

SECOND/FINAL PAPER ASSIGNMENTS

You are to write a 4-6 page paper (typed, double-spaced) on one of the following topics. The paper should be handed in to your T.A. at the beginning of class on Monday, June 4th. Please note: no late papers will be accepted. Any questions you have should be discussed with your T.A..

The plays referred to in the questions are: Antony and Cleopatra; Measure for Measure; Winter's Tale; The Tempest.

(1) The uses and abuses of power. Evaluate a particular power issue in one or two plays, or variations of power abuse in one play. (Either of these options requires comparison/contrast.)

(2) Discuss sexuality in Measure for Measure, or Antony and Cleopatra, or Winter's Tale.

Some suggestions on how to focus your essay might be: sexuality as love vs. sexuality as lust; feminine sexuality; masculine sexuality; function of sexual "perversion"; the economics of sexuality; sexuality and power.

(3) Discuss the effects of "civilization" in one or two of the following: Antony and Cleopatra, Measure for Measure, The Tempest.

Some suggestions on how to focus your essay might be: civilization as repression; imperialism/ colonization; civilization and art; civilization as ideal.

(4) Discuss how the "state of nature" or the "natural" is represented/defined in one or two of the following: Measure for Measure, Winter's Tale, The Tempest.

Some suggested places to look: Lucio, Perdita with shepherds, Caliban, etc.

(5) The Duke in Measure for Measure and Prospero in The Tempest are often seen as figures for the artist or playwright. Discuss how one or both of these figures function in the plays as "artists", plotters, or creative forces.

(6) Discuss the relationship between the aristocracy and the lower class(es) in one or two of the following: Measure for Measure, Winter's Tale, Tempest.

(7) Discuss and analyze the themes of change and stasis in any one of the 4 plays. Some suggestions: what important images are associated with change and stasis throughout the play? What roles do temporal shift (changes in time) and geographical mobility (changes in location) play in the dramatic development?

(8) Discuss the question of personal identity in one or two of the plays. Focus on one or two of the following issues: is the mutability and/or constancy of personal identity important in the drama? Are there any societal restrictions that mediate or legislate a behavioral norm? Under what circumstances is deviation from this norm possible or desirable? Who defines those circumstances?

Are there any significant changes or transformations in behavior, individual understanding, or societal standards by the end of the play?

(9) Compare and contrast the treatment of sexuality and procreation in both Measure for Measure and The Winter's Tale.

Some suggestions on how to focus your essay might be: does the play foreground a definition of "normal" sexual behavior? How and why are these standards of normalcy enforced? To what extent do secular laws, religion, and cultural standards shape the attitudes and conduct of the characters? What are the resulting differences and similarities in the views and behavior of the male and female characters? From your analysis do you conclude that traditional standards of sexual normalcy are reinforced or subverted through the course of the play?

(10) Death and threats of death are prominent motifs in Antony and Cleopatra, Measure for Measure and The Winter's Tale. How does the possibility of death shape the dramatic development of the play(s) you discuss?

Some suggestions on how to focus your essay might be: what images are associated with death? What is the relationship of desire to death? Is the specter of death threatening or redemptive? What is the relation of death to political power? How does the playwright deal with the concept of death without creating tragedy?

(11) The words "Measure for measure" remind one of the strictures of Babylonian law: "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." This play is all about morality, the law, and punishment. Discuss the legal subtext of Measure for Measure in terms of ethical philosophy and the law. Close scrutiny of the scenes where legal judgements are pronounced and/or punishments are meted out should be the central focus of your essay.

(12) The theme of innocence. Consider the various representations of innocence in Measure for Measure and/or The Tempest. How is innocence defined in the play(s)? Is it presented as an asset or liability? Which characters are innocent, and which are ignorant, and what is the (moral) difference? What comment is ultimately made about innocence?