

First Semester Final: *Othello* Essay

Submission deadline
Period 3 Tuesday, 12-17 - 8:10am via Schoology

Objectives for the final exam:

- Read a Shakespeare play, follow the basic details of the plot and characters, understand layers of meaning in the text, identify important passages, and explore themes
- Manage and own all elements of the writing process: deconstructing the prompt, brainstorming, thesis writing, organization, evidence selection, writing, revision, and submission
- Display an ability to examine a prompt and develop an original thesis addressing this prompt
- Provide in-depth textual analysis to support a thesis, correctly incorporating strong evidence into the writing
- Convey your ideas in a written, well-organized, literary analysis essay
- Demonstrate a command of language and grammar, including [MLA Formatting Guidelines](#)

Focus for your work:

Having completed our reading of *Othello* and leaning on the variety of writing experiences you have had during our first semester, your task is to develop, organize, and write an essay in which you respond to a prompt dealing with the play.

You will choose one of these themes as the focus for your writing:

1. **Persuasion and Manipulation** – The ideal Renaissance man was skilled in the art of rhetoric, the ability to persuade others. This can happen in a variety of ways. What does the play say about how one person gets another person to do something, to believe something, or to change an existing belief? What does the play say about what makes this successful or not? What is required of the person doing the persuading / manipulating, or of the person it is being done to?
2. **Power** - Power comes in a wide variety of forms in this play. There are a variety of characters searching for power, plotting around the pursuit of power, and trying to convince others to follow them. Some characters have power over others, even though others may have power over them. What are the sources of power? What is Shakespeare saying about the need for power and how different people use it? What are the positive and negative aspects of power in this play?
3. **Being and Seeming** - As you wrote about in your last essay in terms of images, things are not always what they seem to be. In this play things that seem to be true or truthful aren't always just that. Sometimes there are intentional deceptions - other times there are errors in judgment made by the viewer. What allows a person to accurately see something for what it actually is? What prevents it? What is the play saying about what it means to judge by appearance? What is the play saying about the relationship between appearance and reality?

Character Matrix to organize topics - Oth-Iag-Des-Cass-Emi-Rod- one pair per paragraph

Steps:

1. The first step for your work is to settle on one prompt. The best way to do this is to deconstruct each prompt to establish what each is asking. Consider which prompt you understand the best and the one for which one you can write the strongest argument in your essay.
2. Develop a unique and personal response to the prompt that you will defend in your body paragraphs. Your work here will end with a thesis that is debatable and compelling. This thesis will be included in your introduction, which must have all the elements of a standard introduction (attention grabber, road map, thesis).
 - a. **Your thesis will not name a character or just be based on one character - it is a thesis about your topic.**
3. Find and interpret compelling evidence. The challenge here is for you to go beyond general observations and explore what is learned about your topic through the play. For example, it is not enough to point to examples of a character pursuing power. Rather, you use these moments to explore what is learned about power.
 - a. Each body paragraph needs 3 quotations. They can not all be from the same act.
 - b. This means you will need a total of 9 quotations.
4. *Organize your essay. Your essay will defend your thesis using three body paragraphs. Each of these will contain a topic sentence, evidence, and analysis. You will also write a compelling introduction and conclusion.
 - a. Each body paragraph needs its own topic sentence. The topic sentence is the point you will prove in that paragraph. Each topic sentence is a part of your thesis.
 - b. You are organizing your essay by ideas, not by examples. That means you will not have paragraphs devoted to specific characters, but instead to specific parts of your thesis. This also means you will not name a character in your topic sentences.
5. Analyze your evidence. Remember what we have been working on all semester: call it either the quote sandwich or the show-mean-matter approach.
 - a. Set the context / speaker
 - b. Cite the quotation
 - c. Explain what it means
 - d. Analyze why it supports your topic and thesis
6. Use correct grammar and mechanics.
 - a. Cite your evidence correctly. There is a specific method for citing Shakespeare. We will review this in class together and you are expected to use this format for every quotation used. It is Act.Scene.Lines - For example, III.ii.20-22
 - b. The name of the play is italicized.
 - c. This is not a personal essay. You will not use 1st or 2nd person voice in your writing.
 - d. Your essay needs to be free of grammar and mechanics issues - be sure to proofread it!

Things we will work on in class:

- How to create a powerful thesis statement and effective topic sentences
- How to choose the best quotations
- How to introduce and analyze your evidence

Important notes:

- Because this is a final assessment for the semester, part of the assignment is that you demonstrate your independent skills in terms of reading and writing. Therefore, I will not be reading your thesis or any part of your paper prior to the final essay you submit. I am here to support you and to clarify any elements of the assignment that are confusing. You will have several days of in-class time to work on your assignment and to ask any questions on the assignment or on your previous work. Use the feedback I have given to you on your previous work to guide your writing. Develop your own ideas. And, most of all, trust yourself and your writing.
- It should not need to be said but I will make this point due to the fact that this is a final assessment. When developing your ideas and writing your papers, do not read criticism, reviews, Cliff's Notes, Spark Notes, etc. I've already done that and I know what they say - your job is not to tell me what they say. I've also already Googled many different combinations of characters and themes. Own your essay. **Violating the policy of academic dishonesty will result in a zero for the final exam.**
- Finally, when it comes to the actual writing of your paper, you should complete it without outside assistance, with one possible exception: you may consult books or online sources to look up questions you may have on grammar, punctuation, and spelling. In other words, this paper should represent the culmination of your learning.

Submitting the final:

- Your final must be submitted electronically via Schoology. It is due at the time listed at the top of this document. For a final, not submitting a paper is equal to not showing up for a final. **That means, if you do not submit a paper by the time listed above, you will receive a zero on this assignment.** Being that this is 10% of your semester grade, you do not want this to happen because it could have devastating results on your grade.

Evaluating your final:

- [Here](#) is the rubric I'll use to assess your work. Additionally, as with all your major writing assignments this year, the rubric is available on Turnitin. You should take a look at it and let me know if you have any questions regarding how you will be evaluated. The final is 10% of your semester grade, so it is imperative that you understand how I will be evaluating your work. You'll receive a score out of 100, but it is the percentage that factors into your grade.

And there you have it! We watched the film, played theater games, acted out scenes, wrote poems and songs, discussed characters, asked questions, wrote journal entries, worked in small groups, worked with a partner for a week, and read the play. Take the time to look back at all of this work - that's why you did it. Look at the quotations and topics and ideas we've already explored - use them! You've all been doing excellent work this semester - now it is time to end it with your best piece of writing yet!