

DRAMA 301: Theories of Theatre I (Fall 2008)

Critical Responses

Assignment: Write responses to 7 of the theorists on the course. 200-250 words per response

Due: Before the first session in which we discuss the theorist

Evaluation: 7 responses x 5% each = 35% of final grade

What makes a good critical response?

Responses must be well thought out, carefully crafted, and presented in proper academic format (e.g. full sentences, good grammar and spelling). Good responses aim to engage critically with the ideas presented in the readings. To be critical does not necessarily mean to contradict, disagree with, or find fault in the author's argument. Instead, it means understanding, analysing, questioning, and developing the ideas as they appear to the reader, practitioner, or audience. Articulating the meaning of an idea is only the first step; from this point, you must grapple with the implications of that idea, and seek connections with other ideas on the course. Strong responses focus on *one* or *two* ideas presented in the reading, and seek a deeper engagement with these ideas. Is there something in the reading that inspires, delights, angers, or motivates you? How is the author responding to other ideas in the theory of theatre, implicitly or explicitly? Do their arguments cause you to reconsider previous ideas or concepts explored in the course? You are welcome to use the course themes of mimesis and morality when focusing your responses, but are also welcome to branch off to other ideas found in the week's reading. Weekly postings must be written individually, and organised around your own original ideas (but debates over coffee with classmates can provide good preparation!)

When is my response due?

All responses are due before the theorist is first discussed in class. If you do not meet this deadline, you simply forgo your opportunity to write on that theorist, and can choose from the remaining theorists.

How do I submit my response?

Send it in an email to dram301@gmail.com by the deadline. Please don't use this email address for regular correspondence with the instructor, just use it for critical responses.

Why can't I submit mine late?

Part of the reason for writing these responses is to prepare you for informed discussion in class. Every student is expected to read and think about each theorist before every class, but those who write on a particular theorist will have an even deeper understanding (or informed confusion!) about a given theorist. Responses are meant to encourage independent thinking, and to allow you to discuss what *you* find most interesting before hearing what *everyone else* finds most interesting. As long as you don't leave things to the end, you'll have many opportunities to meet the deadlines.

Can I submit more than 7 responses?

Absolutely. In fact, this is a very good idea, because I will use your top 7 responses when calculating your grade, so you have more opportunities to excel. Deadlines for individual theorists still apply.

Additional Resources

Here are few links with guidance on how to think, read, and write critically:

Writing at the University of Toronto "Critical Reading Towards Critical Writing,"

<http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/critrdg.html>

York University Counselling and Development Centre, "Reading Skills for University"

<http://www.yorku.ca/cdc/lsp/skillbuilding/reading.html>