

English 498: Adapting Texts

Hamlet Case Study Assignment

Length and Due Dates

Length: 4 pages, formatted as described in the “Essays” portion of the syllabus

Proposal Due: Wednesday, April 26th, by 10:00 p.m. via EPost

Essay Due: Monday, May 1st, by noon via E-Submit

Assignment

For the *Hamlet* case study, you may write on one of the following topics. No matter which topic you choose, **you must use adaptation theory to develop your argument.**

- 1) At one point in Aki Kaurismäki’s *Hamlet Goes Business*, Hamlet tosses a page of Shakespeare’s words into the trash. How does the film represent critical revision of the play? What issues are at the forefront of Kaurismäki’s version? How might the film’s concerns critique the focus of Shakespeare’s play?
- 2) Paintings of Ophelia attempt to capture a moment not explicitly depicted in the play: her death. Examine two or more Ophelia paintings, discussing how these works invite us to interpret both Ophelia and her death. What characteristics, emotions, and motives do the paintings embody? How do those elements explain—and thus interpret—Ophelia’s actions?
- 3) Tom Stoppard’s *Fifteen Minute Hamlet* condenses a five-act play into sixteen pages. What argument does Stoppard’s digest version of *Hamlet* make about the act of adaptation? How does his play speak to the question of what makes a text recognizable as a *Hamlet* adaptation?
- 4) Propose your own topic that addresses *Hamlet* and one or more of its adaptations. If you choose this option, you must discuss your topic with me before proceeding with your proposal.

Guidelines

- 1) Although I have asked specific questions, you will need to propose an argument about the relationship between adaptation and source text.
- 2) Remember to address adaptation theory in your essay, either as a component of your argument or as you support your claim. Our theoretical readings will help you shape your thesis and analyze aspects of the adaptation. For example, Stam’s discussion of how adaptations critically rework sources may help you shape a discussion of Kaurismäki’s alteration of the play’s events. Boyum discussion of adaptation as interpretation may aid analysis of the wide range of characteristics represented in Ophelia paintings.
- 3) You are writing to an audience who has already read the comic, viewed the film, or listened to the song. Therefore, your essay should not summarize the texts’ contents. Instead, any references—quotations, scene or image descriptions, explanations of plot movement or formal techniques—should support your analysis.

4) As you develop your argument, don't forget the discussion of *Hamlet* on the posting board and the feedback you received on your proposal. A review of the postings and your peers' commentary on your ideas will help you to ask key questions and shape your analysis.

5) If you're having difficulty devising an approach to the essay, or if you want to discuss ideas-in-progress, email me or come to my office hours in Padelford A-305.

Proposal

The proposal assignment allows you to develop a tentative thesis, pose arguments related to this thesis, identify potential evidence and consider organizational strategies for your case study. In completing the proposal, you will produce a roadmap to guide your writing process.

The proposal should include the following components:

- ❖ A tentative title for the case study.
- ❖ The name of the adaptation(s) you will analyze.
- ❖ The adaptation theory you'll draw upon in your argument.
- ❖ A tentative thesis: What argument do you plan to make about the adaptation's reworking of the primary text?
- ❖ A discussion of how you will develop and support your argument. This discussion should include:
 - Supporting claims: What points will you need to make in order to develop your thesis? List each point you plan to make and explain its relation to the thesis in one or two sentences.
 - Evidence: What evidence will you use to support each of your points? Describe the scenes, dialogue, lines, and images you plan to analyze. Be specific in your descriptions. Also, briefly explain why the particular evidence you have selected supports your point. In other words, what is the connection between your point and your evidence?
- ❖ A list of any questions you have regarding your ideas-in-progress.

Grading

Grades for the case study will be calculated on a 40-point scale. Essays are due at the time indicated; work submitted after the due date and time will be considered late. Late essays will receive a 10-point deduction per day late, including weekends and holidays. I will make exceptions to the lateness policy only in cases of documented illness or family emergency.