

For Monday, 10.17

Hamlet is a play that explicitly takes up the problem of whether or not we can observe phenomena (including other people) accurately. Hamlet is consumed by this problem, but the play also presents an ambiguous view of Hamlet himself. Choose a character (Gertrude, Ophelia, Claudius, Polonius) and consider his/her view of Hamlet. How does this character account for Hamlet's behavior? And are we, as audience members, inclined to trust their assessment? Please quote or summarize specific passages from the play in your response, though you do not need to construct a fully-fledged argument. We're interested in you exploring this topic through your writing, and coming out on the other end with more interpretative questions.

Due: Post your Seminar Paper by 9 am Monday October 17 to the forum appropriate to your seminar/date.

Post your Seminar Paper Responses by 9 am Tuesday October 18.

For Thursday, 10.20

In the quotation Elizabeth cited in lecture last Thursday, Ludwig Wittgenstein speaks of propositions as ladders that we can discard once we have achieved a new level of understanding. 16th- and 17th- century defenders of the theater argued that plays served a similar function, namely, that they were tools through which audience members could achieve a kind of truth: plays were a means to moral virtue rather than an end in and of themselves. As part of its commentary on this claim, the play presents a variety of moments in which Hamlet uses concealment or falsehood in order to try to get at the truth. Describe one of these moments in as much detail as you can, without drawing broader conclusions about Hamlet's character. What do these moments say about theatricality and about the possibility of finding truth through falsehood?

Due: Post your Seminar Paper by 9 am Thursday October 20 to the forum appropriate to your seminar/date.

Post your Seminar Paper Responses by 9 am Friday October 21.