

HAMLET & FILM NARRATIVE
ENGL 4543 MW 2:00-3:20 PM; BEA WOOD 210

Instructor

Dr. Peter Fields, associate professor of English

Email is peter.fields@msutexas.edu

Office is Bea Wood 230 on 2nd floor of PY at the end closest to dorms

Office Hours Tuesday and Thursday are 11:15 AM to 12:15 PM and 2:00 to 5:00 PM

Office Hours Monday and Wednesday are 12:00 to 1:45 PM and 3:30-5:00 PM

Also by appointment.

Required book: You need this edition.

Jordan, Constance, ed. William Shakespeare's Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. 2nd ed. New York: Pearson Longman, 2005. Print.

Essays

You will write five four-paragraph essays, including the Final essay. Each is worth 20 percent of the overall semester grade.

The overall idea should answer our perennial prompt: How does this movie help us understand Shakespeare's play?

Do not generalize or waste space on summary. Better to focus on two or three scenes and bear down on them in depth.

You can dive into key scenes and quote from the play starting in the first paragraph.

You may compare scenes from our other films, especially in later essays.

Pair key moments from the movie with their relevant scene in the play and quote from the play. You have latitude with dialogue that is not in the play. Your quoting does not have to be perfect—just what you remember.

You need to cite from secondary sources—I will let you decide how much. You may use something from our critical edition or something you found on your own, especially a book from the Moffett stacks or a scholarly article from the Moffett-supported databases.

Writing about one of our movies:

In *Hamlet 2*, the main character, Dana Marschz (Steve Coogan) seems suicidal at times especially when the principal tells him the drama program has been cancelled. He wanders in shock back to the classroom—really just a raised stage and some rows of chairs in the “Snackatorium”—and launches into a long tirade. “Shut up! Shut up!” he screams at the kids, momentarily getting their undivided attention. Will someone, he asks rhetorically, please explain to him how a little boy from a dairy farm in Manitoba, who loves acting but isn’t very good at it, who can’t get a decent agent, and who decides to teach kids and pass on his love of the craft, how he is supposed to deal with “all the god-awful crap that’s handed out to him without wrapping his lips around a 45 and blowing his brains out!”

In an interview for the *Hamlet 2* DVD, Pam Brady, who co-wrote the screenplay, comments that she always felt that the genre of inspiring-white-teacher for a class of ethnic minorities was “really offensive.” Her intention was to make fun of the idea. Melonie Diaz, who plays Ivonne (an Hispanic student), says in her interview that she hesitated at first to be in a movie where all the Latinos seem to be the “bad kids.” But Director Andrew Fleming won her over when he explained to her that the usual plotline is reversed in this film: “Steve Coogan’s character doesn’t really save the kids. The kids save Steve Coogan.”

Provide a discussion that captures the key idea before the quote.

On the one hand, Hamlet could accept his lot philosophically and play the passive role of cynical observer. He could linger at the edge of court and amuse himself with the human spectacle of people vying for favor with the new king. Or Hamlet could sweep to his revenge as he promised his father’s ghost. But then he is

distracted by a third path. It is oddly alluring. In fact, he finds himself caught up in reverie and rapture as he ponders leaving this world altogether:

To be, or not to be; that is the question:
 Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
 The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
 Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
 And, by opposing, end them. To die, to sleep—
 No more, and by a sleep to say we end
 The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
 That flesh is heir to—"tis a consummation
 Devoutly to be wished. [...] (3.1.58-66)

NOTE: The parenthetical citation means act three, scene one, lines 58 through 66. The ellipsis means the student did not quote the rest of the line.

Once we know the act and scene, we simply use the line numbers in parentheses. NOTE: Use a forward slash between lines if you are not using a block quote:

Prince Hamlet goes on to worry about the afterlife: "To die, to sleep. / To sleep, perchance to dream. Ay, there's the rub" (66-67). He seems like a priest or monk when he admonishes Ophelia and advises her to flee from temptation and escape the influence of sinful men through celibacy at a "nunnery" (139).

When you go to another scene in the same act, let the reader know parenthetically:

Hamlet's mother does not see her husband's ghost and tells her son that the ghost he sees in the bedroom is merely the "coinage of your brain" (4.128).

Here is MLA in-body citing for Constance Jordan in our Longman Cultural edition of Hamlet. NOTE: We cite page numbers even without a quote if the idea is not our own:

In our Longman Cultural edition of the play, the editor, Constance Jordan, in her preface to the section on Purgatory, reminds us that, at least from a Catholic point of view, the living understandably might want to help those whom they loved and who have passed away. The natural assumption for Catholics, according to Jordan, was that suffering between this world and the next was necessary for the righteous believer to be truly ready for heaven (181).

The living could help usually in the form of prayers for the dead. However, the ghost that visits Elsinore and takes the Prince into its confidence seems to exceed the usual boundaries. King Hamlet's ghost, rather profanely, even incredibly, on his own behalf, seeks revenge against the killer who put him in purgatory. Indeed, according to Jordan, if the Prince carries out such a request, far from rescuing his father, he might succeed only in damning himself: "As murder in another name, this kind of revenge was not a request that Catholic Doctrine could condone, particularly from a sinful soul in purgatory" (183).

There is good reason, as Jordan observes, to regard this ghost as a diabolical impostor, merely purporting to be King Hamlet: "In light of Christian doctrine, the Ghost is suspect" (183). At the same time, from a Catholic point of view, the faithful departed and their loved ones are necessarily involved in each other's spiritual struggle which, even for the most righteous and devout, does not end with death, hence the necessity for purgatory and the close, intertwining bond of living and dead (181-82).

DO NOT LEAD WITH QUOTES. Please, do not start with the quote and then back into its significance:

NOT THIS WAY: “So he chose to feign dullness, and pretend an utter lack of wits” (225) is a phrase that tells us where Shakespeare is going with Prince Hamlet, as we find in our edition’s excerpt of *Historia Danica* by Saxo Grammaticus.

THIS WAY: In our edition’s excerpt from the *Historia Danica* by Saxo Grammaticus, Amleth decides that his best tactic would be to play the part of a lunatic, oblivious and heedless of all around him: “So he chose to feign dullness, and pretend an utter lack of wits” (225).

An ellipsis in brackets means that you, not your source, have done the cutting of material either at the beginning or at the end of a sentence:

Notably, John Calvin, in our edition’s excerpt from *The Institution of Christian Religion*, argues that Purgatory is false for two reasons. The first is that it makes “satisfaction” (188) for sin a kind of commercial enterprise with the result that the Pope’s “Bullbearers” can, quite literally, set and collect the “the price of salvation” (189). The most important problem in Calvin’s view is that Purgatory requires that people must do something about their own sins rather than depend on what Christ has already done: “[...] it is more than evident that the blood of Christ is the only satisfaction, propitiatory sacrifice, and cleansing for the sins of the faithful” [...] (191).

MLA in-body citing of a scholarly article (found on the Moffett online database *Academic Search Complete*). Note repeated use of attribution to ensure the source gets consistent credit for the key ideas.

According to Cameron Hunt, in his article “Jephthah’s Daughter’s Daughter: Ophelia” for *ANQ*, Hamlet taunts Polonius, calling him “old Jephthah” (*Ham.*

2.2.392), because like the Old Testament figure who foolishly promised God the first thing he saw when he returned home, Polonius is using the most important person in his life—his daughter—as a pawn in a dangerous game. The daughter, whom Jephthah “lovèd surpassingly well” (390), rushed out to greet the father she herself adored and respected. She doesn’t know that her father foolishly promised God to sacrifice the first creature he saw upon returning from battle. Prince Hamlet (implicitly) is accusing Polonius of carelessly pushing his daughter ahead of him, oblivious to the dire consequences of abusing her dutiful nature: “This allusion identifies Ophelia as a virgin, destined for sacrifice at the hands of her politically ambitious father from the play’s outset” (Hunt 14). Significantly, as Hunt points out, the story in chapter 11 of Judges indicates that Jephthah’s daughter acquiesced to her fate. She merely desired some time—two months—to lament the fact that she would never marry (14). Hunt drives home the significance of two months: when Hamlet hosts the play-within-the-play, Ophelia herself says two months have passed since the funeral of King Hamlet (14-15). Ophelia’s time is nearly up! As Hunt makes clear, the willows of Ophelia’s drowning symbolize virgins who miss out on becoming brides (16). Polonius is playing a game both father and daughter will regret when it robs Ophelia of love and children, just as Jephthah threw away the prospects of his virgin daughter who does not so much mourn her loss of life as she does her loss of love and children (15-16).

MLA in-body citation of a single-author book from the Moffett Library book shelves:

According to Stephen Greenblatt in his book *Hamlet in Purgatory*, the ghost was meant to be a suspicious character in the play. In Greenblatt’s view, the longstanding consensus in Christendom was that demons were precisely the real culprits in most cases where the dead (supposedly) have reached out to those who mourned their passing: “Demons were clever, and it had long been understood

that they were capable of insinuating themselves into human communities by pretending that they were souls in pain” (209). In fact, Greenblatt quotes from John Chrysostom, an early church saint and theologian, who calls the deceptions of demons a “kind of stage-play” (209). According to Chrysostom, demons frequent graveyards and try to pass themselves off as souls in torment (209). Even in the case of possession, the demon would prefer to be understood as a lost human soul; only reluctantly does a demon want to be acknowledged for it really is—a demon (209).

MLA in-body citing of an essay from an anthology (author and title of essay are sufficient):

C. S. Lewis in his essay “Hamlet: The Prince or the Play” reminds us that the play is about people mired in a dream-like world where action seems urgent but no one can move with authority, confidence, or sufficient speed: “The world of Hamlet is a world where one has lost one’s way” (99). According to Lewis, Hamlet represents something most modern people have in common: they are “haunted” by uncertainty: that is, “man with his mind on the frontier of two worlds, man unable either to reject or quite to admit the supernatural, man struggling to get something done [...], yet incapable of achievement because of his inability to understand either himself or his fellows or the real quality of the universe which has produced him” (102-103).

Works Cited

HANGING INDENT: Highlight entry with cursor, right click on “Paragraph,” and select “hanging” under Special. Be sure to double-space.

For an anthology (like our required book), we cite each item in it separately from the book itself. We use triple hyphens when the editor or author remains the same for each item.

Works Cited

- Calvin, John. Excerpt from *The Institution of Christian Religion*. Jordan 188-91.
- Fleming, Andrew, dir. *Hamlet 2*. Screenplay by Pam Brady and Andrew Fleming. Music by Ralph Sall. Perf. Steve Coogan, Catherine Keener, David Arquette, Elizabeth Shue, Rand Posin, Phoebe Strole, Melonie Diaz, Shea Pepe, Joseph Julian Soria, Michael Esparza, and Marco Rodriguez. Focus Features & Universal, 2008. DVD.
- Grammaticus, Saxo. Excerpt from *Historia Danica*. Jordan 221-34.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. *Hamlet in Purgatory*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001.
- Hunt, Cameron. "Jephthah's Daughter's Daughter: Ophelia." *ANQ* 22.4 (2009): 13-16. Academic Search Complete. Web. 14 August 2015.
- Jordan, Constance. *Purgatory*. Jordan 181-201.
- . *Spiritual and Mental Life*. Jordan 157-80.
- . *William Shakespeare's Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. 2nd ed. New York: Pearson Longman, 2005.
- Lewis, C. S. "Hamlet: The Prince or the Poem?" *Selected Literary Essays*. Ed. Walter Hooper. Cambridge, England: Cambridge UP, 1969. 88-105.

Plagiarism

Any use of a non-documented source as if it were a student's original work is academic dishonesty. The grade will be a "0" (no points) for the assignment and the student can no longer attend the course. If early enough in the semester, the student can bring the instructor a withdrawal slip for a penalty-free W. Otherwise the semester grade must be an F.

Language too close to source

Students sometimes borrow the phrasing of their sources as if it were their own. Students certainly can use key words from their sources, but they must use their own phrasing—not the source's.

Attendance

Five unexcused absences means 10 percent off the overall semester grade. Students who miss class should inform the instructor by email, even if they feel their excuse is lame. The professor will accept documentation in the form of cellphone pictures of clinic sign-in

sheets, court dates, prescription labels, repair receipts, and work schedules; he will accept emails from family members, lawyers, and supervisors. Many times students are helping family members or friends in crisis, which is legitimate. Each case is different. If students are amassing a string of absences, the professor may ask for retrospective documentation to keep the unexcused number below five.

Submission of work

Students must submit their work on due dates in person: not by surrogate, not under my door, not left on a desk, and not by email attachment. The late penalty is 10 points out of 100.

Students may also ask for input on a working draft by email attachment. However, the professor may not have enough time if the student sends it too close to the due date.

Students with disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute for persons with disabilities and guarantees reasonable accommodation. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Disability Support Services in Room 168 of the Clark Student Center, 397-4140.

Tentative daily schedule:

Jan 14-Feb 6 Branagh's Hamlet

Feb 11 Essay 1 Due

Feb 11-Feb 20 Haider (Shahid Kapoor)

Feb 25 Essay 2 Due

Feb 25-Mar 6 Legend of the Black Scorpion (Daniel Wu)

Mar 11-Essay 3 Due

Mar 11-13 Hamlet 2

Mar 18-22 Spring Break

Mar 25 Last Day for W

Mar 25-April 3 Zeffirelli's Hamlet (Mel Gibson)

April 8 Essay 4 Due

April 8-15 RSC's Hamlet (David Tennant)

April 17-19 Holiday Break

April 22 RSC's Hamlet

April 24-May 1 Olivier's Hamlet

May 8 Final Essay Due at 5:45 PM in our regular classroom.