

## Theatre 319 Research Paper Assignment

### Topic

The subject of your Research Paper must have a clear and substantial connection to the era, play, or playwright of your Large Group Project. The entire paper does not have to focus on this topic, but a significant portion of the paper must be rooted in that Large Group Project era. For instance, if your Large Group Project play is *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, you might write a paper that...

- Argues that the philosophies of American Protestantism heavily influenced the novel's author and thus the playwright
- Links the popularity of spectacle-driven melodrama to specific historical trends or events (rise in working class, development of stage technology, Astor Place riot, Fugitive Slave Act)
- Demonstrates ways in which the play specifically departs from other melodramas of the day and explains why
- Proves that the audiences for whom *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was performed expected very similar things (or totally different things, or a mix of similar and different things) than audiences of a different (but specific) era
- Connects *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to other modern (post-1800) entertainment or cultural trends or expressions
- Uses a lens of critical or historical analysis (Marxist Theory, for example), to re-examine the relationship between *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and its era.
- Points out that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (or any other play of the era) had a specific influence on a later work of theatre, film, radio, television, etc.

These are just a few of the basically infinite number of possibilities, but you'll notice that they all start with 19<sup>th</sup> Century America, and they all involve making an argument of some kind. This paper must NOT simply be a reporting of facts, but rather must make some ORIGINAL CONNECTION between different aspects or elements or eras of history. The subject is fairly limited, but the approach and argument is wide open.

### Length

The Research Paper must be at least 2400 words long (approximately seven pages, but use MS Word's "Word Count" feature), NOT INCLUDING the Works Cited page. I would recommend a limit of 3300 words (approximately ten pages), but this is just a recommendation.

### Citation and Sources

Follow the MLA Handbook (7<sup>th</sup> Edition) for citation and formatting, using parenthetical citations and a works cited page. You must make use of at least six sources in your paper, and none of them can be Brockett, Longman, or any non-approved electronic resource.

### Outline

Before writing the paper, you will create an outline. The outline will be worth twenty points and will be due on the day of your Large Group Project defense (to be turned in to me via e-mail, MS Word attachment). The outline should consist of the following:

1. Introductory paragraph: The first paragraph of your paper, detailing the various sections of the paper and the arguments and angles you'll use to prove your thesis. Your thesis statement – a single sentence that sums up the argument of your paper – should appear in this paragraph **in bold type**.
2. Summary of each subsequent section: The paper will be carefully structured, with each section representing a thoughtful approach to managing arguments and evidence and proving your thesis

statement. For each section, you'll summarize the basic argument in a single sentence, and then list the sources (in MLA Works Cited page format) that you're going to use to prove that statement. For example, if your thesis statement argued that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was marketed specifically at northern middle class Christians, your section summaries would look something like this:

Section One Summary Sentence: The overt religious content in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, including Tom and Eva's appearance in heaven at the end of the play, clearly aligned Christianity and abolitionism.

Section One Sources: (list sources here)

Section Two Summary Sentence: Topsy's journey from the south to the north and parallel journey from "shiftless" behavior to "proper" manners plays out an explicitly Christian forgiveness and redemption metaphor to which northern Christian audiences could easily relate.

Section Two Sources: (list sources here)

### **Individual Feedback Meeting**

After you have turned in your Research Paper Outline, you have one week to make an appointment with me to talk about the outline and your plan for the paper. I will give you feedback during that appointment, after which you will have at least two weeks to write the final paper (see below for calendar).

### **Final Paper**

The final paper will be worth one hundred points and should be turned in electronically. The paper must reflect the structure of your outline as well as the revisions and suggestions made during the Individual Feedback Meeting. The paper will be graded on three criteria (see the Rubric on Blackboard for more details):

1. Insightful, clear, concise use of written English and correct use of MLA citation and formatting (30 points)
2. Research expressing depth and breadth of sources that are relevant and specifically applicable to the goals of the paper. (20 points)
3. Combination of historical research, analysis of artistic expression (specific play, design, genre, playwright, theatre, etc.), and focused thesis statement to create a paper that makes and supports an original argument. (50 points)

### **Calendar**

#### Group 3

- Outline Due: Friday, Feb. 18 (Before the start of class)
- Individual Feedback Meeting: Available Monday, Feb. 21 through Friday, Feb. 25
- Final Paper Due: Wednesday, March 16 (Before the start of class)

#### Group 1

- Outline Due: Monday, March 21
- Individual Feedback Meeting: Available Wednesday, March 23 through Wednesday, March 30
- Final Paper Due: Wednesday, April 13 (Before the start of class)

#### Group 2

- Outline Due: Friday, April 15 (Before the start of class)

Theater Historiography website  
[www.theater-historiography.org](http://www.theater-historiography.org)  
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- Individual Feedback Meeting: Available Tuesday, April 18 through Friday, April 22
- Final Paper Due: Thursday, May 5 (Midnight)