Name: ____________________

**A Psychological Case Study of Iago**
*AP English Literature Othello Unit Culminating Essay*

**Due Date: Monday, March 18th** at the start of class.

In class, we have discussed the power of language in William Shakespeare’s *Othello*. Shakespeare uses language to portray this tempestuous love story, and his characters fall in love with one another, betray one another, and even kill one another (stay tuned!) all through their power of speech. Othello mesmerizes Desdemona with his pitiful stories of war and carnage, Iago deceives Othello with lies about his wife, and ultimately, readers must question Brabantio’s claim that people cannot "pierce" one another "through the ear."

Throughout the play, Iago stands out as the key manipulator and effective “puppet master,” whose words can pierce like a rapier and poison like the venom of serpents. The control that Iago has over the hearts and minds of all leads us, as critical readers, to question the psychological motivator(s) or condition(s) that started this madman’s path of revenge. Iago’s wish for fatal vengeance leads him to continually justify his cruel and horrid acts, and causes Iago himself to question even Emilia’s fidelity. At the end of the play, the reader is left wondering what the fate of Iago will be, as the curtains come down as the villain is dragged offstage.

For this paper, you will act as a psychological diagnostician. In the field of psychology, practitioners use a standard set of criteria to diagnose psychiatric patients with a mental disorder. These criteria are compiled in a guide aptly called the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (also know as the *DSM IV*).

Thus, your job is to propose a possible diagnosis for the character of Iago.¹ You will select one of the Personality Disorders listed in the DSM IV, and use textual evidence to analyze and compare Iago’s speech and actions to the criteria provided for the Personality Disorder you selected.

Students who fail to complete this paper by **Monday, March 18th** will be deducted 10 points per day late. Those who turn in the paper more than 3 days late (**after Wednesday, March 19th**) shall not receive credit for this assignment.

¹ *Note: This is an activity in argument as well as textual and informational analysis, and is therefore meant to neither offend nor patronize the incredible amount of time, work, and effort that goes into becoming a psychiatrist or psychologist. Additionally, this is not to disparage those who suffer from mental disorders, as their struggles and victories cannot be adequately expounded upon in the scope of this project.*
Psychological Case Study Requirements

- Four (4) pages of writing, double-spaced and typed, with Times New Roman 12-pt. font and one-inch margins.
  
  OR
  
- Six (6) pages of handwriting, single-spaced, on college-ruled paper.

- Explanations and textual evidence for each criteria of the diagnosis, culminating in a proposal of a specific diagnosis

- Proper analysis of the text, with limited summary of the events. This should not be a retelling of the plot of Othello.

- Your essay must contain an introduction, providing the cultural identity and background of Iago, and lead to a thesis where you assert which Personality Disorder you are going to argue that Iago has.

- Your essay must contain a conclusion, where you connect all the evidence and reassert your argument.

- You must attach any notes or worksheets that you completed to aid you in this assignment.

**List of Personality Disorders (as elaborated in the DSM IV)**

1. Paranoid Personality Disorder
   **What is it?** “The central characteristic of patients with Paranoid Personality Disorder is their unjustified distrust and suspicion of others…”

2. Antisocial Personality Disorder
   **What is it?** “Patients with Antisocial Personality Disorder chronically disregard and violate the rights of other people; they cannot or will not conform to the norms of society…”

3. Narcissistic Personality Disorder
   **What is it?** “People with Narcissistic Personality Disorder have a lifelong pattern of grandiosity (in behavior and in fantasy), thirst for admiration, and lack of empathy. They feel that they are unusually special…”

4. Borderline Personality Disorder
   **What is it?** “Patients with Borderline Personality Disorder sustain a pattern of instability throughout their adult lives. They often appear to be in a crisis of mood, behavior, or interpersonal relationships. Many feel empty and bored; they attach themselves strongly to others, then become intensely angry or hostile when they believe that they are being ignored or mistreated by those they depend on…”


How to Outline a Psychological Case Study
(Based on Kleinman’s Cultural Assessment)

First: Explain the Cultural Identity of the Person You Are Analyzing
This may include the following information about the individual:
1. Gender
2. Age
3. Religion
4. Social Status
5. Education
6. Occupation
7. Race/Ethnicity
8. Language
9. Relationship Status
10. How the person is viewed by society
11. Personality

Second: Propose your Diagnosis
For this essay, you will select from
1. Paranoid Personality Disorder
2. Antisocial Personality Disorder
3. Narcissistic Personality Disorder
4. Borderline Personality Disorder

Third: Outline the DSM IV Diagnostic Criteria for the diagnosis
For this assignment, you may choose the following Personality Disorders are:
1. Paranoid Personality Disorder
2. Antisocial Personality Disorder
3. Narcissistic Personality Disorder
4. Borderline Personality Disorder

For most of these Disorders, the DSM checklist specifies that the patient must fit at least a certain number of the items in the checklist. For each criteria, you will document at least 2 examples in the text

Finally: Use the chart on page 8 to compare and match the DSM IV Disorder Criteria to the text
Psychological Case Study Example

Character: Othello

Identity:
Gender: Male
Age: Middle-aged (not specified)
Region: Venice
Religion: Christian
Occupation: General of the Venetian Military
Race/Ethnicity: Moor (African)
Language: English (as spoken in the novel)
Relationship Status: Married to Desdemona (the daughter of a Venetian senator)

How he is viewed by society: As a Moor, he is viewed as immoral, bestial and not worthy of respect

Personality: Did believe in the inherent good of humanity, however he became more and more suspicious of his wife, resulting in uxoricide (the killing of one’s wife) and the effective “blackening” of his heart. He committed suicide shortly after murdering Desdemona.

Proposed Diagnosis: Morbid Jealousy (also known as Othello Syndrome) caused by a Delusional Disorder (Specified Types: Jealous)

Defining Characteristics of the Disorder: This disorder occurs when a person typically makes repeated accusations that their spouse or sexual partner is being unfaithful, based on insignificant, minimal, or no evidence, often citing seemingly normal or everyday events or material to back up their claims. Unlike other delusional disorders, people who suffer from this disorder have a strong association with stalking, cyberstalking, sabotage, or even violence.

DSM IV Diagnostic Criteria:
For Morbid Jealousy (Othello Syndrome)

A. An underlying mental disorder emerges before or with the jealousy
B. The features of the underlying disorder coexist with the jealousy
C. The course of morbid jealousy closely relates to that of the underlying disorder
D. The jealousy has no basis in reality

For Delusional Disorder
A. Non-bizarre delusions (i.e., involving situations that occur in real life, such as being followed, poisoned, or deceived by spouse or lover)
B. (Omitted: Refers to Schizophrenia Criteria, which is not in the scope of the essay)
C. Apart from the impact of the delusion(s) or its ramifications, functioning is not markedly impaired and behavior is not obviously odd or bizarre.
D. If mood episodes have occurred concurrently with delusions, their total duration has been brief relative to the duration of the delusional periods.
E. The disturbance is not due to the direct physiological effects of a substance(e.g., a drug of abuse, a medication) or a general medical condition.
**Psychological Case Study Example**  
**Symptom Checklist and Textual Evidence Chart**

**Proposed Diagnosis:**  
Morbid Jealousy (Othello Syndrome)

**Criteria for Morbid Jealousy**

A. An underlying mental disorder emerges before or with the jealousy  
B. The features of the underlying disorder coexist with the jealousy  
C. The course of morbid jealousy closely relates to that of the underlying disorder  
D. The jealousy has no basis in reality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Textual Evidence</th>
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| An underlying mental disorder emerges before or with the jealousy | Haply, for I am black  
And have not those soft parts of conversation...She’s gone. I am abused, and my relief  
Must be to loathe her.  
*(Act III Scene III, Lines 293-298)* |
| The features of the underlying disorder coexist with the jealousy | Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate,  
Nor set down aught in malice: then must you speak  
Of one that loved not wisely but too well;  
Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought  
Perplex’d in the extreme  
*(Act V Scene II, Lines 341-345)* |
| The course of morbid jealousy closely relates to that of the underlying disorder | What noise is this?-Not dead? Not yet quite dead?  
I that am creul am yet merciful,  
I would not have thee linger in thy pain.  
So, so  
*(Act V Scene II, Lines 97-100)* |
| The jealousy has no basis in reality | By the world,  
I think my wife be honest and think she is not;  
I think that thou art just and think thou art not.  
I'll have some proof. Her name, that was as fresh as Dian’s visage, is now begrimed and black  
As mine own face. If there be cords, or knives,  
Poison, or fire, or suffocating streams,  
I'll not endure it. Would I were satisfied!  
*(Act III Scene III, Lines* |
Psychological Case Study

Character: Iago

Identity:

Use the attached Personality Disorders information text to complete this next portion.

Proposed Diagnosis:

Defining Characteristics of the Disorder:
DSM IV Diagnostic Criteria

For The Diagnosis of:_____________________________________________________

A. ____________________________________________

B. ____________________________________________

C. ____________________________________________

D. ____________________________________________

E. ____________________________________________

F. ____________________________________________

G. ____________________________________________

H. ____________________________________________

I. ____________________________________________

J. ____________________________________________

K. ____________________________________________
Psychological Case Study Example  
Symptom Checklist and Textual Evidence Chart

**Directions:** On a separate sheet of paper, create the following chart. For your textual evidence, include the Act, Scene, and page number.

**Proposed Diagnosis:**

Criteria for:____________________________________________________________

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom of Disorder</th>
<th>Textual Evidence</th>
<th>Analysis of Textual Evidence</th>
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