

Theatre 317/319 Small Group Project Assignment

You as well as a few of your Large Group members will help foster an interesting and informed discussion on one play during the semester. Essentially, it is the job of the small group to be the expert on this play, its playwright, the era in which it was produced, the –ism (if any) it represents, etc.

At the start of the class period PRECEDING your group’s play (if we discuss your play on a Friday, questions are due on Wednesday - see Course Calendar for due dates) of the presentation the group must turn in to me (electronically, as a Word Document attached to an e-mail) three things:

1. A list of ten questions or discussion topics that they plan on addressing in class. Where to come up with these questions? First, go to the PowerPoint lecture for your topic. You will find discussion questions already in the slideshow. Start with these so that on the days we discuss the play in class, you will already have answers to them. Beyond those questions your inquiries should be specific and thoughtful ways in which to approach the play from a variety of angles, but should largely focus on HISTORY rather than text analysis, though some of the latter is acceptable. Consider relevant cultural contexts, playwright biography, -isms, relationship to past plays read, etc. These questions should demonstrate what you feel are the most important things to know about your play, the playwright, and the world in which they existed. Refer to the “Teaching Points” handout available on Blackboard where you’ll find what I think is important about each play.
2. The ANSWERS to those questions. The answers should not be single-word or single-sentence facts or responses in the style of a quiz, so structure your questions accordingly. Rather, they should be thorough, thoughtful, in-depth demonstrations that you have a solid understanding of the issue about which you are asking. The sources for these answers should be CITED using MLA citation formatting and a works cited page, just as if you were writing a paper on the subject. You may NOT cite Longman or Brockett, as the class will have already read this information, and your job is to bring new perspectives to the table. Most importantly, you may NOT USE INTERNET SOURCES OF ANY KIND. All sources must be either print (library book) or, if electronic, from an established scholarly journal or other library resource. Please contact me with questions about the validity of a source.

The primary source material as well as the ten discussion questions (but not the answers) must be e-mailed to the class on the same date that they are due to me.

3. A brief but insightful excerpt from (more than a paragraph, less than a thousand words) a primary source material that is related in some meaningful way to the play. Primary source material is anything written during roughly the era in which the play was written or originally produced. Aristotle’s *Poetics*, though written one hundred years later, would definitely qualify (although because we study Aristotle in 317, the *Medea* group is not allowed to use *The Poetics*). Other options include but are not limited to writings by the actual playwright about his/her work (autobiography, manifesto, personal letter), contemporary analysis of the playwright’s work (Freud writing about Ibsen), or a theatre review of premiere productions.

On the day (or days) on which we discuss your play in class:

1. You will begin the class period with a reading from the play that lasts less than five minutes. The five minutes chosen should be a representative example of the style, agenda (or both) of the play in particular and the playwright's work in general, so pick the reading thoughtfully. Choose the cast from the class and have someone read the relevant stage directions as well.

2. You will be the experts on the play. Typically, my class discussions involve small conversations about specific topics (Religion and *Life's a Dream*, Epic Theatre and *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, etc.) followed by the class as a whole discussing what conclusions they made in the smaller conversations. When I get to a discussion question on the PowerPoint slideshow, I will have the class start discussing amongst themselves, and I will have you come talk to me about what you think the answers to the question might be. Once you've answered me satisfactorily, you'll go educate your classmates, helping to lead their discussion in useful ways. You are NOT required to present anything for the class (PowerPoint, etc.)

Small groups will be graded on the following criteria:

- Quality of written research: depth and relevance of questions and answers, correct and thorough use of sources, polished, final-draft grammar, mechanics, and citation formatting.
- Usefulness of the in-class reading and primary source material: insight on the style/agenda of the play, playwright's intentions, societal reception of the play, etc.
- Actual execution of the discussion day: demonstration of knowledge of research, ability to articulate important concepts, skill at teaching fellow students about the playwright / play.