

Discussion Questions for Antony and Cleopatra

1. You've spent some time thinking about the way Cleopatra dies. So, what's your theory? Why suicide? Why snakes? Why 2 snakes?
2. What about Antony's death? Why does he have such a hard time killing himself? Is it important that Eros refuses to do this for him?
3. ~~What's~~<sup>Why</sup> do you think Cleopatra leaves Antony at the battle? Why do you think Antony follows her?
4. Take a look at Act II, scene vii. ll. 48-83. What's all this between Pompey and Menas? What does this apparent digression from the central action of the play have to do with anything?
5. Some essentialist readings of this play have emphasized it as a "love story." In the light of Tuesday's lecture, what do you think of this? What evidence is there that these people really love each other? What is love, anyway, and how is it related to politics in this play?

**Antony and Cleopatra: Some Questions to Consider**

1. In the Introduction to our edition, Maynard Mack claims that Cleopatra is "impossible, mysteriously contradictory." (p. 17) To what extent do you agree or disagree?
2. According to Professor Corum, Cleopatra leaves the battle in order "to make Antony grow up." Do you agree? What other explanation could there be?
3. Consider the way Cleopatra dies. Why suicide? Why snakes? Why 2 snakes?
4. A lot happens in Act III, Scene xiii. Try to explain the following:  
At lines 25-28, why is Antony so eager to engage in single combat with Caesar?  
At lines 73-78, why is Cleopatra so willing to conspire with Caesar?  
At lines 41-46 and 197-201, what are Enobarbus' motives for defecting to Caesar? (Think also about why he later commits suicide.)
5. With regard to #2 above, why does Antony follow Cleopatra?
6. As Antony is dying, he tells Cleopatra to trust only Proculeius among Caesar's men. (IV, xv, 48) Is it important that (at V, ii, 35) Proculeius proves to be rather untrustworthy? A related question: why is Dolabella so willing to help Cleopatra?
7. Why does Antony have such a hard time killing himself? Is it important that Eros refuses to do the deed?
8. New Critics tend to regard this play as a "Love Story." Can this reading be reconciled with Professor Corum's reading? In other words, what evidence is there that these people really love each other? A somewhat related question: what is "love" anyway?

**Final Journal Assignment (Due in section next week):**

Bearing in mind the "post-structuralist" discourses we have explored this quarter, analyze some institution or structure that you usually take for granted as a **text**. Some possibilities, a professor (or TA), some office or department at UCSB, your parents, etc. (This will be more interesting if you choose your own topic...)