Reaction Paper Guidelines

**Theatre Appreciation**

**Course requirements.** In addition to our regular classroom activities, you are **required** to attend **two ESU theatre productions** and to write a critical response for each. **If you are unable to attend these performances, drop the class.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Theatre</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Furniture</td>
<td>Frederickson Theatre</td>
<td>September 26-30</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 to 5, The Musical</td>
<td>Bruder Theatre</td>
<td>November 2-5</td>
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**REACTION PAPER (100 points) DUE: October 2 or November 6**

**Reaction Papers** are 3-4 pages, word processed, and represent your critical evaluation of a particular production. The paper is worth 100 points. If you receive an unsatisfactory mark, you may be asked to rewrite your reaction paper. (See rubric attached.) Submit your initial draft of the paper by the due date. You may resubmit as many times as the time allows. Here are some guidelines:

**Answer Goethe’s three questions:**
- What is the artist trying to do?
- How does the artist do it?
- Is it worth the doing?

**Write and rewrite.** Proof carefully. Spelling, grammar and syntax count.

**Be specific.** Provide clear examples.

Write in the **active voice.**

Use **past tense** to describe the action of the play.

Provide a **cover page** that includes:
- Your name
- The name of the play
- Where and when you saw the production

**Grading Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>88-89</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-87</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80-82</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>78-79</td>
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<td>73-77</td>
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<td>68-69</td>
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<td>60-62</td>
<td>D-</td>
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<td>0-59</td>
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<td>001-299</td>
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</tbody>
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TH 105 - REACTION PAPER RUBRIC

_____1. **Heading.** The paper provides an appropriate context for your viewing experience. (5)

_____2. **Organization.** Your paper has a clear thesis (focus) and point of view. (10)

_____3. **Clarity.** Your writing makes your experience of the play clear to the reader (10)

_____4. **Analysis.** Your paper addresses **Goethe’s three questions.** (25)

What is the artist doing?

Who is the artist? How does s/he do it?

Is it worth the doing?

_____5. **Examples** are clear. (10)

_____6. **Grammar** and syntax. Is your writing an example of your best work? (15)

_____7. **OVERALL.** (25) Is the paper written with a point-of-view that makes the reader care?

______ **TOTAL POINTS.** (100)

HERE IS an example from a recent class...

Title page -
All Shook Up Reaction Paper

All Shook Up, written by Joe DiPietro and featuring songs by Elvis Presley, is a romantic musical comedy, taking place in the summer of 1955. Throughout the play, characters fall in love and discover their roles in life. Though each character has his/her own love story, nearly all of the couples’ relationships are linked with comic effect. The play used the aspects of character, set, lights, and music exceptionally well. I attended the play in Albert Taylor Hall on October 10, 2013 at 7:30pm, and surprisingly, All Shook Up kept me on my toes and laughing throughout.

Personally, I have never been particularly interested in theatre, especially musicals; therefore, I took my seat believing I would dislike the play. However, much to my surprise, I truly enjoyed the production. Both the comedy and romance grabbed my attention and kept me interested. Surprisingly, I enjoyed the music as well; the songs were familiar and catchy which made them grab my attention from the very beginning.

My favorite part of the play was the characters. I believe that each actor did an exceptional job of transforming into his/her character making the play seem authentic. Set in a small town, each of the characters dressed and acted accordingly. In the opening scenes, we get a glimpse of the everyday lives of the characters, including inn-keeper Sylvia (Crystal Foxworth) and her daughter Lorraine (Kylie Geiman). Natalie (Kayce Holoubek), her best friend Dennis (Ethan Platt) and Natalie’s father Jim (Brandon Jensen). They hang out at the gas station across the road from Sylvia’s. Shortly after, we were introduced to Dean (Evan Eisenbarth) and his mother, Matilda (Sherri Allen), who is also the mayor. Both Dean and his mother did an excellent job of portraying their higher social status. Nathan Dale Short played the stranger Chad, who shows up one day and sets the town a-flutter.
with his “roustabout” ways. Nathan portrayed the outsider impressively. He seemed like a real motorcycle-riding lady’s man.

Kayce Holoubek, in my opinion, was the strongest actor/actress in the play. In the middle of the play, Natalie decided to disguise herself by transforming herself into a boy, named Ed. Holoubek did a great job in both roles. She put herself into her characters’ shoes and made her role seem real. Ethan Platt, who played Dennis, did a terrific job in his role as well. Nerdy, shy, and self-conscious, Ethan did a great job and was a crowd favorite.

In addition to the characters, the play’s setting added to the success of All Shook Up. The opening scene featured the ensemble singing and dancing behind jail bars, an attribution to Elvis’ “Jailhouse Rock.” The next scene portrayed the small town in which the action of the play takes place. A neat aspect of the set pieces was the fact that they were reversible; in other words, on one side, one particular business in the town was shown, and when the piece was turned around, a different business was shown. In another scene, the audience got a glimpse of the bus station, which appeared to be realistic because of the benches placed outside of the station by a station worker. The outside of a museum was displayed in another scene. Here, statues came to life and interacted with the characters in a clever and amusing way. The town’s fairgrounds were presented by a few different carnival-related set pieces making the audience believe it was in a different part of the town, away from the previous action.

In his book, the playwright DiPietro was trying to show that each person can find his or her soul mate in the end. In other words, regardless of what the characters wish for, or how hard they try to woo another, certain people are destined to be together, and they will find one another. He accomplished this by first giving the audience an idea of who each character wishes to be with. However, the ties of love began to change as couples found
themselves with other people. The unexpected couplings, including the pairing of Dennis with Miss Sandra and Jim with Sylvia, kept the audience members guessing which characters would end up together. In the end, DiPietro surprised the audience with the coupling of the characters, which was both satisfying and humorous. By keeping the audience wondering how it would end, the play successfully held our attention.

I enjoyed the story and the production. From the beginning of the play the actors, songs, and settings caught my attention and held it through the bows. Each of the actors did an excellent job in their roles. And all of the designers, including costume, lighting, and sound, added to the play's success, especially Nancy Pontius’ outstanding set. The play was an appropriate length, and not once was I uninterested or lost. I would definitely recommend *All Shook Up* to anyone, even those like me who do not particularly like the theatre.