

Introduction to Drama

Research Essay Assignment: some reminders and guidelines

The essay is due by 5 p.m. on **Friday, December 3**; if you do not give the essay to me in person, leave it in my mailbox and make sure you have a clean back-up copy.

Your research is meant to provide you with a context for locating a particular play, within its time and place of production. I ask that you examine at least five different sources of information so as to distinguish generally accepted “facts” from scholarly hypotheses, as well as to encourage you to consider a variety of perspectives on or facets of the dramatic context. Depending on the play and country you have chosen, you may need to narrow your area of focus (e.g., not trying to learn about all French drama if you are looking at a particular era) or you may need to widen it (e.g., if the country’s political history or religion informs the drama). The research provides another way to understand the dramatic text, to supplement—not replace—your careful, close reading of the play.

Your essay should focus on analyzing some dimension(s) of the play within its cultural context, national and/or artistic. I do not expect or desire a “laundry list” of possible topical allusions or ways the play fits conventions; rather, I ask that you develop a main argument or thesis that addresses a particularly interesting aspect of the play in relationship to its cultural location. Use specific textual evidence from the play, as well as the research you have done, to support your claims.

The essay should be double-spaced with standard margins, and should include a title and a bibliography. Proofread carefully, editing the essay in accordance with the guidelines provided in any standard composition handbook available (many are in the Writing Center).

I hope the experience of doing research and studying a play on your own has been, and will continue to be, both educational and enjoyable. Please feel free to come see me if you want to discuss the work in progress. Best of luck!