidence and then tell us exactly how that evidence supports the main point of your essay. Once you've finished with one point of evidence, start a new paragraph and discuss another. If the paragraphs get too long, feel free to split them up more, but address one point of evidence completely, then move on to another.

III. Conclusion

This is your chance to sum up everything that you've said and show how you've demonstrated your thesis to be true. Find a way to tie it all together. Perhaps you might give an overall opinion or perception based on what you have learned. Restate your point of view and find some way to leave the reader with a clear sense of the conclusions you've drawn.

8. Write a draft of your essay and revise as much as is necessary to produce the final paper. **You must proofread to catch all your typing errors!** Spell-check and grammar-check will not catch every mistake.

Important things to remember:

1. Contractions are generally inappropriate for formal papers.
2. Be conscious of gender specific pronouns. Try to construct sentences which do not rely on the words he, she, him, her, etc..
3. It is advisable to keep a copy of your paper and make several electronic back-up copies as insurance against loss or destruction.

You should carefully **document your sources**, preferably using MLA style. You must have at least **four non-internet sources** other than *Living Theatre*. Feel free to include reputable and authoritarian internet sources after you have found four books or articles. You may use a source from the internet and count that among your four sources **ONLY** if that source appears in a print form as well. If you are having trouble finding sources, please let me know as soon as possible. I will not be able to help you if you wait until the due date to let me know you are having problems.

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You must meet with me **at least a two weeks** before your paper is due. **Ten points of your paper grade will depend on this meeting.** YOU are responsible for scheduling the meeting or seeing me in my office hours... I will not track you down to make sure that we meet. Our discussion should ensure that you have chosen an appropriate research question, are finding the right kinds of sources, and are on the right track for your paper and presentation. Come prepared to discuss your research question and your findings thus far. Feel free to talk to me at any time during your research process. Communication will help us avoid potential problems at your due date.

Also, **no later than a week and a half before your paper is due, you are required to turn in your introductory paragraph (including your thesis statement) as well as a full outline for your paper.** Again, this should ensure that you are not waiting until the last minute and will give you a better opportunity to create a successful project.

The following aspects of your essay will be evaluated and will form the basis for your grade:

- Thesis: A strong statement of opinion on a specific and focused issue; a thesis addressing the question at hand.
- Definition: Key terms are clearly defined and not left vague.
- Reasoning and analysis: Clear examples of critical reasoning, rigorous analysis, healthy skepticism, and astute inquiry.
- Examples and Evidence: The significant use of evidence to support or illustrate your ideas in order to demonstrate the validity/truth of your thesis.
- Creativity and Originality: Originality in approaching a topic; approaches which move beyond the ideas already covered in class or the ideas self-evident in the reading; approaches which incorporate evidence uncovered in outside research or in examples from personal experience.
- Intellectual curiosity: Open-mindedness, tact, fairness, and honesty; a consideration of opposing viewpoints, alternative interpretations/responses, and counter-arguments.
- Craft: Clear, well-polished language, grammar, organization, structure, and formatting.

THE PRESENTATION: Students will prepare a 6-10 minute presentation to the class on your topic.

Your **well-prepared** presentation will give the class a chance to learn from you. This means that your presentation will be evaluated for content *and* presentation style. Therefore, you should make the presentation as interesting as possible. Think of ways to make it interactive, and explore the use of audio, video, and/or internet resources. Make sure you have *prepared* and *rehearsed* your presentation. **You should not simply go through your paper for the class** – choose the most important and interesting information and practice presenting it in an engaging fashion. The audience for your presentation is your classmates, so construct your presentation accordingly.

For your presentation, **you are required to create a visual outline or organizer that will be projected on the screen in class** through the use of any number of computer programs – Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel, or on a web-site. The visual aid should outline the most important findings from your research, and should also include a bibliography listing important sources.

THE GRADE: The project is worth 200 possible points; the paper is worth 150 points and your presentation is worth a total of 50 possible points. The most important aspect of the project is your ability to present your findings in a clear and cohesive manner.

THE TIME FRAME: Projects will be presented throughout the semester. There will obviously be higher expectations for those that have more time to complete their projects.

Get started early and have fun!!!