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Professor Tenure-Line

Communication Arts and Sciences

Title of your research project.

N/A

Description of research. Please provide a few sentences that explain the question and the methods employed in this research project.

Through its unique jazz-inspired score, creative sets and costume design, the 2019 Tony award-winning musical *Hadestown* tells the classic Greek mythology story of Orpheus and Eurydice, in which Orpheus ventures to the underworld to save his love from an eternity of suffering. In this rhetorical analysis of the musical's script, cast recording, sheet music and Broadway production, I explore how *Hadestown* makes statements about hegemony and memory that connect with current events. *Hadestown* presents the underworld as an industrial wasteland that contrasts with Persephone's green earth, placing industry and the environment at odds with one another and bringing the audience's attention to issues including climate change, refugeeism, homelessness and poverty. Hades is presented as an industrial tycoon and a hegemon who exploits his workers, and the song 'Why We Build the Wall' serves to highlight the many hegemonic tactics used to maintain control over a populace. I also explore how the references to Hades' wall provide audiences experiencing the musical after 2016 with a biting critique of Donald Trump's 2016 campaign promise to build a wall to curb immigration at the United States' southern border, and I suggest that the penultimate song provides audiences with a message that aligns with Hannah Arendt's view of the purpose of memory: that we must remember the past or, in the words of *Hadestown*, 'tell the sad tale', because we hope that it might turn out differently this time. The messages in *Hadestown* encourage theatregoers to remember the lessons of history, including difficult memories related to hegemony, because only through remembering can we learn from the past and take the actions necessary to face our current challenges.

Did this project include Penn State students as researchers?

No

If yes to the above question, please state where it was published.

Its been published in Studies in Musical Theater

What problem do you address with your research?

I'm exploring how the messages in HadesTown align with Hannah Arendt's view of the purpose of memory and what theatre-goers who saw it when the show won the 2019 Tony learn from these messages.