**Naturalism, Realism, and American Expressionism**

* Naturalism and Realism are very closely related.
* Both are late 19th century movements that aimed to replace artificial romantic style with depictions of regular people in believable situations
* In order to create “reality” – playwrights/directors rejected the normal dramatic conventions
* Revolutionized contemporary theatre from scenery to acting style to dialogue to make-up
  + realistic box set with three walls and furnishings became popular
* Stanislavsky – took first serious step to show realism in acting (later adapted by Lee Strasberg)
* \*Henrick Ibsen (*A Doll’s House)* - considered father of modern realism for his three dimensional characters and the situations he put his characters in; “plain truthful language of reality”; everyday subject matter turned into serious drama
* Similarities:
  + Depict events that could happen in real life
  + Both focus on individuals and families
  + Relate to everyday situations
  + Ample subject matter as science advanced and people struggled and fought against oppressive governments
* Differences:
  + Naturalism approaches are in a more scientific way (almost clinical)
  + Realistic plays often had characters to whom the audience could relate and sympathize
  + Realistic plays could show characters breaking free from difficult situations and allow the audience to sympathize with their problem
  + Naturalistic plays aimed at studying the situation, character, etc without interpretation (an attempt at understanding)
  + Naturalistic genre – shows influence Darwin’s “The Origin of Species” on the theatre world
    - the genre focused on how genetics and social advancement affect individuals
    - the focus is to address subjects in a scientific manner – with the artist serving as the disinterested party who observes and studies it
    - \*Emile Zola
* Expressionism:
  + 1920s – American theatre open to experimentation…and so American was ready for expressionist movement
  + the elements of the genre are united by common characteristics as opposed to a strict way of doing things
  + felt no commitment to the depiction of everyday reality
  + the works were subjective and random
  + often featured dream imagery
  + action and language contained nervous energy
  + not always a well-knit plot, diction fragmented, grammar discard, sentence structure not a focus, sudden lyrical outburst….led to need for new acting style
  + new approach to stage design: sets became simplified, angled, distorted, fantasy like; stage thought of as a space rather than a picture; some lighting design concepts had an influence on movies of the time
  + Eugene O’Neil: most notable example of American expressionism in some of his works
    - *The Hairy Ape:* turned oppressors and oppressed in a class society into puppets
    - *\*The Emperor Jones:* put subjective visions on the stage
  + 1960s political theatre rediscovered elements of expressionism
  + 1980s theatre design borrowed heavily from expressionism
* \*\*\*\*\*\*Eugene O’Neil – known for realism and expressionism