

Prof. Shankar Raman

Essay Assignment 3: Instructions for Final paper (3 paper option) and Final Paper draft (2 paper option)

Due: • Dec 10 2003 (for students doing 3 paper option)

• November 26 2003 (long paper draft for students doing 2 paper option---

Final version due Dec 10th, after revision and my comments)

(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 primarily to help those who decide to do the 3 paper option rather than the 2 paper option, but it may help those choosing to do longer papers as well. 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. At any rate, I provide two flavours below, to help you should you be stuck.

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 or 2, but you may choose any of the other plays (references to the plays already written upon is, however, acceptable).

Finally, I expect outside research for this final paper. Your essay should make use of at least five different sources beyond the ones that have been assigned (at various points in the term) for the course. These can be references to primary material, broader critical approaches, secondary material on the plays themselves, or historical material (or any combination of these). I attach a copy of my email regarding research possibilities (originally sent after the description of the second assignment) to help you locate additional stuff.

Flavour 1: Thematic Analysis. Remember you need an overarching thesis.

Before you write:

Skim again through the play of your choice, noting those passages that most attract your attention in relation to the theme you are interested in pursuing. To this end, I would like you to choose sets of lines, scenes, etc. from one of the plays that you feel raises a question or set of questions important to a particular thematic with which the play is concerned. 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 8-9 page essay in which you discuss how the chosen play develops and works the theme in question. Be specific and focused, citing the text to develop and support your claims. The task is **not** to go through passages line by line, listing everything you have noticed. Rather, discuss what you consider to be the most important aspects. You should organise your assertions and observations in such a way that they contribute to a single important claim you want 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 passages you have chosen contribute to the elaboration of those issues. Try to move beyond character analysis to make the link between individual moments or actions and the larger issues with which the play deals.

Flavour 2: The fall-back Comparative essay assignment

1) Find an intriguing parallel between two plays we have read, a *specific* point of comparison. You might, for example, focus on:

- a scenic parallel, similar treatment of an event or encounter (a wooing scene, an interrogation, a death scene)
- a dramaturgical device (overhearing; disguise; the use of soliloquy)
- a clearly defined issue (an aspect of sexuality; the role of money)
- a shared pattern of language (imagery, figures of speech, verse forms)
- two similar characters, linked by their social position

This is only a list of suggestions: choose plays and parallels that interest you. I encourage you to discuss your ideas with me before you begin writing.

2) In an essay of 8-9 pages, focus on what you consider to be the most illuminating or crucial *difference* between the two treatments. How and why are these cases different? Develop a thesis about this contrast, considering how it reflects or contributes to the plays in their entirety. The difference could be one of tone, artistic method, social comment, or dramatic function.

Addendum: You have to choose two plays upon which you have not already written this term and you are not allowed to write on the same topic that you chose for that paper.

n.b.: Given that you have selected a clear parallel, you can quickly make the grounds for comparison explicit in your introduction; then move right in to discuss the distinctions. Be sure you have a *thesis* about the nature of the difference between your two selections -
- a thesis, moreover, that can be adequately developed and supported with textual

evidence. Ideally, your conclusions will be compelling, persuasive, and not immediately obvious. I appreciate imagination, sensitivity, and wit, in a title as elsewhere; they can coexist peacefully (indeed, they thrive) with argumentation and correct, concise prose.

Now, for whatever approach you choose, remember the *After you write* injunctions:

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.

Researching the Paper

Your final paper (the third) requires outside research, and part of the aim of a seminar level course is to get you to pursue and develop ideas you have regarding a particular text through the judicious use of secondary (and primary) texts beyond the one to be analysed. As you know, those who are presenting on texts are expected to develop their presentations in ways that lead to the written assignment that follows. This means that the paper should at least try to integrate some of the additional reading that you have already done into its argument. For others, I recommend doing a little extra research, reading a few articles on the play, or articles thematically relevant to the topic you have chosen.

The first pass at identifying what sources might be useful would probably include the following, all accessible through the MIT Library Databases (VERA):

1. JSTOR is a searchable electronic archive of journals that includes 12 or 13 important journals in literary studies. Once you enter it, it is fairly self-explanatory.
2. Project MUSE is another searchable archive covering a different set of journals (and generally, different time spans in those journals---it tends to have only the last 3 or 4 years worth of stuff, whereas JSTOR tends to have everything in a journal upto the last 3 or 4 years). Many of the journals on Muse and JSTOR also have print versions in the Humanities library covering the years the databases do not cover.

Both MUSE and JSTOR have the advantage of actually having the journal articles online, so that you can download them immediately.

The other two databases only contain the bibliographic info and you will need to either request the article through interlibrary loan (if MIT doesn't own it) or to photocopy the article from actual journal in the Humanities Library. These databases:

3. MLA --- the MLA is the most extensive database, claiming to contain information about all articles in all the major european languages on literary subjects. This is also accessible and searchable through the MIT Libraries Database Link.

4. Chadwyck/ Healey (I think it is filed under LION on-line): this focuses on english literature, has a decent coverage, generally offers a brief summary of the article, and sometimes the entire article itself to be downloaded.

There are other databases too, but these four should be more than enough to get you started. The general pattern is to locate a few articles either on the play or more specifically on the topic of your paper on the play to get a sense of what has been said about it, and then to try and test your own arguments against these, building on them or critiquing them etc. Sometimes (indeed often) the article itself may be less useful, but its footnotes will lead you to other articles that are useful.

And of course, I am always here to help you locate material or provide advice, should you need it.