

Wilder Scholarship Assignment

I. Oral Presentation:

Due the class meeting I assign you, a 10-15-minute oral presentation on the scholarship on the work we are discussing that day. You will need to go to the library and find your articles in the books on reserve (see list on SOCS). You should read **at least 5 sources** for your presentation and annotate them in the bibliography (see example below). **Four of them must be scholarly articles; one of your 5 sources must be a review of a production of a play or film or of the first edition of a novel.**

Since it is usually a matter of when you have time (as opposed to which work you'd like to do research on), between now and the next class, look at the exam and assignment due dates for your other courses, as well as your personal calendar, so that you can list three dates you would love and three dates you would hate to do your oral presentation. (See below for eligible dates/works.) I will post on SOCS a schedule of who goes when.

9/5 *The Angel That Troubled the Waters & Other Plays* (probably have to find a review of the 1928 book)

9/9, 9/12 *Our Town*

9/16, 9/19 *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*

9/26 *The Long Christmas Dinner; Pullman Car Hiawatha; The Happy Journey to Trenton & Camden* (1 on each = 3 total)

9/30 *The Woman of Andros* (2)

10/7 *Shadow of a Doubt*

10/21, 10/24 *Heaven's My Destination*

10/28, 10/31 *The Matchmaker*

11/11 *The Alcestiad* (probably have to find a review of the 1977 edition of the book)

For some works we have more than one oral presentation, so you will need to meet with the other student doing a presentation on the work to divide up the books on reserve so that you do not do the same sources. (So that there are no disputes about who found a review first, **as soon as you have chosen a review, e-mail me and your classmate the bibliographic information** about it: author, title, journal or newspaper it appears in, date, page numbers.)

I have put all the library's scholarly books on Wilder on reserve under my name. Some of these are by one author; some are collections of articles by several authors. Look at the table of contents and the index to find in-depth discussions of your Wilder work. The article cannot be from the **internet** unless it was originally published in a scholarly journal or book, or the website is an online scholarly journal. Do not use articles from mass market magazines such as *Time* or *Newsweek* or from newspapers. Do not use articles from reference works (e.g., *Dictionary of Literary Biography*) unless I approve it as a last resort. If you have any doubts about whether the article is valid for the assignment, call or e-mail me well ahead of the due date.

For a production review, try to find one that makes interpretative and evaluative comments not only on the play itself but also on aspects of the production. (e.g., how the actor played a major role, how set design suggests ideas or feelings, what approach of acting style or interpretation of the text the director chose, and so forth.) For the review, it is **NOT** acceptable if it has been published in *Time*, *Newsweek*, or other mass market periodical. I would first check <http://www.nytimes.com>; click on their theater link, then look for the reviews link. If you didn't find any reviews first by searching there or EBSCOHOST, JSTOR, WILSON SEARCH, GOOGLE, etc., then go to the library reference room. Ask the reference librarian on duty where the annual collections of New York Theatre Critics' Reviews are kept (they are collected in large, red three-ring binders, I think) and look for the play title in the index. You can find original production dates in the notes in the rear of *Collected Plays*....

For the novel review, if you can't find it online (likely), go to the reference room in the library and look in *Book Review Digest* or *Book Review Index* (choose the volume of the original publication date on the copyright page of the HarperCollins edition). Ask the reference librarian to tell you where they keep these indexes.

You are not responsible for discussing every point in the source or for discussing all points in equal depth. Select what you consider to be the most important points to summarize, but be sure you are fair to the author (don't misrepresent his/her argument by omitting key ideas, sections, etc.).

Your task is to give us a summary of the scholars' readings of the work by Wilder. Where possible, name the different types of readings (religious allegory, psychological, sociological) as well as major themes, issues, etc. Identify the scholar by name or review source by title. Also, give us an assessment of the scholarship you read. Is one scholar's reading of the play more convincing than the others'? Are some readings too narrow, too broad, superficial, etc.? (One purpose of the oral presentation is to help the rest of us decide if it is worth our valuable time to read the source ourselves). You may read a few quotes, but they should be relatively brief, and there should be few of them. The assignment is for you to "digest" the scholarship on this work and to present it to us in your own words for the most part.

Make sure the emphasis of your presentation is on the scholarship, not the text of the work by Wilder. You may make brief references to the textual evidence the scholars use, but don't be too specific or try to support the point by analyzing the text for us; save that for discussion and your papers. (You should assume we all have read the work and therefore briefly citing the textual evidence should suffice.)

On the day you do your oral presentation, before you begin speaking turn in a word-processed outline (Roman numeral-type outline is not required, just a list of points you will make stated as more or less complete sentences). This will aid me in evaluating your oral presentation for the letter grade.

You are not required to have the oral presentation memorized, but do not read from a script. **I will grade down if in my determination you are mostly reading word-for-word from your text.** You should spea extemporaneously from a copy of the outline (or note cards or a mixture of both--whatever works best for you). This is not a formal presentation (you can dress comfortably; you can speak from your chair--if we are able to arrange the chairs in a circle), but it also is not a chat off the top of your head; be sure you present substantive ideas. If you want to do this as a Power Point presentation that is fine, but it is not required to get an A, nor will it necessarily help you get a higher grade. If you do prepare a Power Point presentation, be sure that you can do the presentation without Power Point in case the computer, projector, or screen don't work that day. Also, let me know before class starts that you want to use Power Point; then I will turn on the computer so that it is ready when you do your presentation.

Note on length: I'll want you to limit your oral presentation to 15 minutes. You do not have to stretch if your presentation does not last 15 minutes, but if it lasts less than 10 minutes, surely you haven't done your job, and I will have to grade you down. Because the natural tendency is to speed up when you are nervous you should shoot for at least 11 or 12 minutes to make sure you speak for at least 10 minutes. Be sure to practice your speech, and time yourself. If you're running under or just at 10 minutes, go back to the sources and find more to talk about.

IMPORTANT: Not showing up for class on the day your presentation is due is the unpardonable sin; the lesson plan is based on your attendance and delivering your oral presentation. The only legitimate excuses for not being present are the usual life emergencies, crises, etc.; if some crisis does come up, call me **beforehand**. Of course if you're in an automobile accident and are unable to contact me beforehand, then that is another matter; in that case I expect you to come see me as soon as possible after class and explain to me what happened, providing documentation of some kind.

If you are too sick to come to class on the day of your presentation, then you have to contact me enough before class that I can alter my lesson plan. The only way you can be excused for illness when you have a major assignment due is to bring me a doctor's note on official stationery saying that you were too ill to come to class, and again you should notify me in time for me to adjust the lesson. Otherwise, your absence is unexcused, and the assignment is given an F. I may allow you to make up the oral critique for partial credit if I have need of another oral presentation later in the semester; I would have to approve that date very soon after your absence.

This assignment is based on the pedagogy that makes students active rather than passive learners; you learn by teaching others. In addition, the assignment gives you the opportunity to practice and further develop your speaking, research, and critical thinking skills.

II. Annotated Bibliography:

In addition to the presentation, you need to write an annotated bibliography of the scholarship (minimum 5 sources) on the work on which you present. Each annotation should be concerned only with the work we are discussing; however, if a significant part of the chapter or article compares the work we are discussing to another Wilder work, you can indicate that.

Do not cite and annotate a reserved book if it doesn't discuss the Wilder work or only makes brief reference to it. (For example, **do not select Gilbert Harrison's biography *The Enthusiast*.** This has some critical commentary, but the focus of the book is on Wilder's life and career, not interpreting individual works.)

To be useful, the annotations must be brief but specific. You will not have space to do much more than summarize the scholar's thesis and a few main points. You may use obvious abbreviations and sentence fragments to make the annotations as concise as possible. For this assignment only, you may also single space and reduce margins and font to get the annotated bibliography onto no more than two pages. (See example.)

A bibliography, by definition, is an alphabetically organized list of works. However, you may employ other organizing strategies (e.g., chronological, thematic) if the relationship between scholarly studies can be made clearer that way. (But indicate in a footnote what the organization scheme is if not alphabetical.)

Ideally, I would like you to turn in the annotated bibliography on the day of your oral presentation; however, in order for you to be able to concentrate your efforts on delivering a good presentation to the class, I will give you a maximum of one week after the oral presentation to turn in the annotated bibliography. **Turn in both a hard copy to me in class AND e-mail it to the class as a whole via SOCS.**

As with every other writing assignment, the annotations must be your own words, except for the briefest of quotations (see example).

Don't be nervous; you know more about your topic than anybody else in the room, probably even the instructor whose memory of the scholarly works has faded over the years.

May the Force be with you.
(And also with me)

Name
LIT 499-04 Wilder

Date
Dr. Konkle

Annotated Bibliography for *A Streetcar Named Desire*

- Adler, Thomas P. *A Streetcar Named Desire: The Moth and the Lantern*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990. Discusses theme of Blanche's journey; she ends up in a fragmented universe, stuck between two worlds, spiritually, sexually, and psychologically. A modern variation of a medieval morality play, it becomes expressionistic from the POV of her breakdown. Discusses the feminist reading, citing Andrea Dworkin and Raman Selden. The final message is that art will succumb to progress, beauty sacrificed.
- Berlin, Normand. "Complementarity in *SND*," *Tennessee Williams: A Tribute*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi (1977): 97 – 103. Desire is the only thing that B and Stan have in common, and it brings them on the same playing field- rape scene. C/C Stan and B: a battle for Stel, for M, for whiskey, and for bathroom. Light: Stan lives in both light and darkness (breaks bulbs, bright shirts). B lives in between...moth. Tug-and-pull of sympathies between Stan and B.
- Boxill, Roger. *Tennessee Williams*. Modern Dramatists. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987. Examines biographical influence on characters. Contrasts Blanche to faded southern belles Lucretia in *Portrait of a Madonna* and Alma in *Summer and Smoke*, and character types from other works by TW. She's caught between the puritan and the cavalier. Discusses *Streetcar* as a memory play with themes of the lost home, the ruined festive occasion, and the wanderer. Influenced by Chekhov and Strindberg.
- Griffin, Alice. *Understanding Tennessee Williams*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995. Strong analysis of the symbolism of music, light vs. shadow, and water. Explores Blanche's guilt over Allen's death as the cause of her promiscuity and her use of sexuality as a weapon for self-preservation. Suggests the possibility that Stella may turn from Stanley to motherhood, to punish him.
- Jackson, Esther Merle, *The Broken World of Tennessee Williams*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1965. Concerned with Blanche's descent into insanity and the anti-heroic cycle of human experience. She is caught between id and ego-ideal. Blanche vs. Stanley represents the modern American conflict.
- Pagan Nicholas. *Rethinking Literary Biography: A Postmodern Approach to Tennessee Williams*. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1993. Excellent source for symbolism in names. Explores the use of music and astrological allusions. Discusses issues of gender including: the male gaze, patriarchal domain, and motherhood. Sees Blanche's obsession with shading the truth as representing Allen's secret homosexuality. Debates the question of rape vs. surrender to desire.
- Thompson, Judith. *Tennessee Williams' Plays: Memory, Myth and Symbol*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2002. Determines that the memory of Allen's suicide makes Blanche a guilt-haunted wanderer, seeking solace in intimacies with strangers. Labels Blanche's dual nature as a "moth-tiger" psyche; she maintains dignity in the face of degradation. Outlines biblical, mythic and literary allusions, including Edgar Allan Poe.