

PERF 220–1: FINAL ESSAY

Your final essay will take a critical look at the reviewers whose publicity can often make or break a show on Broadway. We will focus on reviews of “history musicals.” Throughout the semester, we have looked at two clear-cut examples in this genre: *Fiorello!* and *Hamilton*. Others include fictionalizations of real-life figures (*Sunday in the Park...*) or events (*South Pacific*).

Shuffle Along: or the Making of the Musical Sensation of 1921 and All That Followed (2016)
[Vulture](#) (Jesse Green); [USA Today](#) (Elysa Gardner)

Come from Away (2017)
[Entertainment Weekly](#) (Allison Adato); [The Daily Beast](#) (Tim Teeman)

Parade (1998)
[NY Times](#) (Ben Brantley); [NY Magazine](#) (John Simon); [Variety](#) (Charles Isherwood)

Read the reviews in the links above. In your essay, choose **at least three** reviewers to critique (they do not all have to be from different shows). **Compare and evaluate how these reviews engage with the challenge of putting a piece of history on the musical stage.**

- How does each reviewer react to the subject matter of the musical itself, and place it in context of what Broadway audiences may enjoy (or pay for)?
- How do they value the accuracy of portrayal, balanced against the quality of performance, writing, and design?
- How do they situate the show among other stage works/practitioners, or other forms of entertainment?
- And lastly, how do they compare the “present day” to when the musical takes place? (Note that *Parade* opened in 1998)

You do not need to become an expert in each show in the above list; your essay should carefully examine reviewers’ critical language and aesthetic/topical priorities. In your answer to at least one of the questions above, though, please discuss how reviewers highlight specific musical moments. You should familiarize yourself with **at least one song or musical number that is addressed**, so that you can proactively respond to the reviewer’s assessment.

There are two submissions for this essay:

- A 350- to 450-word vignette, addressing a single review: due in class **Tuesday, April 17**
- Final submission: due at 11:59pm on **Tuesday, May 1**

Written requirements:

- 1600–2000 words (double-spaced, one-inch margins). 12-point Times New Roman font.
- For the songs you discuss, make sure to cite the specific recording(s) you consult, and give time stamps, when appropriate.
- Include a title page (give your paper an *interesting and relevant title*), with your name and university ID number. This page is also not included in the word count.

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- Organize your thoughts to avoid redundancy. Check spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Be sure you have addressed the questions/issues above and proofread your work. Reread “Guidelines for Writing Papers about Musical Theatre” [[pdf](#)].