

There are three reasons for assigning weekly exercises, rather than one or two longer papers: 1) regular feedback: you will have several opportunities to confer with your preceptor about your written work; 2) focus: we will emphasize different aspects of Shakespeare's complex plays, and skills particular to analyzing them; 3) latitude for experiment: you can try out, over the course of the semester, several different kinds of writing and arguing.

While they are meant to be experimental (increasingly so as they go along), they are still formal assignments, in the sense that the prose should be to the high standard of any submitted paper, and they should have and argue for a thesis. What counts as a thesis will vary from exercise to exercise, as the descriptions will indicate, but we are all always interpreters in this class, trying together to understand and to explain to one another what the plays mean. What they mean will not be obvious. Shakespeare believed that many of the most important motives, forces, even events in human life are difficult to recognize, difficult to understand—whether they are hidden by psychological defenses, ideological complicities, or historical or cultural differences. Each of these exercises has some share in the work of bringing what is hidden into the open space of critical conversation.

Throughout the circuit of exercises—and with the final paper, too—there will be an emphasis on detail, on particular words and lines, and on the art of close reading that responds to them. Stay close to the text and quote what you need as you go.

Citation

For our purposes, all quotations from the plays can be cited in parentheses by act, scene, and line number. A few examples:

A brief quotation in the body of your text. Note that in the second example the quotation is interpolated into the syntax of the argument and punctuated accordingly.

The opening of Hamlet's monologue, "To be or not to be" (2.3.64), might as well be the words of a philosopher.

Hamlet's "To be or not to be" (2.3.64) might as well be the words of a philosopher.

A longer quotation in the body of your text, citing two or three lines. (Note the use of a virgule [/], with a space on either side, to mark the line break, or enjambment.)

Hamlet seems to have a second thought between lines:
"To die, to sleep, / To sleep, perchance to
dream" (2.3.68-69).

A quotation of three or more continuous lines, which should be indented.

After its stark, philosophical beginning, the
soliloquy becomes densely metaphorical:

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. (2.3.65-68)

Both metaphors are military in character.

For all other questions of citation, see *The Chicago Manual of Style* (16th ed.) or the *MLA Handbook* (8th ed.). The library provides electronic access to basic versions of both at <http://library.princeton.edu/help/citing-sources>.

Grading

Exercises will be graded on the usual scale, from A to F. The course will follow the English Department's grading standards, which are copied overleaf. Six exercises are mandatory, and you may submit up to eight—the six highest grades will be counted.

Department of English Grading Standards for Undergraduate Work

When we read student papers or independent work, these are some of the elements we particularly look for:

Argument: Does the introduction provide a clear thesis statement? Is that thesis provocative? Is it arguable? Does the paper or independent work have a motive—i.e., does it explain why the thesis matters? An argument is discourse intended to persuade; is this writing persuasive?

Organization: Does the opening paragraph make clear where the work will be going and how it will get there? Does the work get to the main point quickly and avoid extraneous background or summary information? Does the body of the paper or independent work follow the argument and outline established in the introduction? Are paragraphs connected with smooth transitional sentences? Does each paragraph convey one clear point?

Evidence & Analysis: Does the paper or independent work offer well-chosen, relevant quotations that support the thesis effectively? Are those quotations analyzed appropriately and convincingly, rather than left standing alone? Does the interpretation of the evidence demonstrate a thorough understanding of the text?

Research & Sources: Does the paper or independent work demonstrate a serious engagement with its primary and, in the case of a research assignment, secondary sources? Are the sources consulted of appropriate quality and range? Are they well integrated into the paper or independent work? Are they cited properly?

Style & Presentation: Does the writing compel the reader's attention? Is the language vivid? Is the voice fresh, insightful, and convincing? Can the reader follow the argument clearly? Does the writing avoid repetition, needless use of the passive voice, convoluted words and phrases, and overly lengthy (or overly brief) sentences and paragraphs? Is the writing free of grammatical errors and spelling mistakes? Has it been proofread carefully?

These are the specific criteria we use to grade student papers and independent work:

C- and C papers and independent work provide an **acceptable** response to the assignment. They may make a central claim, but one that may be vague, broad, or self-evident. They include evidence, but often depend on generalization or plot summary rather than analysis. Work in this range does not typically include very much close reading of specific words and passages, or does so awkwardly or superficially. Although C- and C work usually meets some of an assignment's specifications, it typically lacks the focus, sound use of evidence, clear structure, full and purposeful development, stylistic awareness, and/or careful proofreading characteristic of B or A level work.

C+ and **B-** papers and independent work provide a **more than adequate** response to the assignment. Work in this range may present a supportable central claim, and typically shows more attention to close reading and argument than C level work. While B- work often demonstrates some aspects of B or B+ level work, it typically also shows serious weaknesses in one or more of the following: the thesis, motive, argument, organization, close reading, clarity and sophistication of the writing, and/or proofreading.

B and **B+** papers and independent work provide a **good** or **very good** response to the assignment. Work in this range typically has a strong opening thesis, a clear motive, and a sensible, argument-driven organization. It typically selects appropriate passages for close reading, favoring specific, supportable claims over broad generalizations. Indeed, B and B+ work often shares many of the elements found in A level work. However it may lack either the full and purposeful development and/or presentation of the

argument, the fresh attentiveness of the close readings, or the stylistic expressiveness of the prose. B and B+ work nevertheless demonstrates the author's ability to respond effectively to an assignment's demands, to select useful details, to revise sentences for concision and emphasis, and to proofread carefully.

A- (excellent) and **A (outstanding)** papers and independent work deserve to be read aloud. They are clearly written, well organized, and guided from start to finish by a strong, even adventurous, thesis. Intellectually provocative, they go beyond the obvious or expected, developing a fresh and compelling treatment of the topic rather than simply answering the question prompts one by one or recapitulating ideas already foregrounded in lecture or class discussion. They are guided by well-chosen examples, using attentive close reading in support of the central argument. Where appropriate, work in this range engages usefully and meaningfully with secondary readings or historical context. This work should also be stylistically compelling, although style alone is not enough to bring a paper or independent work into this range.

A+ (exceptional) papers and independent work surpass even outstanding work in depth, insight, and style. Grades in this range are extremely rare.

Other possible grades:

D papers or independent work provide a minimally acceptable response to the assignment. They typically demonstrate serious deficiencies or flaws in the argument, organization, close reading, and/or writing. This work often appears as though it were written quickly and extemporaneously at the last minute.

F papers or independent work provide a completely inadequate response to the assignment.

Departmental Grading Scale

A+	97-100	(98)
A	93-96	(95)
A-	90-92	(91)
B+	87-89	(88)
B	83-86	(85)
B-	80-82	(81)
C+	77-79	(78)
C	73-76	(75)
C-	70-72	(71)
D	60-69	(65)

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January 2015*