

English 200: Reading (and Rereading) *Hamlet*

Presentation Assignment and Guidelines

Assignment

In a 20- to 25-minute presentation, groups will analyze one of the following adaptations of *Hamlet*:

- Almereyda, *Hamlet* (2000)
- Branagh, *William Shakespeare's Hamlet* (1996)
- Doran, *Hamlet* (2009)
- Kozintsev, *Gamlet* (1964)
- Kurosawa *The Bad Sleep Well* (1960)
- Zeffirelli, *Hamlet* (1990)

The primary goal of the presentation is for you to make an argument about the way the filmmakers interpret *Hamlet*. How does the film read the play's characters, plot, motifs, and themes? How is your selected adaptation similar to or different from the Kaurismäki or Olivier adaptation?

To focus your presentation, you should concentrate on one or two key scenes or an overall pattern. Your presentation should include clips from your film; you may also use PowerPoint, the overhead projector, or handouts to show an outline of your points. Be sure, though, that your clips do not occupy the majority of your presentation time.

Guidelines

- **Structure the presentation around an argument.** Begin your analysis with a claim about how and why the filmmakers interpret the play in a particular manner--the rest of the presentation should offer support for your argument.
- **All members of the group must take an equal role in the presentation.** Each group member must be actively involved in discussing the film. Each group member should speak for roughly the same amount of time during the presentation.
- **Coordinate the presentation with your partners.** Each group member should know what the others will cover and when they will cover it.
- **Remember your audience.** What questions and class discussions will be fresh in their minds? What issues will interest them?
- **Make the presentation easy to follow.** Your presentation does not have to follow the chronology of the film. Rather, your argument should determine the order of your points. Effective presentations will sequence information in a meaningful manner, with each point building upon the previous one and setting up the next. Regardless of how you structure

your discussion of the film, you should include basic information: the film you will discuss, your argument concerning the film, the points you will address, and who will cover each point. Throughout the presentation, use transitional phrases to signal shifts between ideas.

- **Cite references clearly.** If you summarize, paraphrase, or quote from the film, *Hamlet* or another text, use signal phrases such as "Freud persuasively argues." Such phrases allow the audience to differentiate your ideas from those of another critic.
- **Speak slowly and loudly.** Your audience only has one chance to hear your presentation.
- **Speak from notes.** Although you may worry that nervousness will erase your memory, do not write out everything you plan to say on paper or on your PowerPoint slides. Speakers who do so tend to look only at their papers or visual aids, not their audience.
- **Avoid lacing your speech with "um," "uh," "like," and "you know."** Also refrain from performing the shifty-footed, hand-wringing dance of the terrified orator.
- **Incorporate visual aids effectively.** Whether you use clips, PowerPoint, transparencies, or a handout, your visual aids should be readable and have a clear connection to the presentation. If you use a presentation outline, be sure that the outline matches your points. If you distribute a handout with key points and scene descriptions, let the audience know when to look at the handout. Remember that visual aids help the audience to follow your points; they do not represent a transcript of your remarks. You want the audience to listen to you rather than tune you out as they read a text-heavy visual aid.
- **Do your homework and have a backup if you plan to use technology.** Our classroom comes equipped with a projector, VCR, DVD player, and computer hookup, but you must learn how the equipment works before you use it. If you use PowerPoint or an electronic handout, save files in at least two formats (floppy, uploaded to Dante) and bring a transparency or prepare to write on the board if the equipment fails. Most of the time, you won't need to use your backup plan, but having one will decrease your stress.
- **Conclude effectively.** Before turning to questions, end the presentation with a statement that lets the audience know how the scene advances our thinking about the film. Do not say, "that's all" or "we're done." These statements diminish everything you have said.
- **Ask and answer questions.** Formulate discussion questions that allow the class to expand upon points introduced in the presentation. Before posing your own questions, remember to take questions from the audience. To prepare for Q & A, write a list of questions your audience will likely ask. Better yet, practice in front of friends and have them question you.
- **Have fun.** While you need to advance an argument about the film, the format of the presentation is up to you. You may debate alternative readings of the film, poll audience members during the presentation, perform moments from the film to illustrate points, or incorporate other interactive elements into the presentation.