Culture Wars: 
Early Modern French Theater and Contemporary American Culture 
in the General Education Classroom

ASSIGNMENTS

SHORT PAPER 1

Topic:
What is an important cultural crisis as you see it today? Support your claim. What are the opposing sides (at least two)? Where does the crisis emerge from historically? Where do you see it going – can you make a prediction?

Technicalities:
2-3 pages, double-spaced, 1” margins, Times or Times New Roman 12. Library research is optional, but you must support your claims (online resources are fine). Regarding citing methods using MLA Style. Use a bibliography and refer to articles in simple parenthetical references at the end of the sentence – i.e. (Smith, “Toboggans” 42) or (Electronic Database X).

MIDTERM PAPER

For your midterm papers, write 8-10 pages, double spaced, Times or Times New Roman 12-pt font, using one of the following approaches. Your paper must focus on the theme of cultural crisis in contemporary America.

Papers must have at least three (3) sources, only one of which can be an online source.

I. Literary Analysis.
Analyze Angels in America as a literary text using critical articles found on the MLA Database. The topic of your paper must treat cultural crisis and must be approved by me.

II. Film Studies.
Analyze the HBO film Angels in America as a literary and visual text using critical articles found on the MLA Database or elsewhere. The topic of your paper must treat cultural crisis and must be approved by me.

III. Historical Approach.
Choose any one of the intertexts we have studied with Angels in America. Write a research paper that situates, explains and analyzes this intertext in relation to Kushner’s play and its themes. You do not have to research the
intertext you were assigned to present in class, but no two people can research the same intertext. An intertext we have not discussed in class needs instructor approval.

IV. **Topic of your choice, to be approved by me.**

**SHORT PAPER 2**

This 2-3 page paper should be treated as an extended “intertext” like the ones we did for *Angels in America*. However, rather than help examine the cultural conflict in one play, your research for this paper should help explain cultural conflict (ie culture war) in early modern France. While historical, your paper should not be a list of dates, but rather an analysis of the role of your chosen topic in the culture wars of the time period.

Some possible topics for research are:

**Authors:**
Corneille, Racine, Molière, Mariaux, Françoise de Graffigny, Montesquieu, Diderot, Rousseau, Olympe de Gouges, Beaumarchais, Voltaire, La Bruyère, La Rochefoucauld, Perrault, Descartes

**Historical topics:**
- salon women such as Mme de Rambouillet
- the influence of Italy on Francis I
- Classical art and Poussin
- Rococo art and Fragonard
- the Tennis Court Oath / Jacobins and Montagnards
- The Terror
- Port Royal and Jansenism
- Diderot’s salons
- the *Encyclopedia*
- Quarrel of the Bouffons
- The Comédie Française (troupe or building)
- Commedia dell’Arte and the Comédie Italienne
- Richelieu and the Académie Française
- Publishing in 18th century France
- The figure of the Amazon
- French exploration of the New World in the 17th/18th centuries
- Benjamin Franklin in Paris
- Declaration of the Rights of Man
- Parisian demographics / the layout of the city

**Technicalities:**
Only one person may do each topic. Once you have chosen a topic, please tell me. Write 2-3 pages, double-spaced, 1” margins, Times or Times New Roman 12. Library research
is optional, but you must support your claims (online resources are fine). Use a bibliography and refer to articles in simple parenthetical references at the end of the sentence – ie (Smith, “Toboggans” 42) or if there is only one Smith entry in the bibliography simply (Smith 42).

SCENE PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Performance. Your assignment is to identify a crisis evident in the scene assigned and present the scene from a modern perspective, choosing either to remain faithful to the printed words on the page or to alter them as you see fit while maintaining the basic premise. You will perform your scenes for the class and be prepared to discuss your choices and performance with the class in a Q&A after your scene presentation.

Analysis. Each student will hand in to me a two-page analysis of the assigned scene on the day of their scene presentation, placing the crisis/theme you identify within the context of both contemporary and modern culture and criticism. This scene analysis is independent, not group, work.

Grading. As stated on the syllabus, the percent of this project in your overall grade is as follows:
Scene presentation – 5%
Scene Analysis – 10%

1. Cid. IV.iv and IV.v (pp 54-57)
   Chimene, Diegue, King (;Sanche, Rodrigue)

2. Intellectual Ladies. V.ii & iii (pp 162-165)
   Chrysale, Martine, Henriette, Philaminte, Notary

3. Game of Love and Chance. II.v, vi and vii (pp192-195)
   Lisette, Harlequin, Sylvia

   Mericourt, Dorimond, Cenie, Orphise

5. Barber of Seville. IV.iv, v and vi (pp 270-272)
   Rosine, Figaro, Count
**FINAL PAPER**

For your final papers, write 8-10 pages, double spaced, Times or Times New Roman 12-pt font, using one of the following approaches. Your paper must focus on a **cultural crisis** in early modern France that has a contemporary (20\textsuperscript{th}/21\textsuperscript{st}-century) American counterpart. The modern American crisis should frame your presentation of a similar cultural crisis in early modern France (1600-1789) through the lens of the theater.

**Papers must have at least four (4) sources, only one of which can be an online source.** See “MLA Bibliography Guidelines” on my website for information on how to cite different kinds of sources on your bibliography.

I. **Literary Analysis. Options:**
   - Compare a theme or approach in two plays we have discussed during the second half of the semester. Pay close attention to textual analysis and be sure to cite the texts in your argument.
   - Examine the use of light and/or space (geographical locations in the play or stage directions in the text) in one or two plays we have read during the second half of the semester. Pay close attention to textual analysis and be sure to cite the texts in your argument.
   - Choose a play written in French between 1600-1789 that we have not discussed in class. Examine it in its cultural context and/or compare it to another play we have read during the second half of the semester.

II. **Historical. Options:**
   a. Research a controversial subject in early modern France and situate it in relationship to its contemporary culture and theater world. Possible subjects might include the quarrel of the Cid, the role of Jansenists in seventeenth-century culture, the situation of actresses, the controversy surrounding the publication of the *Encyclopedia*, the development of the booktrade, the political parties of the French Revolution, the changing role of the Church, Voltaire’s enemies, the controversy surrounding Diderot’s play *The Natural Son*, authors’ reactions against government censorship, etc. Many other topics are surely possible; see me for approval.
   b. Examine the development or history of the Comédie Française or the Opera, taking into account, for example, the physical location of the theater, the troupe membership, the repertoire, publicity, approach to theatrical presentation and/or the “page-to-stage” process. Your paper will necessarily situate the theater given the context of seventeenth or eighteenth-century cultural crisis.
   c. Examine the development of the role of dance or music in the theater, from 17\textsuperscript{th}-century “machine plays” to the establishment of the Royal Opera.
d. Evaluate the depiction of actors, actresses and/or theater themes in eighteenth-century French art.

e. Critique the influence of Italy on early modern French theater.

III. Topic of your choice, to be approved by me.