

CRÍTICA PRÁCTICA DE LA LITERATURA INGLESA (35334)

HAMLET MIDTERM EXAM

Description of the class activity:

The midterm was designed exclusively for students who had chosen to be evaluated in accordance to continuous assessment (“modalidad presencial”), as their final grade depended upon their active participation and completion of activities designed for them to acquire the course-specific and degree-specific competences collected in the Teaching Guide. The midterm accounted for 40% of their grade and was carried out during the session following the last lecture/lesson on *Hamlet*.

Presented here are the two models of which the aim is for students to demonstrate both their thorough knowledge of the play and their ability to engage in critical discussion regarding theoretical and practical aspects. MODEL A features a first section in which students are to reflect their knowledge of the historical context and the formal features of the play and a second section in which students must put such knowledge to the test through a practical, textual commentary. MODEL B, on the other hand, includes two questions that the students are expected to answer through a short essay and through a structured, cohesive and coherent enumeration, as well as different excerpt to be analysed and commented.

The object of the critical analysis of the excerpt was to have students apply their knowledge of the literary frameworks studied thus far in a practical manner. Students were expected to not only, through the focus on the excerpt, produce original insight in accordance to the fundamentals of such frameworks, but also to prove their knowledge and assimilation of the readings and film productions that were taught, discussed and analysed in class by relating them to the extract. Furthermore, students were encouraged to order and structure their ideas through outlines and rough drafts prior to their handing in of their final response in order to accustom them to a necessary self-assessment of their own critical and academic skills and to ensure that their writing style and linguistic correctness were at their best (a minimum of a B1 level in English was expected). Once graded, the teachers dedicated a follow-up session and/or tutorials to the midterm so that students could understand and evaluate the underlying reasons for their particular mark.

Learning Objectives:

Students were to confront a series of questions and a practical exercise in exam format for the first time. Having previously performed collective textual analyses during class sessions at an oral level and been taught the structure, objectives and expectations regarding the standards of literary essay writing, for the first time in the course they were to test themselves on their skills in critical commentary at a written academic level. Through this activity, students should be able to:

- Explain the basic theoretical premises, aims and methods of the types of literary criticism covered in the course.
- Synthesize how a literary text can be variously interpreted from the critical perspectives covered in the course.
- Formulate questions on a literary text from several critical approaches.
- Apply the critical concepts and methods of some of the approaches seen in class to a literary text in English.
- Explain the critical approach(es) used in a given piece of literary criticism.
- Write a stylistic commentary or ‘practical criticism’ essay.
- Write a well-structured essay using conventional academic English at B1 level.

Competencias específicas del Grado en Estudios Ingleses evaluadas en esta actividad:

- CB3 Que los estudiantes tengan la capacidad de reunir e interpretar datos relevantes (normalmente dentro de su área de estudio) para emitir juicios que incluyan una reflexión sobre temas relevantes de índole social, científica o ética.
 - CE2 Demostrar una competencia comunicativa y social en lengua inglesa (comprensión y expresión oral y escrita, interacción comunicativa y mediación, incluida la corrección gramatical y estilística).
 - CE3 Desarrollar la capacidad crítica para explicar textos literarios en inglés e identificar las convenciones estéticas de movimientos, etapas, géneros, autores y obras de las literaturas en lengua inglesa y sus modos de producción.
 - CE15 Conocer y aplicar las corrientes y metodologías de la teoría y crítica literarias.
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MODEL A

PART 1: Give a short answer to each of the following questions:

1. When and where was *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* first performed and when was the first Folio edition published? (1 Point)
2. What kind of meter does Shakespeare use in these lines from *Hamlet*? Please refer to the line structure in terms of rhythm, syllables, feet and stress and describe the overall effect of this type of meter (2 Points)

*For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil*

3. Why can we refer to *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* as a meta-theatrical play? Please refer to the text to provide examples and make a connection to the Elizabethan theatre, if possible. (3 Points)

PART 2: Read the following excerpt. (a) Identify and contextualize the passage within the play and (b) provide a short critical commentary, identifying the themes and referring, if possible, to a psychoanalytic and/or feminist perspective. You may allude to the two film adaptations presented in class to illustrate and/or support your ideas. (4 POINTS)

HAMLET

O, that this too too sallied flesh would melt
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! God!
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on't! ah fie! 'tis an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. That it should come to this!
But two months dead: nay, not so much, not two:
So excellent a king; that was, to this,
Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!
Must I remember? why, she would hang on him,
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on: and yet, within a month--
Let me not think on't--Frailty, thy name is woman!--

MODEL B

1. *Hamlet* is generally regarded as a canonical work of western and world literature. Provide a definition of the canon and explain the process of canon formation (consider the matters of authority, authenticity and authorship along the way). Lastly, provide a critical commentary as to why *Hamlet* stands today as a representative piece of the western canon. (2,5 POINTS)
2. Write five characteristics of postmodernist art and the sort of postmodern criticism it inspires. (Although all characteristics are related, make sure that the same idea is not repeated.) (2,5 POINTS)
3. Read the following excerpt. (a) Identify and contextualize the passage within the play and (b) provide a critical commentary from *both* a psychoanalytic and a feminist perspective. You may allude to the two film adaptations presented in class to illustrate and/or support your ideas. (5 POINTS)

LAERTES

(...)

Then weigh what loss your honor may sustain
If with too credent ear you list his songs,
Or lose your heart, or your chaste treasure open
To his unmastered importunity.
Fear it, Ophelia, fear it, my dear sister,
And keep within the rear of your affection,
Out of the shot and danger of desire.
The chariest maid is prodigal enough
If she unmask her beauty to the moon.
Virtue itself scapes not calumnious strokes.
The canker galls the infants of the spring
Too oft before their buttons be disclosed
And in the morn and liquid dew of youth
Contagious blastments are most imminent.
Be wary then; best safety lies in fear.
Youth to itself rebels, though none else near.

OPHELIA

I shall th'effect of this good lesson keep
As watchman to my heart. But, good my brother,
Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven
Whilst like a puffed and reckless libertine
Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads
And recks not his own rede.