Discussion of Themes/Foils on 3/11/16

**Foils**

Hamlet/Fortinbras

Both avenging father, F is valiant and courageous and H is opposite waits until the end to seek revenge , although F waits until end. H deliberates where F acts. Is F valiant, according to Shakespeare? No, p.126, l17-22, F’s Captain disdains F’s actions, but some say he thinks that F’s actions are noble because he’s avenging his father’s death. What does Old Norway think of F? p. 35, Norway & p. 68 F is being secretive and honorable in his approach. F secretly wanted to invade Denmark, so Poland wasn’t actually the goal. An old rival of Claudius, why is C so willing to let him pass? Claudius doesn’t rule – someone disagrees because p.69 C relied on a gentleman’s agreement. C to trusting. What does the ending mean – does the play end well with F in charge?

L&F

Both rashly responding to father’s death. Is Shakespeare condemning a return to revenge as a value? How does H’s hesitation play into this?

Would H have been a good king? Yes, fighting and not deliberating is not so great. H would have been a good king. If Hamlet would have not killed anyone it would have all worked out? Isn’t revenge necessary if it means corruption of your country. H would have progressed the country, but didn’t get the chance because of everything that happened with C. H is justified with his inaction. He should have waited to take the time, but no one else seems to be doing so. But he’s waiting too long. He waited for confirmation – yes, but he took too long after knowing what he needed to do. The Ghost is chivalrous/revenge side of H – once H became vengeful, the ghost begins to disappear. Only when mom dies does he gets angry and kills C. p.168, everything he says isn’t about revenge, but is anger. I see it more as acting out of justice. So, it’s C’s fault.

Laertes/Hamlet – both want revenge for fathers

Getting revenge for a death.

Hamlet/Ophelia

In the face of death, Hamlet sane, Ophelia crazy

Ophelia/Gertrude

Ophelia died giving up, Gertrude died because she defied authority. P. 168 I’m going to drink anyway.

Hamlet/Claudius

Both wanted Gertrude and the throne.

**Is the play a tragedy? Is H a tragic H?**

No, H doesn’t learn from his mistake (an Aristotle criteria). But there are other aspects of A’s tragedy – H does realize he’s a coward “am I a coward,” he’s relatable – his depression, his love of O. He does havea realization – when talking to Horatio, H wants Horatio to tell the story not to make the same mistake he just made. His epiphany is by the grave – everyone dies, and we all turn to dust. That he’s a Nihilistic. At the grave he’s Nihilistic, but at the grave he’s a humanist. But regardless, if H’s epiphany is that his actions weren’t correct – is the play’s point inaction? And the dangers of it? Or is Shakespeare worried about a vengeful society as being unjust. H’s real tragedy is that he dies before he can act on trying to work beyond revenge to work toward something more noble. When H is talking to the gravedigger, he runs through a bunch of people who turned to dust, this is before Ophelia – and his views change because he cares a great deal about Ophelia. But everyone strives to kill someone, but why go to such extreme measures for really nothing.

Is inaction at the heart of the tragedy? No one would have died had it not been for H’s inaction. Ophelia included. Does it matter that there’s justified inaction? H was afraid of being Claudius. But why didn’t he just do it? Action is more of the problem – C’s action. What kinds of action? C’s action driven by greed for power, F & L driven by revenge, H justice, G action defiance driven by thirst – no, she was proud of H for once. . Is Shakespeare arguing that the old ways of vengeance are the good ways.