

Take Home Exam #3 (450 points)

Due: Friday, December 6 at the beginning of class

General Information: This exam is designed to allow you to show your ability to make use of concepts we've discussed in class and to demonstrate your ability to "mine" the text in support of your ideas. Therefore, here are some things to keep in mind. I want to see you use the text (i.e. quotes) and not rely on class examples for your support. An exam that simply regurgitates class discussion will not earn a passing grade. You'll also want to demonstrate your knowledge of the entire book. Therefore, choose examples from a number of places in the novel, including the end. I've given you room to interpret the questions in a number of ways; however, be sure you answer the question I've given you. Resist the temptation to follow tangents, unless you can establish their relevance.

I will be grading these exams by looking at your answers: the clarity of your thoughts, your use of specific passages from the text to support your ideas, your ability to clearly explain how your examples relate to the question I've asked, and your ability to relate individual examples to the overall topic you've selected. However, numerous grammatical and/or proofreading errors will interfere with my ability to follow your argument and will result in a reduction of your grade, so please edit carefully. Also, be sure you meet all format and length requirements, or you'll receive a reduction in your grade. Format/length requirements are as follows:

- 1 inch margins on all sides
- 12 pt Times New Roman font
- 6-8 pages in length (aim for a minimum of 2 or more pages for each question)

You must answer at least one question on each text, although you may answer two questions on one text. If writing about film, pay attention to the following:

You may answer questions on films in the following combinations:

Apocalypse Now/Othello or *O*, but then you must answer at least one question about *Emma*
Clueless/Othello or *O*, but then you must answer at least one question about *Heart of Darkness*

You **may not** answer the following combination:

Clueless/Apocalypse Now

One of the questions on *Othello/O* may be answered as extra credit (25 points) OR it may be answered as your third exam question (150 points).

Let me know if you have any questions. Good luck.

The Heart of Darkness (choose one or two of five)

1. In class, we discussed Conrad's use of delayed decoding to give the reader a sense of what Marlow was experiencing in the jungle of the Congo. Provide 3 examples of delayed decoding, discussing not only what Marlow's actual experience was during the event (what was actually happening), but also what impression Marlow describes and what would cause him to describe the event in such a manner.

2. Many critics have noted how racist Conrad's story is. Others have claimed that Conrad sees beyond skin color and identifies a common humanity between Africans and Europeans. Find two examples and discuss them from both points of view. How does each example support the claim that Conrad is racist? How does it undermine this idea?
3. In the novel, Kurtz presents a complicated picture of a man, one who cannot easily be characterized by Marlow, who knew him better than anyone. Discuss and evaluate Kurtz's character and his relationship to the novel's narrator. Be sure to answer all of the following questions: What kind of a man is he? What does he represent, in Conrad's opinion? Why is he so fascinating to Marlow?
4. In class, we briefly discussed what the "heart of darkness" is. Define the term, using examples from the text to support your point.
5. The film *Apocalypse Now* revolves around the character of Captain Willard. Discuss his characterization as the film progresses and his relationship to Colonel Kurtz. How does his character make him an ideal replacement for Colonel Kurtz? Use specific examples from the film to address how Willard would make an ideal soldier for the Vietnam War, according to Kurtz's definition in his war brief.

Emma (choose one or two of five)

1. *Emma* has been described as a novel of manners. Using the definition of the term I gave you in class, discuss the novel, pointing out the features that make it fit into this category. Be sure to address Austen's use of satire to critique the novel's characters and their behavior.
2. Austen makes use of irony to help the reader see the humor in the characters and situations she describes. Identify 2-3 incidences of irony and discuss what the irony helps the reader to see that the characters do not. (There's a thorough definition of irony on the handout on elements of fiction we discussed in class. It's also on my website.)
3. Emma often lets her imagination lead her into situations that she misinterprets. Choose one of Emma's self-deceptions and follow it to its conclusion. What does she imagine will happen? How does this idea lead her to misinterpret what's actually happening? What signs does she miss? How does realizing she is wrong affect her?
4. Austen often uses aesthetic distance to maintain the reader's ability to see the satire she provides. Using the definition I provided you, choose 3-4 examples of aesthetic distance (circumlocution, reported conversation, epigram) and discuss what Austen was using them for. What was happening? Why does Austen use distance rather than direct reporting or dialogue? What might the reader miss if Austen had been more direct?
5. In her essay "*Emma Becomes Clueless*," Suzanne Ferris claims that Cher is a more conservative character than Emma. In other words, she reinforces traditional values and customs that place women in strictly defined roles from which they often cannot escape. Read the essay and then discuss whether or not you agree with Ferris's claim. Use specific examples from the film that you feel either support or contradict Ferris's contention.

Othello/O – optional questions (choose one of 6)

1. One of the major themes in *Othello* is prejudice. The film version we watched highlights the way many characters feel about the black man living among them. Using the film (and language from the play itself), discuss how the following characters feel about Othello's race: Othello, Iago, Desdemona.

2. The difference between appearance and reality plays a big role in Othello's downfall. Choose two situations in the play and discuss how the difference between appearance and reality in *Othello* OR *O* (choose only one) and discuss how the misunderstanding leads to Othello's or O's tragic end.
3. Iago's motivation for his behavior has been discussed for generations. Why did he decide to ruin Othello's life? In *Othello*, his reasoning is complicated, while in *O*, the motivation is clear. Discuss Iago AND Hugo. Why does Shakespeare's character want to ruin Othello? Why does Hugo want to hurt O? Be sure to discuss both films.
4. *O* has a contemporary setting but contains the same themes as *Othello*, particularly the theme of prejudice. Discuss racism in the film. How does the issue get introduced in the film? How do the characters deal with this issue?
5. *Othello* is a Shakespearean tragedy that corresponds to the definition of tragedy we discussed earlier in the semester. Using that definition (on my website), discuss the play as a classical tragedy. Be sure to address all the elements.
6. Othello's character is very interesting. Discuss his characterization. What does he say about himself? What do other people say about him? What is his tragic flaw? How does this flaw contribute to his destruction?

Extra Credit – 25 points each (choose up to two options, for a total of 50 points)

1. Answer one *Othello/O* question. You may choose this option even if you have written about these films for your third exam question.
2. Answer any question from previous exams that you have not already chosen.
3. Choose one novel/film pair from our class discussion this semester (not *Othello/O* or *All Quiet on the Western Front*, since in this case the context doesn't change), and discuss the contexts in which both stories occur. What are the contexts? Do you think the film context is an appropriate situation in which to tell the story found in the novel? What works about the new context? What doesn't work?