In this document you will find instructions for the three-step research project that you will complete this semester.

I. Annotation Assignment (Due 16 March, 15% of grade)
II. Research Statement & Preliminary Bibliography (Due 11 April; 10% of grade)
III. Research Essay on one of three areas: Medieval Theatre, Renaissance Theatre, or Commedia dell’Arte (Due 4 May; 25% of grade)

I. Annotation Assignment (Due 16 March): There are three essays that you can find on Blackboard that you will annotate (instructions below). These three essays will also be read and referred to during the units on Medieval, Renaissance and Commedia dell’Arte performance. Reading and understanding these essays will not only be of benefit for the second half of class this semester, but will also make you more comfortable with identifying a writer’s argument, the evidence used to support the argument, and the methodology that is used to flesh out his or her central question or thesis.

1. Annotate the essays listed below (all essays are available on Blackboard). Each annotation should be no less than 2 double spaced type written pages, Times New Roman, 12 pt font, 1” margins. Each annotation should be no more than 3 pages (2 is preferable)

Start by copying the citation information into a blank document for each of the three essays you will need to annotate in a blank document:


2. Underneath each citation answer the following questions about the essay
   a. What is the argument of the essay?
      i. Note: While you are welcome to quote from the essay, you must use your own words to contextualize any quotations. It is rare that an academic essay simply states “I argue XXX.” You need to do the work to help your reader understand the argument
   b. What evidence does the writer use to support the argument/thesis? (see below for a reminder of what constitutes evidence)
   c. What methodology is the writer using to construct this essay? (see below for a reminder of what constitutes method)

Argument: the argument, or thesis, is the main idea of the essay. This is usually contained in a couple of sentences up to a paragraph. The thesis is where a writer explains what s/he wants to say, and what new knowledge s/he is suggesting this essay contributes. The argument differs from a subject of an essay in that it goes deeper and explains why understanding this information is significant. In short, it answers the “so what?” question: “Why does it matter that we understand this?” “Why is this significant?”

Evidence: Broadly construed, evidence is anything presented in support of an assertion. Evidence may be weak or strong. The strongest type of evidence is that which provides direct proof of the truth of an assertion. “Strong” does not mean “better,” it simply describes evidence that is factual, or primary, and is most often found in an archive. Many arguments in scholarly essays in the arts and humanities may have a “weak” intentionality. That is, the writer makes a persuasive argument based on a combination of critical theory and a close reading of primary documents. In this later type of essay, the dream of the writer is to show the reader another way of looking at something that has heretofore gone unnoticed. It might also allow the writer to understand how a particular history is important for the present moment.

Methodology: After stating the argument/thesis and the evidence used to support the argument, compose several paragraphs where you describe the methodology. Remember that the methodology a writer uses is largely determined by the assertion s/he makes in the thesis. If a writer
wishes to answer a question about historical conditions for a particular production in medieval York, England, then s/he will most likely be using the archives of medieval documents located in York. In other words, archival research will be the main method of investigation.

Another writer may want to examine the construction of gender in Commedia improvisational performance. In this case, the method might comprise a combination of things: examining documents from the time period (like conduct books produced by the church) that prescribe particular conduct for women during the 16th and/or 17th century, as well as contemporary gender theory that might allow the writer to see the ways that gender was socially constructed during this time period.

This is a tricky thing to figure out, and there is typically no one black and white answer. Keep asking questions to yourself about what the writer is trying to convey in the argument and the evidence s/he uses to support his or her claims, and this will help give an indication of methodology. As long as you can make a convincing argument for what you believe is the writer’s methodology (or methodologies), I will accept this.

II. Research Statement and Preliminary Bibliography for Research Essay (Due 14 April)

The Research Statement should be a one-page statement describing the period you will investigate, possible play-text or other primary materials you will explore, and what you find interesting about this topic. While it can be somewhat preliminary, you will need to do advanced research to prepare your statement and your bibliography.

After this statement, you should include a clear bibliography that uses correct citation format (use the MLA Guide for the Writers of Research Papers). The bibliography should be separated into primary and secondary sources. It should include three primary sources and seven secondary sources.

III. Final Research Essay (10-12 pages, includes bibliography)

While students are allowed to pick the area of research that they wish to investigate, they will be limited to selecting their topics from one of three areas: Medieval Theatre, Renaissance Theatre and Commedia dell’Arte Performance. Appropriate research questions and topics can be discussed with me in advance of your individual tutorials (and then refined during your tutorial), and students are welcome to speak to me about possible topics at any time during the semester.
**Topic Ideas for THE 150: Theatre History Research Paper**

1. Examine the relationship between the medieval Catholic church and the rise of secular medieval theatre that grew out of the Church (focusing on medieval morality plays might be helpful for this topic).

2. Explore how the dramaturgy of medieval morality plays (like *Mankind*) has been utilized in contemporary Christian-themed performances, like *Hell House*. You should also explore where the dramaturgy between the two are distinct.

3. Commedia dell’Arte helped to nurture some of the Western world's most common ideas about acting and comedic characters. Write an essay where you carefully research 3-4 of the character types that appeared in Commedia performances, and the influence of these characters in a contemporary performance context (be it in the theatre, film, sitcom, etc).

4. Examine a contemporary production of one of Shakespeare’s plays (the *Hamlet* starring Benedict Cumberbatch, or David Tennant, for instance). How is your chosen production in conversation with an “original”? What does “original” mean in the context of the production that you chose? (note: remember our investigations of what “authenticity” means in the context of Greek theatre and Kabuki theatre; this will help you to start your investigation).

5. Ingo Jones (1573-1652), England's first major scene designer, introduced the Italian concept of *perspective scenery* to the English court theatre of James I in the beginning of the 17th century. Research innovations in scenic technology and the development of single point perspective during the Renaissance. Discuss how the changes in perspective in scenery changed dramaturgical perspectives on the kinds of plays that were written and performed. (note: remember our discussion of how the configuration of the Greek amphitheater effected how dramatists told their stories).

6. Research the ritual and aesthetic aspects of the York Corpus Christi Cycle of medieval plays. For this essay you could consider medieval acting, the playing space of the Corpus Christi play cycle in York, or the role of the audience. You may also wish to compare it to contemporary (non-traditional) performances where the audience is involved in the production.