

Introduction to Drama: Second Essay Assignment

Due Tuesday, April 7, by 2:00 p.m. on WesternOnline. Length: approximately five double-spaced pages. Please contact me, if you have questions about document design (i.e., margins and other format issues), or about how to meet the length requirement without padding.

Tragedy Versus Comedy in Shakespeare



Laurence Olivier as Hamlet, 1948

Choose one character, one scene, or one exchange of dialogue in *Hamlet* and *A Midsummer's Night Dream* to compare and contrast. The purpose of this exercise is to define *one* important difference between tragedy and comedy in Shakespeare.

If you choose to analyze two characters, there should be some basis of similarity between them. If you chose to analyze two scenes, there needs to be something in parallel. If the scene is too long to analyze closely, select parts of the dialogue to compare and contrast.

As always, I will reward close reading. Please cite the plays.

Your task is not to provide a comprehensive reading of the plays, or all all-expansive comparison and contrast, but to create a thesis-driven argument about a particular difference between tragedy and comedy in Shakespeare (which may have applicability to plays written after Shakespeare).

Always imagine an intelligent reader who may have no knowledge of our class and no special understanding of drama; in other words, write for a general audience. You are welcome to elaborate your personal reactions to the plays, but keep in mind that opinions do not replace interpretation.

I would rather that you *not* use outside sources to write this essay because you'll learn more if you do it all by yourself. But if you must consult an outside source—be it Wikipedia, a website, a critical article, or something else—you have to document it.