

*Prof. Shankar Raman*

**Essay Assignment 2: Speech and Scene Analysis**

**Due: Nov 3**

(leave papers in envelope attached to my office door)

**Length:** 8-9 pages, double spaced throughout, standard 12 pt font such as Times, one inch margins.

This description is to help those who decide to do the 3 paper option rather than the 2 paper option. Since this is a seminar, I expect you generally to choose topics yourself. Consequently what follows is a general approach to help you select a topic and write a paper, but you are not bound to follow this. If there is something else you want to do, go ahead and do it. Or talk to me first, and then do it. For example, you might prefer to do a comparative study of two plays organised around a particular theme. This is perfectly acceptable

I assume that you have read the plays available for this assignment thoroughly in order to prepare for class discussions. You may not write on the play chosen for paper 1, but you may choose any of the other plays. I would much prefer you to write on one of the plays done after paper 1 (that is, Epicoene, Hamlet, The Broken Heart or The Duchess of Malfi), but if you have compelling reasons to return to one of the earlier plays, you may do so.

*Before you write:*

Skim again through the play of your choice, noting those passages or parts of scenes that most attract your attention. Select a passage or a scene, preferably one which we have not already discussed in detail in class. (If you do pick one we have discussed, I expect you to do much more than repeat what was said in class). Study it carefully, paying attention to sound as well as sense, thinking about poetic form, diction, sentence structure and imagery. Consider how the lines reflect a mood, or a theme, the speaker's character, or a conflict. This assignment is intended to get you used to reading the text closely. To this end, I would like you to choose a scene from one of the plays that you feel raises a question or set of questions important to the play as a whole. It is this theme that you will be examining through the chosen passage. The paper should argue its case through a close reading of the scene in relation to the play.

*Writing the essay:*

Now, you are in the position to begin your essay. Please compose a 7-8 page essay in which you discuss how the chosen section works in relationship to the play. Be specific

and focused, citing the text to develop and support your claims. The task is **not** to go through the passage line by line, listing everything you have noticed. Rather, discuss what you consider to be the most important aspects of the passage. You should organise your assertions and observations in such a way that they contribute to a single important claim you want to make about the significance of these lines within the play. That is to say, your careful reading of the particulars of the passage should be directed toward a central thesis.

It is not sufficient to say that a specific passage "heightens" or "augments" something the play is interested in. That is a vague thesis that simply prompts the question: so what? You need to have a focussed claim that examines the significance of the issues raised by the play and thinks in specific terms about how the passage you have chosen contributes to the elaboration of those issues. Since the assignment demands that you connect the chosen passage to other parts of the text, you will have to engage with and cite bits from the rest of the play in order to develop a good argument. Try to move beyond character analysis to make the link between individual moments or actions and the larger issues with which the play deals.

*After you write:*

After you have written the paper, re-read and edit it to make sure that you have eliminated typographical and grammatical errors. Examine the transitions between sentence and paragraphs and re-work the paper so that it flows smoothly from beginning to end. To cite from the play follow the convention: 1/ the first time you cite, include a footnote detailing the edition you are using 2/ thereafter, simply include citation in parentheses in the body of the text, e.g., (2.3.32-39).

Finally, remember the injunction against plagiarism. If you borrow ideas from elsewhere, or use language from other sources, you are expected to acknowledge explicitly in footnotes or bibliography the nature of your reliance. Such acknowledgement needs to be made not just for direct quotation, but for paraphrasing the ideas of an external source as well.