

**Wieland Schwanebeck, M.A. (Staatsexamen)**

**1220**     **Introducing Drama:**  
**70320**     **William Shakespeare's *Hamlet***                     **Tue (2)**                     **GER 07**

Ü                     2 KP (regular and active participation, 15-minute presentation or written assignment)

*The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* is probably the best-known text in the history of English theatre, maybe even in terms of world literature. Due to the multitude of adaptations, spoofs, and attempts to "rewrite" the play (e.g. Tom Stoppard's hilarious *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, which links Shakespeare to the notion of Absurd Theatre), one tends to forget what makes the actual drama still so compelling after 400 years.

In this class, we aim to get acquainted with some of the key debates and issues surrounding *Hamlet* and the play's significance in literary history (e.g. the genre of tragedy, Elizabethan theatre & stage conventions, reworkings of Shakespeare's play in the modern age).

This course will elaborate on the specifics of drama as opposed to other literary genres and demonstrate approaches to the analysis of plays, using *Hamlet* as a model text. Thus, we will draw on the drama chapter from the introductory course (cf. Nünning & Nünning's *Introduction to the Study of English and American Literature*, Ch. 4), though the course is also aimed at students who have not yet attended the introduction.

By addressing major elements of drama interpretation, we familiarise ourselves with some practical skills that can be helpful in analysing classical drama.

Our topics of interest include (amongst others):

How does the reading of drama differ from that of other literary genres?

What does dramatic speech consist of?

What are the elements of tragedy?

Which semiotic codes are characteristic of the theatre?

**Please buy:**

William Shakespeare. *Hamlet*. Eds. Ann Thompson & Neil Taylor. London: Black, 32005 (The Arden Shakespeare). [ISBN 1904271332]

Tom Stoppard. *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead* [1967]. London: Grove, 2000. [ISBN 0802132758]

**Prerequisites:**

**You should have read Shakespeare's play before the start of the seminar.**