**THEATRE PAPER DUE 12/7**

Essay (3-5 pages) research paper, about the SUBJECT OF YOUR CHOICE. Because this class is called **Theatre Appreciation**, it is important that you pursue something that interests you so that you may better appreciate theatre.

**The paper must be about theatre**. Although film and television are related to theatre, those subjects are best saved for a film or television class. Your paper can be about something we covered in this class (Oedipus, Othello, Asian Theatre) or something related. Here are some subjects students wrote about in the past: the use of masks in theatre, minstrel shows and the use of black face makeup, Marlon Brando, the Actors Studio famed acting school, the choreography of Bob Fosse. One student wrote about theatre superstitions (like not saying the name Macbeth in a theatre). Our textbook, Theatre — the Lively Art, is full of wonderful information that might give you some ideas. Please email if you are uncertain about what to write about.

Be sure your idea is about theatre. One student submitted a paper about Star Wars. I, of course, did not accept the paper and the student had to write a new paper the day before the class ended.

***SOURCES***

***Your Paper must have THREE outside sources. You must cite them in MLA format. MLA citation is for arts, literature, and humanities. APA citation is for social sciences. There are many online resources that demonstrate MLA citation, if you don't know it.***

RELIABLE SOURCES

A reliable source is academic or professional. For example, if you wanted to write a paper about how Eugene O'Neill's seafaring experiences influenced his "sea" plays (we didn't study that), the Eugene O'Neill Sailing Club would NOT be a legitimate source; however, a university archive or professor's article would be.

HELPFUL WEBSITES

There are many. I think this one is pretty good: Short Research Papers/Jerz's Literacy Weblog (he's a professor, so legit).

WHAT IS A RESEARCH PAPER?

Research is the quest for knowledge. It is generally based on a question: What was Arthur Miller’s impact on the American theatre? How did Bunraku puppetry develop in Japan? What are some controversial plays and why are they controversial? A research paper is not an argument paper, but it still must have a thesis, a focus. The focus is generally the significance of your research: Marlon Brando changed acting forever, Kabuki united different social classes in Japan, etc.

Research is one of the most important skills you take with you into the 21st century, whether you continue on in school or begin your professional life. However,  research is one of the most important 21st c.  skills—we live in the information age so finding, evaluating, and communicating information is crucial.

**Here are some research ideas:**

1) You may research a person we studied or mentioned, such as Samuel Beckett, Aristotle (focus on his drama theories), Julie Taymor, Marlon Brando. Seems like an easy idea, right? It's not! These papers often turn out poorly because they become like encyclopedia lists rather than essays. If you do this, you must love the person (intellectually, artistically) and have something you really want to say about him or her: "Samuel Beckett's bleak world view expressed the horrors of his time," etc. Ira Aldridge, the first black man to play Othello, could be an interesting topic.

2) Greek theatre: What was it like to be at the Dionysia? Again, don't just describe the Dionysia for me; I can get that from the Internet Theatre Database. Have a point! How did playwrights experience it? Spectators? Actors?

3) Shakespeare. YOU MAY NOT WRITE A BIOGRAPHY OF SHAKESPEARE. You must narrow this topic waaaayyyyy down. There are thousands of books about Shakespeare. Even a topic such Shakespearean tragedy is too broad. You would have to have knowledge of all his tragedies (Lear, Hamlet, etc.)--that is a year's project. However, a research paper about how critics have interpreted Iago's evil is doable, and there is much material out there on that subject.

4) Theatre architecture through the ages, or from one particular era in particular.

5) Critical theory. Critical theory is when critics look at art through a particular sociological, historical, or philosophical lens. For example, we explored a bit of feminist critical theory about Desdemona in Othello. You can look at Othello or A Midsummer Night's Dream through the lens of feminist criticism, or Othello through the lens of Race Theory.

6) Asian theatre--the influence of Kabuki, Noh theatre (we didn‘t really study Noh but it is in our textbook and you can research it further if it interests you). Puppetry. Its influence. Its history. What accounts for its current popularity in Avenue Q and Hand to God and other contemporary plays?

7) Female actors onstage.

8) Controversial casting issues (some of which we discussed Week 4).

9) Controversies over Porgy and Bess, or Angels in America,

10) The Federal Theatre Project, Franklin Delano Roosevelt's program to keep theatre workers employed during the Great Depression. The movie Cradle Will Rock, which is on Videos, is about that.

11) Costume. Set design. Songwriting. Choreography.

12) This list could go on. Read Theatre-- the Lively Art. Look at the clips on Weekly Assignments. Search the web. The important thing is to pick something that interests you, not just something expedient. Trust me, your paper will be better if you care about your subject.

13) Theatre of the 1960s. The 1960s was a wild decade for theatre, especially in New York City. The 60s was a time of experimental theatre, happenings, theatre love-ins, and the rise of Off- and Off Off-Broadway.

14) Rock musicals. When did they start? What constitutes a “rock” musical? How are they different from traditional musicals? Why would a rock star be interested in writing a musical? You have to watch a few (in addition to Hair) to adequately cover the subject. Hedwig and the Angry Inch is highly acclaimed and widely available on streaming services. David Bowie has a musical. David Byrne of the Talking Heads has a musical. Pop star Duncan Sheik has several  (one of them is the hit Spring Awakening). Be certain you watch film/video versions of theatre musicals, not original film musicals.

15) One-person shows. There are many theatre artists who have perfected this very demanding theatrical form. These include John Leguizamo (his show Latin History for Morons is currently on Netflix), Anna Deveare Smith, and Spalding Gray. There are some one-person shows in which the actor is telling a story about him- or herself (Spalding Gray), and others in which the actor plays many characters (Anna Deveare Smith). What are the dramatic benefits of telling a story this way? A note: Freak by John Leguizamo is on Course Videos. John Leguizamo’s work is sexual and has much profanity. To watch work by Anna Deveare Smith or Spalding Gray, you must purchase work on your own.Spalding Gray’s most noteworthy show is Swimming to Cambodia.

16) The AIDS epidemic engendered many fine theatrical works. We will watch one of them—Angels in America—the next few weeks. Rent, another one, is on Netflix. The Normal Heart, a very significant work, was made into an excellent film in 2014. You will have to purchase it online (I highly recommend it regardless of whether you do research on the topic). How did AIDS have a creative impact on the theatre?

17) The Vietnam War also engendered many fine theatrical works, including Hair, Streamers, The Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel, etc. How did the Vietnam War creatively impact the theatre?

18) During the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s WPA included the Federal Theatre Project to keep theatre workers employed. The program was short-lived and its success or failure is of question. The movie Cradle Will Rock (on Course Videos) is about this era and has much about the FTP, and also other WPA artists and works, such as Mexican muralist Diego Rivera. Research the FTP. Is federally funded art a good idea?

**These are suggestions. It’s important you pick something that interests you and to find something to say about it. The questions about the topics are to give you some things to think about; you do not need to answer them in your paper, unless of course they are relevant to what you have to say.**

**MORE ABOUT SOURCES**

**As you know, you need to consult three outside, legitimate ounces. WIKIPEDIA IS NOT A LEGITIMATE SOURCE. Wikipedia can direct your path toward other sources, but it is not legitimate because anyone can post information there.**