In this course we will study five of William Shakespeare's later plays: *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *King Lear*, and *The Tempest*. The objective of the course is to deepen our knowledge of the individual plays, and increase our ability to discuss them critically -- that is, to say what they do and how they do it. We'll use the first play we study, *Hamlet*, to bring up questions we will ask of all the plays, such as what genre is this play, and how does it abide by or break with traditions? what is character and identity? what is the relationship of speech to character and identity? how is social organization, including gender, represented, and how does it affect the action and outcome of the play? how are performance and narrative represented? what are the significant figures of speech in the play and how do they work? how do specific instances of figurative language work? what are the emotional and intellectual impacts of the play, and how can we account precisely for them?

**Format**

Open lecture. I will give out questions which we will discuss informally.

**Assignments**

In general, you must have read the entire play before the first class in which we study it.

1. A short written essay, which I call a scene study. In this essay you will select a single scene from *Hamlet*, or *Othello* and, in four or five pages, discuss the importance of the scene to the interpretation of the play as a whole (25%); due February 25.

2. Thesis statement of the longer essay. This is a substantial paragraph which states the argument of your longer essay and outlines the evidence which you will use. It takes the form of a proof: that is, you state that you will prove something to be true, show the components of the argument and how they are connected, and refer to the evidence you will use. I will discuss the preparation of this statement in class. I will schedule brief and private meetings with me to return the statement and discuss strengths and weaknesses (10%); due March 25. (You may hand this in to me earlier than March 25, and thus get an earlier evaluation, giving you more time to work on the essay. If you are unsure about how to proceed with an essay of this sort, I recommend that you do hand in the thesis statement early.)

3. Longer essay, of 7 to 10 pages (30%); due April 8.

4. Final exam (35%).

**On Plagiarism**: In all of your written work you must take care not to plagiarize. Plagiarism occurs when you represent somebody else's ideas or words as your own; to avoid it, you must ensure that your reader understands, through your use of the conventions of documentation, when you are quoting or borrowing in any way from another person's writing. You'll know if you are plagiarizing deliberately; to make sure you don't do it by accident, take careful notes, making sure you write down the author and page number of each quotation, and the title and publication information of the book or article, and make this information clear to your reader in your essay. I will briefly go over the conventions of documentation; if you are still in doubt you must consult a stylebook such as *The MLA Handbook* or *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

Lectures and class discussion are free for your plunder, and need not be cited.

**Late Policy**

Assignments which are late will be penalized at the rate of 2% a day (based on the assignment being...
worth a maximum of 100%) unless a letter from a doctor or medical clinic shows that you were unable to work on the days prior to the due date. A late assignment should be handed in to the departmental receptionist; make sure it is date-stamped. I cannot accept any assignments after the date of the final exam. I will consider granting extensions on an individual basis, in the event of hardship beyond the usual, but these must be arranged with me prior to the due date.

Schedule

January 7: Introduction; syllabus, etc.
January 9: Introduction: Shakespeare and the theatre of his age
January 14, 16, 21, 23, 28: Hamlet
January 30, February 4, 6, 11, 13: Othello
February 17-21: reading break
February 25: *****scene study due*****
February 25, 27, March 4, 6: Antony and Cleopatra
March 11, 13, 18, 20, 25: King Lear
March 25: *****thesis statement due*****
March 27, 28: meeting with me re thesis statement
March 27, April 1, 3, 8: The Tempest
April 8: *****longer essay due*****