

Theatre 319 Large Group Project Assignment

Overview: The larger groups (several of the smaller groups working together) will divide research on a historic play and its production into various specific areas among the group for in-depth research. You may not choose either a specific play or a playwright that we will read for this class. The group's efforts will culminate in the following:

- 1) A fifteen- to twenty-minute theatrical production given before the class
- 2) The submission of the script for the production
- 3) A fifteen-minute presentation of the research used to create the production
- 4) An oral defense of the choices made in the production
- 5) An annotated bibliography detailing the sources used to inform your research presentation

Topic Areas: The specific play and playwright must come from the historical eras assigned below.
I must approve the play/playwright before research begins.

Group 3: Realism/Naturalism in Europe or American, before 1920 (not *Playboy of the Western World*, *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, *Peter Grimm*, or *The Power of Darkness*)

Group 1: Alternatives to Realism (1890s to 1940): Dadaism, Surrealism, Expressionism, Epic Theatre (not Brecht), Theatre of Cruelty (not *Spring's Awakening*, *Machinal*, *The Adding Machine*, or *Morn to Midnight*)

Group 2: Post WWII: Poetic Realism, Absurdism, African Theatre, African-American Theatre (not *Death and the King's Horsemen*, *The Man Who Turned Into a Stick*, *Dutchman*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, or *Rhinoceros*)

Production expectations: Each group will be required to stage a collection of scenes cut from their play. The intention is to capture the arc of the story as well as the play/playwright's theatrical style. This production should run fifteen and twenty minutes and will be performed before the class. Scripts may be in hand, but you must demonstrate a substantial amount of preparation regarding acting, directing, and production choices. This should look like a professionally executed staged reading. The choice of scene(s), location of performance, and the nature and style of the production should be informed by the research gathered for the paper and presentation portions of the project.

You will be expected to work together (theatre is a collaborative art, remember) and to find and develop your own resources. No departmental support will be provided (costumes, props, scenery, lights, etc.), so be creative. You are encouraged to use "found" spaces for your production, appropriate to the theory/context that your research suggests/inspires you to use. You should aim to impress your audience with your ingenuity, creativity, scholarship, and attention to detail.

IMPORTANT LOCATION NOTE: You may NOT use any interior spaces in the library. ALL interior locations should be considered with thoughtful respect for the surrounding offices and classrooms. You should find an authority who controls the space, make the timing and nature of the project very clear, and get their permission.

IMPORTANT PRODUCTION NOTE: If there is stage violence of any level of danger or complexity (with or without weapons) in your production, you MUST have it cleared with Jonathan or Drew, and I MUST have confirmation of this from one of them via e-mail.

Presentation Expectations: On the day that you perform, you are expected to provide the rest of the class with both written and verbal information to help them appreciate your performance. You can hand out programs with director's notes, give an oral presentation before or after the performance itself, e-mail everyone in the class the day before with something they are to have read, etc. Since the class won't be reading your paper before they see your production, the point of this presentation is to share the research you've done and emphasize the connections between that research and the performance they're about to see. Your presentation is expected to be practiced, organized, thorough, and thoughtful.

Each group member should contribute to the oral portion of this presentation, which can come before or after the production ("Here's what you're about to see" vs. "Here's what you just saw"). Do NOT simply read your portion of the paper, but rather know what points you're going to make, in what order, and how long it will take to do this. You are limited to fifteen minutes. Consider the presentation an academic performance, and prepare as such.

Annotated Bibliography: Each individual group member must turn in an annotated bibliography of at least four sources that informed his or her research. You may NOT use Brockett, Longman, or any unapproved internet source. The annotation for each source must be at least five sentences in length, and should provide a thoughtful overview of what information the source covered and how that information was used in the project. For more on Annotated Bibliographies, go here, and focus on the "Summarize" section: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/01/>

Defense Expectations: On the next class after your presentation and production, your group will be required to defend the choices made and go into any detail on the research information presented. Be prepared to answer any and all questions about your research and your production choices. Because you will not be writing a paper in support of your creative work, the defense will be extremely rigorous. If you don't do enough research to answer in-depth questions about your area of expertise, it will show, and it will cost you points.

Peer Evaluation Survey: You will be required to fill out an InQsit survey evaluating the work of your group members (as well as your own work). You will rate each group member's work from a scale of 1-5, (1=A, 5=F). Additionally, you will be required to write a few sentences (in the InQsit survey) in which you identify what each member researched, how useful their contribution was to your efforts, what each individual's attitudes were, and any special explanations of your own contributions (or lack thereof) that you need to explain. . The InQsit survey will open after the conclusion of your Defense Day and will **close one week later**.

From these evaluations I will vary individual grades by as much as one-third. The two highest-scoring group members will receive additional points. No one other than myself will see these evaluations. Failure to submit a Peer Evaluation Survey on time will result in a grade deduction.

Brief Tip: This is a big project. There is no way on earth you can get all of this done in a week, let alone in a few nights before your group presents. Get on it early. Be organized. Make plans. Ask me lots of questions. Know what you're talking about and why you did what you did.

Grading: The entire project is worth 100 points total. Some points will be assessed to the group as a whole, and some points will be given to individuals. The breakdown is as follows:

- Group points (same grade given to the entire group):
 - o Research Presentation: 20
 - o Production: 40

Theater Historiography website
www.theater-historiography.org
Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0 United States License

- Oral Defense: 20
- Individual Points:
 - Annotated Bibliography: 20
 - Peer Eval (Bonus / Deduction)

Theatre 319 Large Group Worksheet

When you have decided on the playwright and play you're going to study, you need to divide the group's tasks. You should plan to cover five of these six topics (arranged in an order that makes sense for your group) in the five chapters of your paper:

1. Cultural Context(s): What were the characteristics of the society in which this play was written and produced? How were gender, class, religion, nationality, race (etc. as relevant) perceived by people of the culture, and how were those issues handled in the play? Focus on the cultural contexts that you have found most relevant to the creation of your production.
2. Artistic School of Thought: The work you've chosen will most likely be a work that is representative of a specific school of thought or "-ism." What were the major traits of that -ism? What other thinkers – artists, writers, playwrights, philosophers – were relevant to the school of thought? What was its nation of origin, if any? What -isms were related to it? Against what -isms was it revolting? What other schools of thought did it create? How does your production reflect the essence of that school of thought?
3. Playwright's Biography and Body of Work: This section should include the relevant details of the playwright's life as well as an overview of his/her larger body of work, characteristic style, and historical relevance. How does his/her life relate to the play you've chosen? How does this play relate to other plays he/she has written? How does this playwright relate/compare to other major writers of his/her era? Focus on the history, styles and other information that informed your production choices.
4. Entertainment Context(s): What were the entertainments available to the people of this era? Who went to the theatre? What kinds of plays were audiences used to seeing? What was their typical social class, gender, race, level of education, etc.? How was theatre perceived by the culture? For the modern era, consider the various other forms of entertainment – radio, TV, movies, etc. – available to the general public. How did these things influence your production choices?
5. Original Production: When this play was first produced, what did it look like? How was theatre actually executed in this era and culture? What do we know about acting styles? Scenic/Costume/Lighting/Sound design? Theatre architecture? Were there any relevant critical responses to the original production? Was it popular? Hated? What did people enjoy/dislike? How has all of this impacted your group's production choices?
6. Subsequent Major Productions: Choose several productions of this play that have been undertaken since its debut. What specific creative and stylistic choices were made in those productions? What did reviewers and audiences think of those choices? How did those choices relate to or depart from the intention or nature of the original play? How did your study of subsequent productions inform your group's choices?

You don't have to answer every single question in each topic area, but do make use of the different possible directions of research to create a thoughtful and relevant chapter. Also, you do NOT have to let me know which group members are working on which chapters. However, the sooner you figure that out, the easier it will be to get the work done in an efficient and timely manner.

NOTE: If for some reason your group wants to cover a topic area not included in the five listed above, check with me immediately. Hint: For approval of an alternate topic area, come ready with reasons why your proposed topic is better/more interesting/more relevant than one of my six.

Additionally, I would recommend assigning creative roles for the production (director, actors, designers, etc.), but this is completely optional.

319 Large Group Project Good Ideas and Bad Ideas

The good ideas are not requirements, and the bad ideas are not expressly prohibited, but in my observations of these projects, there are things that have worked and things that have not.

Good Ideas:

- Read the entire play aloud as a group during one of your first group meetings
- Read at least one or two other plays by the playwright
- Be able to explain the process of script cutting
- E-mail the class a synopsis of the play beforehand so that they can follow along
- Make sure your individual half-chapter meets the minimum word count
- Thoroughly edit your annotated bibliography for grammar and formatting
- Be aware of the limitations of your performance location. Outdoors? Great! Just make sure we CAN HEAR YOU, and that you have a rain location.

Bad Ideas:

- Lack of clarity when justifying creative choices such as location, performance style, etc.
- Research of unclear relevance to the play: Failure to tie research paper to the specific content and style of the play.
- Lack of application of research and play analysis to creative choices made in performance
- Lack of rehearsal in presentation of research materials
- Inability during the defense to speak coherently about the playwright's body of work, major themes, styles, trends, etc.