

CRÍTICA PRÁCTICA DE LA LITERATURA INGLESA (35334)

FINAL EXAM

Description of the class activity:

At the end of the course students were expected to complete a final exam that would address and evaluate both the course-specific and the degree-specific competences that the syllabus was aimed for them to acquire. This final exam was originally designed for the students who, by their own accord, had decided to adhere to the “modalidad no presencial,” by which they had refrained from both attending class on a regular basis and completing the coursework established throughout the calendar. Other students who also had to take this final exam were those who, despite having attended class, did not reach a minimum average through their coursework.

The exam is divided in three different sections: the first consists of a stylistic commentary of an excerpt and the two others are more theory-based exercises. Because throughout the course there were two fundamental canonical works that were studied, *Hamlet* and *Frankenstein*, the exam was designed in such way that the students had to prove their knowledge of both literary pieces.

PART 1: Students were provided with excerpts from *Hamlet* and *Frankenstein*, from which they had to choose one to develop their essay. Due to the possible complications that Shakespeare’s vocabulary could present for first-year students, a glossary was provided for those who selected *Hamlet*. Although this sort of exercise evidently appeals to the practical skills regarding textual analysis that the students had developed throughout their secondary education, they were expected to deepen into a more critical level, both analytically and philosophically, after having rigorously studied the traditional literary critical frameworks (psychoanalysis, feminism and gender studies, historicism, Marxism, postmodernism and postcolonialism, etc.).

PART 2 AND PART 3: These sets of questions were divided into two parts to ensure that students, through their choice of questions, had to answer and demonstrate a critical engagement with both *Hamlet* and *Frankenstein*. In this instance, students were expected to produce reasonable and structured theoretical arguments stemming from the practical approaches that had been taught and carried out in class. This applied as well to one of the questions on the standards of academic writing, as part of the syllabus included theoretical and practical lectures on the established, paradigmatic ways of carrying out research and subsequently developing an original paper.

Students were expected, throughout the examination, to first order and structure their ideas through outlines and rough drafts before submitting their final response essays. As had been taught in class, they were strongly encouraged, in PART 1, to self-assess the extent to which they focused on the text at hand, as there seems to be a common tendency amongst first-year students to use the excerpt as an ‘excuse’ to drift off into general comments about the whole literary piece, thus overlooking the textual focus that an exercise such as this demands. Linguistic accuracy and correctness (a minimum of a B1 level) as well as their writing style was also taken into account, as their responses had to be readable and comprehensible.

Learning Objectives:

The exam is designed in such way that the students are able to apply practical skills involving critical reading and interpretation of texts, demonstrate their knowledge and assimilation of the different literary approaches and frameworks that they have studied throughout the course, and also reflect their ability to construct an essay through a bottom-up methodology that requires from them to deduct theoretical aspects. 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.
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- 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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FINAL EXAM

NAME: _____

GROUP & DATE: _____

PART 1. Stylistic commentary of an excerpt. Choose **ONE** of the following excerpts and write a short critical commentary. Identify and contextualize the passage within the play or the novel and provide a short critical commentary, paying attention to linguistic features, identifying the themes and referring, if possible, to the critical essays included in the syllabus. You may allude also to the films or short videos seen in class. (5 POINTS)

- A. 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!—

Glossary:

Sullied: dirty, tarnished, contaminated ('solid' in the Folio edition)

Thaw and resolve: melt and dissolve

Dew: moisture condensed from the atmosphere, especially at night, and deposited in small drops upon a cool surface

Canon: law

Stale: stagnant, not fresh

Fie: a strong exclamation of shock, reproach, disgust

Rank: excessively vigorous in growth

Gross: indecent, vulgar

Hyperion: Greek god of the sun

Beteem: allow

- B. The words induced me to turn towards myself. I learned that the possessions most esteemed by your fellow creatures were high and unsullied descent united with riches. A man might be respected with only one of these advantages, but without either he was considered, except in very rare instances, as a vagabond and a slave, doomed to waste his powers for the profits of the chosen few! And what was I? Of my creation and creator I was absolutely ignorant, but I knew that I possessed no money, no friends, no kind of property. I was, besides, endued with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome; I was not even of the same nature as man. I was more agile than they and could subsist upon coarser diet; I bore the extremes of heat and cold with less

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injury to my frame; my stature far exceeded theirs. When I looked around I saw and heard of none like me. Was I, then, a monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled and whom all men disowned?

I cannot describe to you the agony that these reflections inflicted upon me; I tried to dispel them, but sorrow only increased with knowledge. Oh, that I had forever remained in my native wood, nor known nor felt beyond the sensations of hunger, thirst, and heat!

PART 2. Please answer **ONE** of the following questions (2,5 POINTS)

1. Write five characteristics of postmodernism. You may refer to Michael Almereyda's film version of *Hamlet* (2000) to refer to them.
2. List at least 3 features proper of Elizabethan theatre. You can refer to the social context in which it was created, to the theatres and to the characteristics of the dramas produced in them. As *Hamlet* is a metatheatrical play you can identify in which ways Shakespeare's play refers to the theatrical milieu in which it was created.

PART 3. Please answer **ONE** of the following questions (2,5 POINTS)

3. How are academic papers written? Please explain what is a research paper and what are the steps to be taken when writing an essay; how and where to find secondary sources; how to cite, the citation styles and why it is necessary to do it.
4. Choose a contextual approach to comment upon how Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* reflects extrinsic realities (cultural, scientific, historical, social economic etc.) and how it reworks them.
5. How has *Frankenstein* been re-read in twentieth and twenty-first century popular culture?