

**WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM
REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO USE W-DESIGNATION**

LSC # 129
Action Approved 3-25-93

TYPE I. PROFESSOR COMMITMENT

- () Professor Dr. Donald G. Eisen Phone x2969 ext 2965
() Writing Workshop? (If not at IUP, where? when? IUP 9/1988)
() Proposal for one W-course (see instructions below)
() Agree to forward syllabus for subsequently offered W-courses?

TYPE II. DEPARTMENTAL COURSES

- () Department Contact Person _____ Phone _____
() Course Number/Title _____
() Statement concerning departmental responsibility.
() Proposal for this W-course (see instructions below)

TYPE III. SPECIFIC COURSE AND SPECIFIC PROFESSOR(S)

- () Professor(s) _____ Phone _____
() Course Number/Title _____
() Proposal for this W-course (see instructions below)

SIGNATURES:

Professor(s) Dr. Donald G. Eisen Donald G. Eisen
Department Chairperson Dr. Donald G. Eisen Donald G. Eisen
College Dean [Signature]
Director of Liberal Studies [Signature] 2/25/93

COMPONENTS OF A "WRITING SUMMARY"

- (I) "Writing Summary" — one or two pages explaining how writing is used in the course. First, explain distinctive characteristics of the content or students which would help the Liberal Studies Committee understand the summary. Second, list and explain the types of writing activities; be especially careful to explain (1) what each writing activity is expected to accomplish as well as the (2) amount of writing, (3) frequency and number of assignments, and (4) whether there are opportunities for revision. If the activity is to be graded, indicate (5) evaluation standards and (6) percentage contribution to the student's final grade.
- (II) A copy of the course syllabus.
- (III) Samples of assignment sheets, instructions, or criteria concerning writing that are given to students.

Provide 12 copies to the Liberal Studies Committee.

WRITING SUMMARY Th 310 -- Theater Criticism

Th 310, Theater Criticism, is a required course for Theater majors with an approximate enrollment of 50% theater majors and 50% majors from other departments taking the course as a free elective. Students attend seven to nine live theater productions and write responses to each production using a range of types of writing. Enrollment is limited to fifteen to simplify travel.

There are 10 types of writing which may occur in this class:

1. PERFORMANCE DOCUMENTATION FOR THE HISTORICAL RECORD. Performance documentation avoids judgments based on matters of personal taste or preference or even the application of critical standards. It requires objective documentation of such aspects of the production as the nature of the physical theater, the configuration of the stage, costumes, sets, lighting, properties, acting choices and styles, director's concept, type of company, etc. Such writing provides for the historical record a factual, objective account of the performance as an evanescent art form. This type of writing is intended to afford students the opportunity to discover differences between rendering objective factual accounts and dealing in personal interpretation and value judgements. This essay will be evaluated and graded on the basis of the extent of significant detail observed in each of the aspects listed above and on the basis of the student's ability to refrain from coloring responses with personal interpretation or enthusiasms.

2. DISCRIMINATION BETWEEN TWO PERFORMANCES OF THE SAME TEXT. A comparative analysis/critique of two productions of the same play, one of which the class has seen on videotape and one of which they have seen in live performance. In the course of critiquing the production students will be asked to discriminate between such things as a) the different visions that the two productions have of the dramatic action of same text, b) the different interpretations of specific moments in the play as suggested by the companies' performances, c) the differing interpretations of at least one character as represented in the actors' performances, d) differing interpretations of the setting as implied by the stage and costume designs for the two productions, and e) differing approaches to the staging of the play's action as it was interpreted by the two companies. This assignment will be evaluated in terms of the student's ability to analyze salient distinctions between performances.

3. DISCRIMINATION BETWEEN TEXT AND PERFORMANCE. A critique of a production of a play for which students have prepared by studying the written text of the play. The student will distinguish between such things as a) the text of the play and the production of that text, b) the play-wright's text and the interpretation of the text suggested by the company's performance, c) at least one character as represented in the text and the interpretation of the character(s) as represented in the performance of the actor(s), and d) the setting and implied staging inherent in the text and the actual stage design and staging of the play's action by the company. This assignment will be evaluated in terms of the student's ability to analyze salient distinctions between text and performance.

4. WRITING BASED ON RESEARCH. A critique on some aspect of the production of a play, based on the student's research, for example, on: a) the body of the playwright's work, b) the production history of the specific play, c) the history of the reception and criticism of the particular play, d) the social or political history of the period represented in the play, e) the social or political history of the period in which the play was written, f) the work of a particular artist involved in the production as it relates to that artist's work in the production in question, or g) another appropriate topic of the student's choosing which has prior approval of the instructor. This assignment will be evaluated upon the quality and relevance of the research and on the student's ability to use that research to inform our understanding of the production in question.

5. ASSESSING THE CONTRIBUTION OF A SINGLE ARTIST WITHIN A PRODUCTION. A critique of a production in terms of the contribution of a single artist to the overall production, focusing on the artist's achievement in terms of specific details relating to choices made, the ways in which choices illuminated the text, and the artists' virtuosity in executing those choices. This assignment will be evaluated in terms of the student's ability to isolate and analyze specific choices of a specific artist and to recount and describe the execution of such choices as they relate to and inform the text of the play.

6. FORMULATING A PERSONAL RESPONSE. Students articulate their responses in the form of impressions and images, distinguishing personal responses from value judgments, and focusing on their feelings about the work and their individual responses to it. The ability to isolate, discuss and account for individual responses will be the standard for evaluation of this critique.

7. FORMULATING, ARTICULATING AND JUSTIFYING CRITICAL JUDGMENTS. A critique distinguishing between judgments based on personal taste and those based on established critical standards. Having read a range of professional reviews reflecting a variety of critical standards, students will critique a production on the basis of specific critical standards and their applicability to the performance in question. These assignment will be evaluated upon the student's ability to articulate clearly the relevant critical standards relevant and to apply those standards meaningfully to the production in question.

8. FREE CHOICE. Once during the course of the semester, any student may exercise the option of choosing an alternative to the types of writing specified above. Any student exercising this option is required to define the purpose and objectives of the alternative assignment and the approach that will be taken. This definition should be incorporated as part of the title cover sheet, and the instructor will evaluate the assignment in reference to the announced purpose and objectives of the assignment.

9. ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE WRITING OF OTHERS. For the final examination, students will be provided at least one week before the exam with a variety of critical responses to and reviews of a particular production which they have not seen. They will prepare a written response to them which they will bring to the final exam and these responses will be discussed during the exam period. This assignment will be evaluated upon the astuteness and clarity with which the student identifies and comments upon the strengths and weaknesses of the critiques they have read and evaluated in light of issues emphasized during the semester.

10. NOTE-TAKING AT PERFORMANCES. For two (2) productions of the student's individual choice, (once before mid-term and once after mid-term) the student will take notes during the performance, recording among other things brief observations or thoughts on specific salient details of sets, costumes, lights, properties, staging, acting, directorial choices or other observations that may occur to them. Students will turn in either the original notes or xerox copies of the notes simultaneously with the critique to which they relate. The notes will not be graded, but the instructor will return them with comments about the student's note-taking technique.

Evaluation: Students will attend 7-9 of the assigned performances of theatrical productions. They will write responses to a minimum of seven of those nine productions, each assignment according to the types of writing outlined in sections 1-8 above. The course grade will be based 70% on the best seven grades for the nine production assignments. In addition, each student will be required to write two (2) substantial revisions of any two of their 7-9 previously evaluated assignments. These two revisions will be evaluated and assigned separate grades. The course grade will be averaged as follows: Best seven essays - 70%. Two revisions -- 20%. Final exam -- 10%.

All seven to nine responses will be evaluated primarily according to the evaluation criteria established for each discrete type of writing articulated in sections 1-8 above. However, for all written assignments the following two general sets of criteria are implicit: 1. Clear articulation of, organization appropriate to and focus upon a central idea or expression of purpose. 2. A command of syntax and of the mechanics of sentence structure, punctuation and spelling consistent with standard English and commensurate with reasonable general expectations for a university undergraduate writing.

THEATER CRITICISM
TH 310
WRITING INTENSIVE SECTION
DR. DONALD G. EISEN
SPRING, 1993

SYLLABUS

Theater Criticism is offered as a writing intensive "W" course, satisfying one unit of the IUP Liberal Studies writing intensive requirement.

The objectives of the course are:

1. To formulate meaningful and articulate expressions of one's personal responses to theatrical performance.
2. To conduct meaningful analysis of one's personal responses to theatrical performance.
3. To form meaningful distinctions between dramatic text and the production/performance of that text.
4. To distinguish meaningfully between the character as created by the playwright and the art of the actor in performing the role.
5. To distinguish between judgments made as matters of taste and judgments made on the basis of established critical standards.
6. To develop a lexicon of different types of critical approaches to art and the critical standards that may be appropriate to each type.
7. To use a variety of critical standards in the formulation of critical judgments.
8. To document the discussion of theater art with objective observation of the details of a particular production and/or performance.
9. To integrate objective observation of production details into arguments about and analysis of performance.
10. To take notes on performance that will support and sustain meaningful discussion of the performance.

In order to address these objectives, the course provides the following opportunities and exercises:

A. The instructor will provide a set of guidelines on the approaches and types of writing that each student will do in the course of the semester. For each assignment (including revisions), the student will be free to choose any of the specified types of approaches for that specific assignment, and will indicate as part of the title/heading convention which approach is being taken. The only requirement is that each student attempts each of the specified approaches/types of writing at least once during the term.

B. Students see and critique in written form (two to four pages each or 600 - 1200 words) a minimum of seven (7) and a maximum of nine (9) productions during the course of the semester. Students attend each production as a group, so that for each assignment all students are critiquing the same performance of that production. Critiques are due on the date specified on the syllabus. Late critiques are penalized one letter grade for each day the critique is late.

C. Students will do two (2) major revisions of their choice of any two of the critiques they have written in the course of the semester, one due at mid-term and one due toward the end of the semester. As indicated in section A above, students are free to take any of the specified approach/types to the assignment, regardless of which approach/type was attempted in the original assignment.

D. Students will maintain a file of all their critiques and keep their own record of which assignments fulfill which required approach/types. Students will submit that complete file at the time of the final exam.

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

1/20 -- Introduction: Requirements and Logistics of the Theater Criticism course.

1/22 -- Lecture/Discussion -- Introduction to Criticism: The Nature and Practice of Criticism.

1/25 -- Videotape and discussion of Moliere's Tartuffe (RSC production).

**Reading Assignment; Moliere's Tartuffe.

1/27 -- Videotape and discussion of Tartuffe (RSC production).

1/29 -- Discussion of issues and approaches involved in criticism of Tartuffe.

(Woolgatherers opens. Runs 1/29-1/31.)

2/1 -- Videotape and discussion of A Month in the Country by Ivan Turgenev.

**Reading Assignment: Turgenev's A Month in the Country.

2/3 -- Videotape and discussion of A Month in the Country.

2/5 -- Lecture/discussion -- Issues and Approaches Involved in Criticism of A Month in the Country.

(*2/7 -- Assignment #1. Mad Forest. Caryl Churchill. PPT. Sunday Matinee. 2:00 P.M. Vans will leave from Sheetz at 11:45 a.m.)

2/8 -- Lecture/discussion -- Identifying and defining your personal response.

Reading Assignment: Michael Kirby. "Criticism: Four Faults." (Xerox hand-out)

**2/10 -- Assignment #1 due. Mad Forest. Discussion of Mad Forest.

2/12 -- Return of Mad Forest critiques. Discussion of Mad Forest and the critiques.

2/14 -- Discriminating between text and performance.

2/15 -- Discussion and videotape of Tartuffe .

2/17 -- Discussion and videotape of Tartuffe.

2/19 -- Lecture/discussion: Issues in the Criticism of Comparative Productions of Tartuffe.

(*2/21 -- Assignment #2. A Month in the Country. Ivan Turgenev. University of Pittsburgh Stephen Foster Theater. Sunday Matinee. 2:00 p.m. Vans will leave from Sheetz at 11:45 a.m.)

- 2/22 -- Lecture/discussion -- Expanding the Lexicon:
Discriminating between taste and critical judgment.
Discussion of selected readings.

Reading assignment: (Xeroxed handouts).
- (*2/23 -- Assignment #3. The Lunatic, the Lover and the Poet.
Tuesday, 2/23. IUP. Fisher Auditorium. 8:00 p.m.)
- **2/24 -- Assignment #2 due. A Month in the Country.
Discussion of Pitt production of A Month in the
Country.
- (2/25 -- Quilters opens. Runs 2/25-2/28, 3/3-3/6.)
- **2/26 -- Assignment #3 due. Lunatic. Discussion of the
production.
- (*2/27 -- Assignment #4. Tartuffe. CMU. Saturday Matinee.
2:00 p.m. Vans will leave from Sheetz at 11:45 a.m.)

- 3/1 -- Return of A Month in the Country critiques.
Discussion of Pitt production and critiques.
- **3/3 -- Assignment #4 due. Tartuffe.
Return of Lunatic critiques. Discussion of
critiques and the production.
(SETC 3/3-3/7)
- 3/5 -- Lecture/discussion -- Expanding the Lexicon:
Critical Problems of Genre and Form.

** DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF FIRST REVISION.

MID-TERM

- 3/8 -- Return of Tartuffe critiques. Discussion of
critiques and the production with videotape
reprise.
- 3/10 -- Lecture/discussion -- Lost in Yonkers: Critical
Issues in the Work of Neil Simon.

**Reading Assignment: Simon's Lost in Yonkers.
- *(3/11 -- Assignment #5. Lost in Yonkers. IUP Artists Series.
Fisher Auditorium. 8:00 p.m.)

3/12 -- Performance Documentation: Exercising Observation and Suspending Judgment.

Reading assignment: Selected reading of professional critiques. (Xeroxed hand-outs)

SPRING RECESS 3/13 --3/21

**3/22 -- Assignment #5 due. Lost in Yonkers. Discussion of road company production.

3/24 -- Return Lost in Yonkers critiques. Discussion of critiques and production.

3/26 -- Expanding the Lexicon: Historical and Biographical Critical Problems.

(*3/28 -- Assignment #6. Pippin. (Musical). Point Park College at the Pittsburgh Playhouse. Sunday matinee. 2:00 p.m. Vans will leave from Sheetz at 11:45 a.m.)

3/29 -- Expanding the Lexicon: Sociological, Political and Psychological Critical Approaches.

**3/31 -- Assignment #6 due. Discussion of Pippin.

4/2 -- Return of Pippin critiques. Discussion of production and critiques.

(*4/4 -- Assignment #7. Karmic Soap Opera. A new play by Sherry Nevins. University of Pittsburgh Studio Theater. Sunday matinee. 2:00 p.m. Vans will leave from Sheetz at 11:45 a.m.)

4/5 -- Discussion of A Comedy of Errors and Boys from Syracuse. (Video and audio tapes.)

**Reading Assignment: Shakespeare's A Comedy of Errors.

**4/7 -- Assignment #7 due. Karmic Soap Opera. Discussion of the production.

4/9 -- Discussion of A Comedy of Errors and Boys from Syracuse. (Video and audio tapes.)

Easter Sunday 4/11 -- No Classes Monday, 4/12

- 4/13 -- Monday Classes Meet Today.
Return of Karmic Soap Opera critiques. Discussion
of the critiques and production.
- 4/14 -- Discussion of A Comedy of Errors and Boys from
Syracuse. (Video and audio tapes.)
- (4/15 -- Time of Your Life opens. Runs 4/15-4/18, 4/21-4/24.)
- 4/16 -- Discussion of A Comedy of Errors and Boys from
Syracuse. (Video and audio tapes.)
- (*4/17 -- Assignment #8. The Boys from Syracuse. (Musical).
CMU. Saturday matinee. 2:00 p.m. Vans will leave
from Sheets at 11:45 a.m.)
- **4/19 -- Assignment #8 due. Boys from Syracuse. Discussion
of the production.
- 4/21 -- Lecture/video: Introduction to the work of Vaclav
Havel.
- 4/23 -- Lecture/video continued: Introduction to the work
of Vaclav Havel.
- (*4/25 -- Assignment #9 Temptation. Vaclav Havel. City
Theater. Sunday matinee. 2:00 p.m. Vans will leave
from Sheetz at 11:45 a.m.)
- 4/26 -- Return of Boys from Syracuse critiques. Discussion
of the critiques and production.
- **4/28 -- Assignment #9 due. Temptation. Discussion of the
production.
- 4/30 -- Return of Temptation critiques. Discussion of
Critiques and the production
- ** DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF SECOND REVISION.
- 5/3 -- Discussion: Overview of theater criticism.
- 5/5 -- READING DAY -- NO CLASSES
- 5/7 -- Theater Criticism Final 10:15-12:15

GRADES

PROVISION A: The course grade will be determined as follows: 70% will be the average of the best seven (7) grades of the nine critique assignments; 20% will be based on the grades for the full revisions which you make on any two critiques of your choice during the course of the semester; 10% will be based on the final exam.

PROVISION B: In the case of students who have written and submitted all nine critique assignments, the instructor will automatically drop the lowest two of the nine grades. Thus, the 70% of the course grade based on critiques will be calculated on the basis of the best seven of nine papers.

PROVISION C: In the case of five of the nine critiques assignments, due to the amount of class time invested in preparing for them, these following assignments are mandatory and failure to complete them will result in a grade of F for that assignment:

- #2 -- A Month in the Country
- #4 -- Tartuffe
- #5 -- Lost in Yonkers
- #8 -- Boys from Syracuse
- #9 -- Temptation

Should a student receive an F for failure to turn in one or more of these five mandatory assignments, the F grade(s) will stand and will not be dropped as a low grade under the terms of Provision B of this grading policy.

PROVISION D: Four critique assignments are not mandatory. Should a student fail to see and turn in a critique for one or two of these assignments, the student will receive F grades for those assignments. However, F grades received for failure to complete one or two of these four assignments will be subject to Provision B of the grading policy. As many as two F's received for not completing any of these four assignments can be dropped as the lowest two of nine grades. These four assignments which are not mandatory are:

- #1 -- Mad Forest
- #3 -- The Lunatic, the Lover and the Poet
- #6 -- Pippin
- #7 -- Karmic Soap Opera

PROVISION E: No students are excused from the two revision assignments or from final exam essay. Failure to complete and submit any of these three assignments will result in an F grade for that assignment. These F grades are not subject to Provision B of the grading policy.

PROVISION F: There will be no arrangements to make up a missed critique, nor to substitute a different performance of an assigned production for one missed, nor to substitute another production for one of those listed on the syllabus.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR TICKETS

Students will be required to turn in a \$40.00 deposit for tickets for the entire semester (the total will be approximately \$75.00) by class time on January 22nd so that tickets can be purchased for the entire group at group rates. Therefore, students should appropriate \$40 during the first week of classes and turn that money in (in cash). Because of problems in previous semesters with checks returned for insufficient funds, no checks will be accepted. The balance of \$35 is payable no later than February 1. Should the student not turn in the total of \$75 by February 1, tickets in excess of the money turned in will not be purchased and the student will receive F grades for the relevant assignments. If the total amount for the semester's tickets turns out to be less than \$75.00, a refund will be made to each student. Students who cannot or do not wish to make this expenditure by February 1 should drop this class by Friday, January 22.

If a student chooses to or must miss a particular play, it is that student's responsibility to dispose of his/her ticket by selling it or giving it to a friend. There can be no refunds for tickets for performances missed, since theaters do not make refunds in such instances. Class size is limited so that we can travel by university van(s). Therefore, under normal circumstances, there will be no charge for transportation.

A student who is scheduled to attend a production and finds at the last moment that he/she cannot attend is personally responsible for contacting the instructor directly, or for sending word along to Sheetz that he/she is not coming. Courtesy demands that students should not keep the group waiting. The vans will not wait longer than five minutes beyond the departure time for latecomers.

In particularly snowy or otherwise inclement weather, the departure time will be automatically moved up 30 minutes earlier than the time printed on the syllabus.

Dr. Donald G. Eisen. Theater Department, WLR 104.
Office Hours: M & F 3:30-4:30 p.m., T & R 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
Office: 357-2965. Home: 465-6508

THEATER CRITICISM
TH 310
WRITING INTENSIVE SECTION
DR. DONALD G. EISEN
SPRING, 1993

There are 10 types of writing which may occur in this class:

1. WRITING WHICH OBJECTIVELY DOCUMENTS AN EVENT FOR THE HISTORICAL RECORD. Each student will produce one (1) essay/response on a production of the student's choice in the style and form of production documentation as outlined and described by Michael Kirby and as routinely practiced in such periodicals as The Drama Review (formerly The Tulane Drama Review), samples of which will be made available for students' perusal. Performance documentation avoids judgments based on matters of personal taste or preference or even the application of critical standards. Instead, it requires objective documentation of such aspects of the production as the nature of the physical theater, the configuration of the stage, design of costumes, sets, and lighting, selection and use of properties, acting choices and styles, director's concept, type of company, etc. Performance documentation provides for the historical record a factual, objective account of the performance, which is an evanescent art form. Documentation is as objective as possible so that readers may draw their own interpretations and conclusions about the performance from the facts listed. In a course which deals so extensively in students' personal and interpretive responses, this type of writing is intended to afford students the opportunity to discover differences between rendering objective factual accounts and dealing in personal interpretation and value judgements. This essay will be evaluated and graded on the basis of the extent of significant detail observed in each of the aspects listed above and on the basis of the student's ability to refrain from coloring responses with personal interpretation or enthusiasms. This assignment may constitute a revision of an earlier assignment.

2. WRITING FOR DISCRIMINATION BETWEEN TWO PERFORMANCES OF THE SAME TEXT. For one or two (1-2) assignments, students will write an analysis/critique of the assigned production, taking into account another production of the same play which the class has seen on videotape. In the course of critiquing the production students will be asked to discriminate between such things as a) the different visions that the two productions have of the dramatic action of same text, b) the different interpretations of specific moments in the play as suggested by the companies' performances, c) the differing interpretations of at least one character as represented in the actors' performances, d) differing interpretations of the setting as implied by the stage and costume designs for the two productions, and e) differing approaches to the staging of the play's action as it was interpreted by the two companies. This assignment will be evaluated in terms of the student's ability to analyze salient distinctions between performances, especially as they relate to interpretation of the text. One of these assignments may constitute a revision of an earlier assignment.

3. WRITING TO DISCRIMINATE BETWEEN TEXT AND PERFORMANCE. For one (1) assignment, students will critique a production of a play for which they have prepared by reading/studying the written text of the play. In the course of critiquing the production the student will be asked to make distinctions between such things as a) the text of the play and the production of that text, b) what should be attributed to the playwright's text and what should be attributed to the interpretation of the text suggested by the company's performance, c) at least one character as represented in the text and the interpretation of the character(s) as represented in the performance of the actor(s), and d) the setting and implied staging inherent in the text and the actual stage design and staging of the play's action by the company. This assignment will be evaluated in terms of the student's ability to analyze salient distinctions between text and performance. This assignment may be constitute a revision of an earlier assignment.

4. WRITING TO FOCUS ON THE WORK AND CONTRIBUTION OF A SINGLE ARTIST WITHIN A PRODUCTION. For one (1) assignment, students will critique a production largely in terms of the work of a single artist and of the contribution of that artist to the overall production. Students are free to write about the actor, director, or the set, light, costume or sound designer, focusing in on that artist's overall achievement in terms of specific details relating to choices made, the ways in which choices illuminated the text, and the artists' virtuosity in executing those choices. This assignment will be evaluated in terms of the student's ability to isolate and analyze specific choices of a specific artist and to recount and describe the execution of such choices as they relate to and inform the text of the play. This assignment may constitute a revision of an earlier assignment.

5. WRITING TO FORMULATE AND ARTICULATE A PERSONAL RESPONSE. For one (1) of the early production assignments in the semester, students will be asked to articulate their responses in the form of impressions and images. They will be asked to discriminate between personal responses and value judgments and, for purposes of this assignment, to avoid value judgments, focusing instead on their feelings about the work and their individual responses to it. They will be expected to develop images to convey to an audience a sense of what it was like to experience this performance, integrating into their essays discussion of their personal responses without necessarily passing or even implying value judgments. The ability to isolate, discuss and account for individual responses will be the standard on which this critique will be evaluated. This assignment may constitute a revision of an earlier assignment.

6. WRITING TO FORMULATE, ARTICULATE AND JUSTIFY CRITICAL JUDGMENTS. During the course of the semester, students will be involved in a number of different class activities aimed at distinguishing the difference between judgments based on personal taste (preference for apple pie over pecan pie) and those based on established critical standards. Among the activities will be assigned readings of professional reviews, readings and lecture/discussions on a range of critical issues and standards, and class discussion intended to distinguish between responses based on personal taste and those grounded in established critical standards. The objective of these activities will be for each student to develop a variety of critical standards and to apply those standards to the

forming of value judgments relative to matters philosophical, aesthetic, political, social, etc. Students will be expected to begin to integrate critical standards as one element of their performance responses. After mid-term, students will be expected to choose one or two (1-2) productions to critique on the basis of specific, particular critical standards and their applicability to the performance under discussion. These assignment will be evaluated upon the student's ability to articulate clearly the critical standards relevant to the discussion and to apply those standards meaningfully to the production in question. One of these assignments may constitute a revision of an earlier assignment.

7. **WRITING BASED ON RESEARCH.** Students who choose this assignment will be expected to focus on some aspect of the production of a play, with the discussion of that aspect based on the student's research. The research should be appropriately documented. The student might choose, for instance, to write about the production of the play based on the student's research into: a) the body of the playwright's work, b) the production history of the specific play, c) the history of the reception and criticism of the particular play, d) the social or political history of the period represented in the play, e) the social or political history of the period in which the play was written, f) the work of a particular artist involved in the production as it relates to that artist's work in the production in question, or g) another appropriate topic of the student's choosing which has prior approval of the instructor. This assignment will be evaluated primarily upon the quality and relevance of the research and on the student's ability to use that research to inform our understanding of the production in question. This assignment may constitute a revision of an earlier assignment.

8. **FREE CHOICE.** Once during the course of the semester, any student may exercise the option of choosing an alternative to the types of writing specified above as a response to or critique of a production. Any student exercising this option is required to define the purpose and objectives of the alternative assignment and the approach that will be taken. This definition should be incorporated as part of the title cover sheet, and the instructor will evaluate the assignment primarily in reference to the announced purpose and objectives of the assignment. This assignment may constitute a revision of an earlier assignment.

9. **WRITING TO ANALYZE AND ASSESS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE WRITING OF OTHERS.** For the final examination, students all students will be provided at least one before the exam with a variety of critical responses to and reviews of a particular production which they have not seen. They will be expected to study those critical responses and reviews and to prepare a written response to them which they will bring to the final examination. The final exam period will provide the opportunity for all students to read their responses to the assigned readings and to comment meaningfully upon these writings in the context of the issues relating to the formulation of performance responses as those responses have been discussed during the course of the semester. This assignment will be evaluated upon the astuteness and clarity with which the student identifies and comments upon the strengths and weaknesses of the critique/responses they have read and evaluated in light of issues emphasized during the semester.

10. NOTE-TAKING AT PERFORMANCES. For two (2) productions of the student's individual choice, (once before mid-term and once after mid-term) the student will take notes during the performance, recording among other things brief observations or thoughts on specific salient details of sets, costumes, lights, properties, staging, acting, directorial choices or other observations that may occur to them. During intermissions and at the end of the play, the student will flesh out these notes with brief discursive comments which elaborate upon the notes and record further thoughts for examination and exploration in the subsequent writing of the critique. Students will turn in either the original notes or xerox copies of the notes simultaneously with turning in the critique to which they relate. The notes will not be graded, but the instructor will return them with comments about the student's note-taking technique.

EVALUATION

Students will attend 7-9 of the assigned performances of theatrical productions. They will write responses to a minimum of seven of those nine productions, each assignment written to fulfill one of the requirements for types of writing outlined in sections 1-8 above. The course grade will be based 70% on the best seven grades for the nine production assignments. In addition, each student will be required to write two (2) substantial revisions of any two of their 7-9 previously evaluated assignments. These two revisions will be evaluated and assigned separate grades. The course grade will be averaged as follows: Best seven essays -- 70%. Two revisions -- 20%. Final exam -- 10%.

All seven to nine responses will be evaluated and graded primarily according to the evaluation criteria established for each discrete type of writing articulated in sections 1-8 above. However, for all written assignments the following two general sets of criteria are implicit: 1. Clear articulation of, organization appropriate to and focus upon a central idea or expression of purpose. 2. A command of syntax and of the mechanics of sentence structure, punctuation and spelling consistent with standard English and commensurate with reasonable general expectations for a university undergraduate writing.

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SPRING, 1993

THEATER REVIEWS
GUIDELINES AND SUGGESTIONS

1. Write to an imaginary audience of readers who have not seen the production and who may not necessarily know the play. Assume that your audience has a sound general knowledge of theater and dramatic literature, but do not assume that they have any technical knowledge about lighting, costumes, acting directing, etc.
2. Establish the essential facts about the production at the outset. In your opening paragraphs, establish the name of the play, the playwright, the production company and the theater in which the play was performed.
3. Always keep in mind that the work you are reviewing is not the wholly the playwright's text but a production of the text of the play, and that every production of a play constitutes an interpretation of the play by the performing company. Be sensitive to the implications of these facts.
4. Always keep in mind that you are reviewing one specific performance of one particular production of a play. Different performances of the same production will differ, just as other productions of the same play will differ. Be sensitive to the implications of these facts.
5. Remember that your review, no matter how objective you believe you are trying to be, is ultimately an account of your response to the performance. Though you may assume that you are writing about the performance, you are actually writing about your response to it.
6. Be aware that your response is not necessarily the same as or representative of the responses of other members of the audience to the same performance. Even when the entire audience may seem to be laughing, they are not likely to be laughing uniformly to a single precise perception. When Charlie Chaplin kicks the bureaucrat in the butt, one person may laugh in pleasure at the idea of deserved humiliation, another may laugh at the nerve of the little tramp, a third may laugh at the revelation that the bureaucrat really has no power to protect himself from assault, and a fourth may laugh at the tension between the exquisite balletic execution of the action and the vulgarity of this undignified act. Finally, there may be several in the audience who are not laughing, among whom are a few bureaucrats. Always keep in mind that, though you are a member of the audience, you do not speak for the audience but for yourself. Be very cautious about attributing your own attitudes, perceptions, opinions, etc. to other members of the audience.

7. Keep in mind that in this class, though we hope you enjoy the performances, you are attending the performance in order not only to experience a response, but to write afterwards about your response. As you watch the performance, strive to be aware not only of the performance, but also simultaneously of your response to the performance, and, finally, to be aware as well of what specifically, moment by moment in the performance, elicits that response.

8. Develop a skillful and useful technique for taking notes during the performance about your responses to the performance and about those elements of the performance that elicit those responses. Try to record your ideas briefly but clearly as they occur to you, noting as well, when it is possible, those specific aspects of the production that stimulated the thought. Do not trust your memory to recall after the production all those ideas and responses that you have moment by moment through the course of the performance. Do not trust your memory to recall all the specific elements of the performance that elicited the responses at the time. N.B. When taking notes in the theater, be careful not to make a pest of yourself by rattling papers, using a flashlight to see your notes, etc. Be considerate of those around you. Keep a low profile and don't disturb others.

9. Pay attention to the program or playbill. It may contain notes by the director, a dramaturg or others which often can give you some insights into the performance, and into the company's approach to the play.

11. When you write your review, make use of your program for the accurate spelling of names of the actors, director, designers, etc. Refer to Ms. McClain rather than to "the redhead," to Gregory Hines rather than to "the guy in the leotards," or to Charlie Chaplin rather than the one with the moustache. Since your imaginary readers have not seen the performance, references to moustaches, leotards or redheads may not be meaningful.

12. Provide a title for your review that gives your readers some indication of what the general thrust and tone of your review will be. For example, rather than title it "Assignment", or "Theater Criticism", or "Review 2", or Hedda Gabler, try titles like "Hedda Garbled", or "Hedda Gobbler", or "This Gabler's no Turkey." The less cheeky among you may prefer titles like "Glenda Jackson's Hedda Triumphs at Playhouse," or "Playhouse Opens Promising Season with Hedda/Jackson."

13. Try to find a an introductory metaphor or other image to express your feeling about the production. "This production had all the menace of a cap pistol." Or, "Watching this inaccessible, arcane and wholly convoluted production is as evocative as reading an erotic poem in a foreign language written in braille." Then, carry the image through, using it to express your responses to various elements in the production. For example, "Simon has crafted a scene structure that promises a

climax of fireworks, but Director Stanley Blewit seems to prefer to play Russian Roulette, and in what should be the climactic moment of the play manages to fire only a blank." Or, "Whereas Ibsen's script may invite many actresses to tell us more than we want to know about Hedda in the very first scene, Jessica Lange is brilliant in her restraint. She does not give the whole Hedda in any moment, scene or act. Lange sustains her characterization of Hedda as if it were a seduction, tantalizing us continually with brief but exciting revelations, like a flirt teasing us with a look that might have been a leer, or a turn that unexpectedly reveals a flash of leg. We sit riveted, watching for Lange's next move."

14. Do not merely retell the action of the play or recount the plot. Deal as fully as possible with the production as an interpretation of the playscript.

15. Remember that you need not have read the play in order to have access to the playscript. The dialogue of the play as spoken by the actors is the text of the play. You've heard it, though you may not have read it.

16. Insofar as possible, discuss your response to the production in terms of specific choices -- acting choices, staging, scenic design, lighting, costumes, props, etc. Consider how these specific choices clarify, illuminate, enrich or underscore the meaning of the playscript; whether the various choices are consistent with each other; whether the various choices mislead, obscure, diminish, contradict or otherwise undercut the script; or whether the choices, perhaps clever and amusing in themselves, may be largely irrelevant to the playscript?

17. Do not confuse actors with characters. Avoid such statements as "Jeremy Irons was Tesman." Or, "My favorite moment was when Glenda Jackson lost it and burned the manuscript." Distinguish between actor and character. Use the actor's name when referring to an actor's choice, and the character's name when referring to the character's action. For example, "Jeremy Irons' Tesman is always foremost the scholar. Irons will pause to mark his place in his book carefully with his braided bookmark before he allows Tesman to advance to embrace his wife." Or, "Glenda Jackson as Hedda is extremely sensitive to touch, mirroring Hedda's interior state by her reactions to surfaces, the texture of Thea's hair, the coldness of the steel of her father's pistols, the feeling of skin on skin."

18. Do not confuse characters with the actors. Avoid statements such as "Hedda could be a real witch; for example, take the way she laughs when Tesman expresses concern that he may lose his appointment at the university." Rather, try saying, "When Irons almost chokes with tears upon Tesman's hearing that his university appointment will be contested, Jackson's response adds a brief, sardonic chuckle to Ibsen's words, suggesting that Hedda's disaffection has grown beyond indifference to cruelty."

19. Similarly, make specific references to the work of the director, distinguishing what are the director's choices (blocking, staging in general) from what may have been actors' or designers' choices. Understand, however, that ultimately the director is responsible for all artistic choices in the production. Refer to the director by name.

20. Refer specifically to designers, as well. For example, "Santo Loquasto has created a set dominated by massive images: the huge french doors UR, General Gabler's enormous portrait ULC." This says more than, "The set is appropriate to the play." For another example, "Patricia Zipprodt's costumes emphasize Hedda's repressed sexuality, the lines of Hedda's gowns following loosely the contours of Ms. Jackson's hips and legs as she moves across the stage or settles on the couch, articulating Jackson's expressive body language." This communicates more specifically than "The costumes were excellent and fit the actress well."

21. Be aware of the difference between judgments made on the basis of personal taste and those made on the basis of established critical standards. To say that you prefer pecan pie to apple pie is to say little about either type of pie but more about yourself. While it is perfectly reasonable for you to have that preference and to say so, do not confuse that preference with some value judgment such as "Pecan pie is superior to apple pie." Thus be wary of saying "Robertson's lighting is boring and just plain lousy," when what you mean is that the lighting is always clearly motivated and therefore predictable, whereas you prefer more splash and surprise in a lighting design.

22. When making value judgments based on established and justifiable critical standards, it is helpful to invoke the standard on which the judgment is made. For example, rather than saying simply, "Robertson's lighting fails completely," or the lighting design ruined the play," try something like this:

"Robertson's lighting is continually dark, shadowy and moody at the expense of basic visibility. An upstage bureau is deeply in shadow making it impossible to discern visibly from the fifth row where I was sitting exactly what Hedda removed from the drawer and threw on the fire. In the final scene of the play the light on the curtain drawn across the upstage room is so dim that when Jackson pulls the curtain back for Hedda's final line, the expression on her face is invisible, and the irony Jackson was playing could be inferred only from her voice. How frustrating to be denied sight of Hedda's face at her last appearance on stage."

23. Maintain a low profile in your review. Though the review is and should be an account of your response to the performance, the focus should be as much as possible on the performance. Avoid the first person ("I" and "me") where it is unnecessary. Since the comments you are obviously your own, there is no need to call the audience's attention to yourself. Nor does changing the first person "I" to the third person ("this writer" or "the author of this review" or "in the opinion of this member of the audience") lower your profile. It only makes your writing more verbose. For an example of keeping your profile low except where it is useful to call yourself to attention for a moment, see the example about dim lighting in #22 above. Compare that with:

"The lighting was so dim that I couldn't see anything. I was unable to see what Hedda took from the bureau drawer, which made me very frustrated. It wasn't until she threw it on the fire that I could figure out what it was, and then I thought, 'How dumb can you get.' But I really got irritated in the last scene when there wasn't even enough light for me to see Hedda for her last line. I could hear her fine, but I really wanted to see her. 'Total bummer,' I thought. And I was sitting in the fifth row. I think if you're going to pay good money for orchestra seats, they ought to let you see what's happening! That's my philosophy, anyway."

THEATER CRITICISM
TH 310
DR. DONALD G. EISEN

Assignment #1
January 31, 1991

Noises Off, by Michael Frayn
Pittsburgh Playhouse

Think of this first assignment as a response to the production, rather than as a journalistic review or a critical analysis. If we may assume that you will have a response to the production, the objective of this assignment is to write meaningfully about your own response, and to account for that response as much as possible in terms of specific facts and observations that you are able to make about the production.

For example, it would not be adequate to say simply, "I liked it," or "It was great," or "It was really, really great," or "I liked it a whole lot." "I found it entertaining," is better because "entertaining" is more specific, and "I found it amusing," is better yet because "amusing" is still more specific than "entertaining." Now consider a series of opening statements that are increasingly specific because they tell us, each more than the previous one did, why the writer found the work amusing:

A. "This production was amusing from the opening curtain to the end of the play. Even the curtain call was fun."

B. "Not only is Frayn's play funny from beginning to end, but this young company manages to find new and funny things to do with it in each scene."

C. "The delight in this production is not simply that the company seems to find every joke, explicit or implicit, that Frayn's script provides, though by itself that would be a remarkable accomplishment. The true delight is to sit back and chuckle at the chemistry that develops between Frayn's comic script and the comic imaginations of this zany company."

D. "There are at least two kinds of delight. First, there is the delight we take in encountering something delightful. Then there is the delight we take in the surprise of being delighted. The current Pittsburgh Playhouse production of Michael Frayn's Noises Off delights both ways. I love to laugh. I loved this production because it gave me more than simple permission or reason to laugh. In spite of the recession, the state of the union or the balance of my bank book, this production made my laughter the only intelligent, the only possible response. Here in the heart of the rust belt, a company of young actors, some of them perhaps the children or grandchildren of unemployed steel workers, are

playing in this British farce about the absurdity of the theater and theater people. And they play it with such obvious delight and such unflagging comic invention that, even as I am laughing at the current scene, I can't wait for the next one to see what new nonsense they'll offer up for my amusement. Frayn's wonderful script becomes Bud Abbott to this company's Lou Costello. As Frayn's script sets up each joke you can count on at least three laughs: the first at Frayn's deadpan wit, the second at your own amusement in imagining how the company will play it, and finally at your own surprise as the company finds yet another new twist or bit of comic invention, even better than the one you'd anticipated. British farce, the grin of comedy and the resilient human spirit are all alive and well, and of all places in Pittsburgh, a stone's throw from the skeleton of the old J & L furnaces, the last place you'd think to look. If that's not cause for laughter, what is?"

All of the above responses communicate some sense of a positive response. What makes the last example preferable to the others, at least according to the rules of this assignment, is, first, that the last example has taken some care to specify the quality of the response. It is not simply pleasure, but a particular kind of pleasure taken in a particular context by a particular member of the audience from a particular perspective. Second, this response communicates some specifics about the production that were the sources of pleasure -- youthful enthusiasm, invention, zany imaginations, energy, and an audacious actor's spirit that makes the text the pretext for performance. A more fully articulated essay would go on to make still more specific observations about choices of specific actors in specific scenes.

Paying particular attention to items 1-11 in your copy of "Guidelines and Suggestions," write a 600-1200 word essay on your response to the production of Noises Off at the Pittsburgh Playhouse. Define as accurately and clearly as you can what your response was. Account for your response to the production as clearly as you can, citing and discussion those qualities in the production which elicited your response.

Your essay need not be type written, though well-typed essays are much appreciated. Whether written or typed, your paper should reflect some revision and look like a final draft, clear of errors, etc. If you write the essay longhand, write in ink and be sure to write legibly. Problems of spelling, punctuation, syntax and diction will be noted, but for this first assignment these mechanical problems will not be factored in the calculation of a grade. Please supply a title page with only your name, the date, the assignment number and your title written on that page. Write only on one side of each page, leaving margins for comments at the top and bottom of the page and at the right and left sides. Either staple or paper clip your pages together. Don not bend down the corners of the pages.

THEATER CRITICISM
TH 310
DR. DONALD G. EISEN

Assignment #2
February 7, 1992

110 in the Shade
Pittsburgh Playhouse

As with the first assignment for Noises Off, think of this second assignment as a response to the production, rather than as a journalistic review or a critical analysis. Do not feel obliged to come to some value judgment. The two objectives of this assignment are 1.) to write about your own response discussing, describing or analyzing the nature of that response, and 2.) to account for that response as much as possible in terms of specific facts and observations that you are able to make about the production. This is wholly consistent with the first assignment.

Paying particular attention to items 1-11 in your copy of "Guidelines and Suggestions," write a 600-1200 word essay on your response to the production of Noises Off at the Pittsburgh Playhouse. Define as accurately and clearly as you can what your response was. Account for your response to the production as clearly as you can, citing and discussion those qualities in the production which elicited your response.

Your essay need not be type written, though well-typed essays are much appreciated. Whether written or typed, your paper should reflect some revision and look like a final draft, clear of errors, etc. If you write the essay longhand, write in ink and be sure to write legibly. Problems of spelling, punctuation, syntax and diction will be noted, but for this first assignment these mechanical problems will not be factored in the calculation of a grade. Please supply a title page with only your name, the date, the assignment number and your title written on that page. Write only on one side of each page, leaving margins for comments at the top and bottom of the page and at the right and left sides. Either staple or paper clip your pages together. Do not bend down the corners of the pages.

THEATER CRITICISM
TH 310
DR. DONALD G. EISEN

Assignment
January 30, 1991

King Henry V, Act I
William Shakespeare

Write a 1-2 page essay comparing the treatment of Shakespeare's text of Act I of Henry V by Laurence Olivier and Kenneth Branagh in their respective films of the play. The objective of the assignment is to make meaningful distinctions between the text of a play and the production of that text by a particular company of actors and theater artists. You may decide:

I. To make brief observations on a number of choices made by the director and company, in which case you should be able to draw a strong and significant generalization from the illustrations you've used.

Or,

II. To conduct an extended discussion of two or three choices which are clearly related to a central point you intend to communicate.

In either case, turn in a polished draft of your writing. Your essays will be read, but they will not be graded or evaluated beyond the extent to which they are evaluated during class discussion. Papers should be typed or written in ink, on one side of the page only, leaving generous margins at the top and bottom of the page and at the left and right sides of the page.