Summer Reading & Writing Assignment

The summer assignment for Honors Humanities and Theater consists of reading texts, watching films and videos, and writing four short essays, one for each group of works. These assignments are designed as preparatory work for some of the shows and other encounters we will have during the first semester of this course.

- **Assignment 1: The Theater Is Not A Building – *Macbeth* (mid Sept. performance, Pittsburgh Shakespeare in the Parks)**
  - **Reading:**
    - *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare (any edition)
  - **Viewing**:
    - *Macbeth* (any filmed version; I recommend 1971 (Polanski), 1976 (Nunn), or 2021 (Cohen) as they are high-quality and easy to find, but any movie adaptation you can find on video will do)
  - **The Big Idea**: Our first major work will introduce us to origins of modern theater. In the centuries before Shakespeare built The Globe, theater in the Western tradition was something that happened in the midst of life – in the town square, in the court of the local noble, in the village commons.
  - **Essay Prompt**: All movie adaptations of this play leverage the elements of film (e.g. three-dimensionality, camera angles, multiple sets and locations) to translate essential aspects of Shakespeare's stage play to the screen. Be sure to support your assertions with specific examples [700-900 words].

- **Assignment 2: The Adaptation Matrix – *La Bohéme* (mid Oct. performance, Pittsburgh Opera)**
  - **Reading 1:**
    - Selections from *Scenes of Bohemian Life* by Henri Murger (provided)
  - **Reading 2:**
    - *La Bohéme* libretto by Giacomo Puccini (provided)
  - **Viewing:**
    - *RENT* by Jonathan Larson (on a streaming service of your choice)
  - **The Big Idea**: Often, a work of literature will be transformed multiple times over its lifespan. For example, Murger's 1851 novel became Puccini's 1896 opera which became Larson's 1996 Broadway musical.
  - **Essay Prompt**: What essential elements of Murger's novel does Puccini elevate? What does he ignore? What essential elements of Puccini's opera does Larson elevate? What does he ignore? Do you think Murger would recognize his work in Larson's musical? [700-900 words].

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- **Assignment 3: – Ripped From The Headlines (fall performance date TBD, Quantum Theatre)**

  o **Readings:**

    ▪ Selected readings about the Enron scandal (provided)

  o **The Big Idea**: It has been said that "Fiction is the lie that tells the truth." This is especially true when we do historical fiction, because reality doesn't neatly fit the narrative structures we use to tell the truth.

  o **Essay Prompt**: What are the big truths of the Enron scandal? What elements of the real story probably needed to be modified in order to fit the framework of a stage play?   [700-900 words].

- **Assignment 4: Classic Remix – *Iphigenia And Other Daughters* (mid Nov. performance, University of Pittsburgh Drama)**

  o **Reading 1**:

    ▪ *Iphigenia in Aulis* by Euripides (provided)

  o **Reading 2:**

    ▪ *Iphigenia in Tauris* by Euripides (provided)

  o **Reading 3:**

    ▪ *Electra* by Sophocles (provided)

  o **The Big Idea**: The play we are seeing is an adaptation that was written in 2011. It adapts three plays that Euripides and Sophocles wrote almost 2500 years ago about stories that were already old by the time they set quill to parchment.

  o **Essay Prompt**: What is it about these stories that would inspire someone to retell them in the 21st century? Additionally, what aspects of the story do your chosen adaptation seem to focus on? [700-900 words].

Each reading marked as "(provided)" will be available on Moodle and/or Schoology while we make the transition from the former to the latter.

Each essay should be 700-900 words, double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font. The essays should include quotations from the assigned texts when and where it is appropriate. Cite your quotations parenthetically in MLA style (include a works cited section). These essays must be submitted as separate files to Turnitin.com **by 11:59 PM on Monday, August 25, 2024.**

Any problems, questions, or concerns should be brought to me as they occur so that I can address them speedily.

If you haven't done so by now, enroll in the class on Moodle and Remind:

Text @hht2526 to the number 81010 or go to https://www.remind.com/join/hht2526.

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