

Albee Scholarship Assignment

I. Oral Presentation:

Due the class meeting I assign you, a 15-20-minute oral presentation, wordprocessed outline, and wordprocessed works cited on the scholarship on the play we are discussing that day. You will need to go to the library and find your articles in books on reserve, although you may find some through JSTOR, etc. You should read and present on **at least four scholarly sources**; the other source **must be a review of a production of the play (ideally, a major NYC or London production)**.

Since it is usually a matter of when you have time (as opposed to which play you'd like to do research on), look at the exam and assignment due dates for your other courses, as well as your personal calendar, so that you can e-mail me **three dates you would love and three dates you would hate** to do your oral presentation **ASAP**. (If I haven't received all of your preferences by the **second** class, I'll pass around a sheet of paper for you to list them, and will make up the schedule the next day.) If you present on a date when a paper is due, you can automatically take a one-week extension on the paper (just let me know that you are definitely taking the extension on the paper). I will post on SOCS a schedule of who presents when.

In the meantime, I would like to get **1 volunteer for the 3rd class (Thursday 7th) to present on *Tiny Alice***. Incentives for going early: 1) Get it out of the way; 2) Since you'll have less time than others I can't grade as hard; 3) The fond place you'll have in my heart at least through the end of the semester when I sit down to calculate course grades. ☺ I'll assign this presentation on a first-come, first-serve basis, so e-mail me asap. (I already asked students who have done this assignment in another of my classes to cover the first two classes.)

Depending on the final enrollment, we will have one student presentation for each of most of the plays, but two on *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and *Box and Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* (possibly Albee's most postmodern play or plays), so if you are one of two presenting on the same play you will need to coordinate with the other student doing a presentation on the play to make sure you do not do the same sources. (So that there are no disputes about who found a source first, **as soon as you have chosen a review or article through JSTOR, or the library, etc., e-mail me and your classmate the bibliographic information** about it: author, title, book or journal or newspaper it appears in, date, page numbers.)

WARNING: Do not wait until the day before your oral presentation is due to try to find the articles and review. I strongly urge you to wait no longer to find the articles and review than one week before your presentation is due. Some of the books about Albee on reserve are by one author; some are collections of articles by several authors. An individual article by a different author within a collection of articles is considered a separate source; you cite it by author of article, **not** the editor of the book. Look at the table of contents and the index to find in-depth discussions of your play. **Or look for an article** published in a scholarly journal (e.g., *American Drama*) or a book on Albee or modern or postmodern or American drama. Check the MLA Bibliography online, which is accessible from the library's website. MLA will cite books and articles (as well as dissertations, but those are inappropriate for this assignment). Start searching by the play title; if that doesn't produce enough results, search by play title first, then by Albee. Once you find a citation you have to see if our library carries the journal or the book. If you need to order a book through interlibrary loan, see the library website or talk to a reference librarian. (But ILL usually takes too long unless you have a few weeks before you need the book or article.) The article cannot be from the **internet** unless it was originally published in a scholarly journal or book, or the website is an online scholarly journal. Do not use articles from mass market magazines such as *Time* or *Newsweek* or newspapers. Do not use articles from reference works. If you have any doubts about whether the article is valid for the assignment, call or e-mail me well ahead of the due date.

For a production review, try to find one that makes interpretative and evaluative comments not only on the play itself but also on aspects of the production (e.g., how the actor played a major role, how set design suggests ideas or feelings, what approach of acting style or interpretation of the text the director chose, and so forth). For the review, it is **NOT** acceptable if it has been published in *Time*, *Newsweek*, or other mass market periodical. I would first check <http://www.nytimes.com>; click on their theater link, then search for past reviews; some are free and some aren't. If you didn't find any reviews first by searching there or EBSCOHOST, JSTOR, WILSON SEARCH, GOOGLE, etc., then go to the library reference room. Ask the reference librarian on duty where the annual collections of *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews* are kept (they are collected in large, red three-ring binders, I think) and look for the play title in the index.

You are not responsible for discussing every point in the source or for discussing all points in equal depth. Select what you consider to be the most important points to summarize, but be sure you are fair to the author (don't misrepresent his/her argument by omitting key ideas, sections, etc.).

Your task is to give us a summary of the scholars' readings of the play. Where possible, name the different types of readings (religious allegory, psychological, sociological; or more specifically, Marxist, gender, new historicist, etc.) as well as major themes, issues, etc. Identify the scholar by name or review source by title. Also, give us an assessment of the scholarship you read. Is one scholar's reading of the play more convincing than the others'? Are some readings too narrow, too broad, superficial, etc.? (One purpose of the oral presentation is to help the rest of us decide if it is worth reading the source ourselves). You may read a few quotes, but they should be relatively brief, and there should be few of them. The assignment is for you to **"digest"** the scholarship on this work and to present it to us in your own words for the most part.

Make sure the emphasis of your presentation is on the scholarship, not the text of the play. You may make brief references to the textual evidence the scholars use, but don't be too specific or try to support the point by analyzing the text for us; save that for discussion and your papers. (You should assume we all have read the play and therefore briefly citing the textual evidence should suffice.)

On the day you do your oral presentation, before you begin speaking, turn in a **word-processed outline** (you may create a Roman numeral-type outline but it is not required since that format is often confusing to some writers; all you need as a minimum is a list of points more or less completely stated (i.e., not just a list of single words or short phrases) in the order you will state them. This will aid me in evaluating your presentation after class.

You are not required to have the oral presentation memorized, but do **not read** from a script. **I will grade down if in my determination you are mostly reading word-for-word from your outline or notes or whatever.** You should speak extemporaneously from a copy of the outline (or note cards or a mixture of both--whatever works best for you). This is not a formal presentation (you can dress comfortably; you can speak from your chair--if we are able to arrange the chairs in a circle such that everyone can easily see each other), but it also is not a chat off the top of your head; be sure you present substantive ideas. If you want to do this as a PowerPoint presentation that is fine, but it is not required to get an A, nor will it necessarily help you get a higher grade. If you do prepare a PowerPoint presentation, be sure that you can do the presentation **without** PowerPoint in case the computer, projector, or screen don't work that day. Also, let me know before class starts that you want to use PowerPoint; then I will turn on the computer so that it is ready when you do your presentation.

Note on length: I'll want you to limit your oral presentation to 20 minutes. You do not have to stretch if your presentation does not last 20 minutes, but if it lasts less than 15 minutes, surely you haven't done your job, and I will have to grade you down. Because the natural tendency is to speed up when you are nervous you should aim for at least 17 minutes to make sure you speak for at least 15 minutes. **Be sure to practice your speech, and time yourself.** If you're running under or just at 15 minutes, go back to the sources and find more to talk about. If you're running at or above 20 minutes, you should cut out some of the detail.

IMPORTANT: Not showing up for class on the day your presentation is due is the unpardonable sin; the lesson plan is based on your attendance and delivering your oral presentation. The only legitimate excuses for not being present are the usual life emergencies, crises, etc.; if some crisis does come up, call me **beforehand**. Of course if you're in an automobile accident and are unable to contact me beforehand, then that is another matter; in that case I expect you to come see me as soon as possible after class and explain to me what happened, providing documentation of some kind.

If you are too sick to come to class on the day of your presentation, then you have to contact me enough before class that I can alter my lesson plan. The only way you can be excused for illness when you have a major assignment due is to bring me a doctor's note on official stationery saying that you were too ill to come to class, and again you should notify me in time for me to adjust the lesson. Otherwise, your absence is unexcused, and the assignment is given an F.

This assignment is based on the pedagogy that makes students active rather than passive learners; you learn by teaching others. In addition, the assignment gives you the opportunity to practice and further develop your speaking, research, and critical thinking skills.

II. Works Cited:

In addition to the presentation and detailed outline, you need to write a Works Cited for the 5 sources (4 scholarly articles or book chapters, 1 production review) on the play on which you present. The citations should be in standard MLA format. See either of these links for explanation and examples:

http://campusgw.library.cornell.edu/newhelp/res_strategy/citing/mla.html

http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/RES5e_ch08_o.html

Do not cite a source if it doesn't discuss the play or only makes brief reference to it (e.g., most biographies—**Gussow's** in this case). They may have some critical commentary, but the focus of a biography is the writer's life and career, not interpreting individual works).

Turn in both a hard copy of the outline and works cited to me in class AND e-mail it to the class as a whole and me via SOCS.

Don't be nervous; you know more about your topic than anybody else in the room.

May the Force be with you.
(And also with me)