

Essay due on Wed 29<sup>th</sup> October.

### Essay instructions

This assignment requires you to consider how a film approaches and interprets a Shakespearean play. The three Shakespearean texts from which you may choose are **The Comedy of Errors**, **Much Ado about Nothing**, and **Othello**. Essay must be 7-8 pages, double-spaced and using a standard 12pt font (such as Times or Courier).

#### *Before you write:*

- Read and think about the Shakespearean text you have chosen, considering the scenes, issues, and speeches of most interest to you.
- Attend the film screenings of the play you want to examine and then view parts of it on your own. You can simply borrow the film from your local video store.
- Think about the treatment of your selected scenes, issues, and speeches. Did the directors include them? If not, why not? If so, what choices of staging and interpretation did the filmmakers and actors make? How did they contribute to the film's overall vision and emphases? Give special attention to those aspects of the performance that added to your understanding of the text, either by calling attention to dimensions and possibilities you had not contemplated, or by making choices that did not accord with your own intuitions and therefore prompted you to reconsider those scenes more carefully.

#### *Now you are ready to write.*

In a seven page essay, develop an argument that focuses on how the film re-creates the play. This relationship can be approached in different ways. You may wish, for example, to focus on a few carefully chosen or speeches you selected, reflecting upon how the film interpreted these and upon the larger implications of how it handled the dramatic text. Your essay should locate quite carefully specific scenes and moments which you will use to support your argument.

Whatever your choice is, you need to be specific in your analysis of how the film's particular choices worked to shape the interpretation of the Shakespearean text. In other words, you need to develop an argument regarding the film's choices and think about how the film interprets the play. Make sure to formulate a clear, thoughtful thesis about the relation between the film and textual treatments under discussion; develop and support your thesis using concrete examples; and try to reach a conclusion that might prompt a reader to think further about this matter.

Do not simply praise or pan the film, and do not choose so large a topic that you cannot explore it in depth or too narrow a one. For example, if you decide to discuss "the character of Benedict" or "Comedy in *Much Ado about Nothing*," remember that such a topic is not yet a properly developed one---the former is too specific, the latter too general. This does not mean that Benedict's character cannot play a role in your argument, or that you can't talk about comedic moments and their significance. It does mean, however, that you need to

address the further question of why you think the film portrays Benedict in a particular way, or the specific ways in which the film creates comedy and why it does so.

Edit your writing to make the sentences lucid, the connections between thoughts felicitous, and the paragraphs useful as indicators of the stages in your argument. Double-space the essay, and use standard margins. Proofread your printed essay (do not rely solely on spellcheck or onscreen reading) to make sure that it is grammatically correct, clearly organized, and the best, most persuasive presentation of your thinking possible.

If you need an extension, please contact me in advance by email. Extensions taken without prior permission will result in grade being docked.