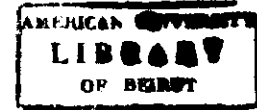


FINAL EXAMINATION



Due: 4pm, 3 June

General Directions: Write three coherent, well-argued essays on three different topics, one each from each of the three sections. Each of the essays should not exceed three double spaced pages. Remember that you will have to discuss at least five different plays (one of which must be *Hamlet*) on the examination, so plan accordingly. GOOD LUCK!

PART ONE - PLAYING

- 1) "Poems [i.e. dramatic poems or plays] imitate both to delight and teach; and delight, to move men to take that goodness in hand, which without delight they would play as from a stranger; and teach, to make them know that goodness whereunto they are moved...."
-Philip Sidney, *A Defence of Poetry* (1595)

Discuss whether or not Shakespeare's plays may have had (or have now) the capacity to contribute to the higher moral purpose that Sidney attributes to all "good" poetry. With reference to one of the works we've read, discuss how plays teach us and move us to virtue (or don't)?

- 2) Many, if not all, of the plays we've read reflect on the theatrical activity in London during Shakespeare's lifetime. What do these metadramatic elements tell us about early-modern playgoing? Are they accurate representations of what went on, are they satirical, or are they just plain wrong? With reference to instances of playgoing in one of the plays we've read, discuss how it reflects on theatrical practice and what it says about it. Strive for a blend of analysis of the play in question with your knowledge of how plays were staged and the theatrical industry was organized during this period.

PART TWO - COMEDY

- 1) Northrop Frye's "Greenworld" has been a dominant and extremely useful paradigm in classifying and explaining Shakespeare's comedies and Romances. Explain the basic tenets of the theory and apply it to two comedies (or romances) that we've looked at in this class. NOTE: If you choose this question DO NOT devote significant discussion to As You Like It.
- 2) Shakespeare's comedies (and indeed the histories and the tragedies) have been fruitfully analyzed in terms of their embodiment of and relationship to more primitive notions of communal accord, festivity, and the carnivalesque. Compare the carnivalesque in at least two plays that we have studied. Don't forget to address the political dimensions of this concept and its potential utility in the plays

PART THREE - Hamlet

- 1) Discuss the nature of the ghost. Assess the various theories put forward concerning the ghost, where he comes from, and what he signifies to Hamlet and the other characters in the play. Which theory (if any) do you find most compelling and why?
- 2) What's Hamlet's problem? Discuss and assess the various possibilities put forward by various commentators on the nature of Hamlet's character. Which theory (if any) do you find most compelling and why?