**Essay Topics on Hamlet**

1. Select one of Hamlet soliloquies (preferably not "To be or not to be. . .") and by a detailed attention to the poetry discuss the nature of Hamlet's feelings as they reveal themselves in this speech. What insights might this speech provide into the prince's elusive character? Confine your attention strictly to the soliloquy you have selected.

2. Discuss Hamlet's treatment of and ideas about women. How might these help to clarify some of the interpretative issues of the play? You might want to consider carefully the way he talks about sexuality.

3. Discuss the importance in Hamlet of one of the following: (a) Ophelia, (b) Rozencrantz and Guildenstern, (c) the ghost of Hamlet senior, (d) Polonius, (e) Fortinbras, (f) Gertrude. Do not just write about what these people do. Discuss how an attention to them illuminates issues of central importance to the play as a whole (i.e., deal with matters of importance to the thematic or character development in the play, not with matters of the plot).

4. Discuss the importance of appearance and reality in Hamlet (strong hint: Why is Hamlet so interested in the players?).

5. Hamlet and Orestes (in the Oresteia) have similar challenges, and their stories are, in many respects, quite alike. In what ways are the heroes significantly different?

6. Is something rotten in the state of Denmark? If so, what precisely is it? Is anyone in particular responsible or is the rottenness simply a condition of life?

7. Select a particular scene in Hamlet (preferably a short one) and discuss its importance in the play. How does this particular part of the action contribute significantly to our response to what is going on? What might be missing if a director decided to cut this scene (e.g., Claudius at prayer, the scene between Polonius and Reynaldo, the gravedigger scene).

8. Write an essay defending one of the following options. "Hamlet is . . . -a noble prince who suffers from a corrupt world that is not suitable to his sensitive moral nature; -a true poet,