



INTRODUCTION TO *Shakespeare*

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(Undergrad Syllabus)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

How does Shakespeare help us understand the world we live in? Why is he the most celebrated English author? How should his plays be performed today? What were his politics, and what are the politics of working with Shakespeare now?

Because Shakespeare is such a canonical author, an introduction to Shakespeare is an introduction to literature; it is also an introduction to Shakespeare studies and by extension an introduction to literary studies. Alert to these larger concerns, this course introduces students to some Shakespearean texts and contexts. Emphasis is placed on Shakespeare's choice of drama—thus the plays are treated as plays, and experienced in performance—and on close reading and interpretation. But interpretation will be done in light of the traditions in and against which Shakespeare wrote, most especially the conventions of the four traditional Shakespearean genres: comedy, tragedy, history, and romance. Our readings will include the texts and contexts of *Hamlet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Richard III*, *1 Henry VI*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *The Tempest*, as well as their modern afterlives. We'll discuss Shakespeare's reception—how a provincial playwright came to be England's literary figurehead—and adaptations that span the globe, some of them speaking back to Shakespeare, with fire, in addition to some recent trends in Shakespeare studies, especially interdisciplinary work.

REQUIRED TEXT

The Norton Shakespeare. Edited by Stephen Greenblatt, third edition. Norton, 2015.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Weeks 1-2: Interpretation

Hamlet (1602-03)

Week 3: Text

Hamlet, first quarto edition (1603)

Hamlet, second quarto edition (1605)

Hamlet, first folio edition (1623)

Week 4: Collaboration

Marlowe, Nashe, Shakespeare, and others, *I Henry VI* (rev. 1595)

Weeks 5-6: History

Thomas More, *History of King Richard III* (1513-19): Excerpts

The True Tragedie of Richard the Third (1590): Scenes i, iv, xiv, xvii, and xviii

Richard III (1592)

Week 7: Performance (Then and Now)

A Midsummer Night's Dream (1596)

The Hollow Crown, Cycle II, dir. Dominic Cooke (2015): Select Scenes

Hamlet, dir. Simon Godwin (2016): Select Scenes

Weeks 8-9: Genre

Christopher Marlowe, *The Jew of Malta* (1589-90)

The Merchant of Venice (1596)

The Tempest (1611)

Week 10: Canonization

Ben Jonson, "To the Memory of My Beloved, the Author Mr. William Shakespeare" (1623)

Samuel Johnson, *Preface to Shakespeare* (1765): Excerpts

David Garrick, "An Ode upon Dedicating a building and Erecting a Statue, to Shakespeare, at Stratford Upon Avon" (1769)

Elizabeth Griffith, *The Morality of Shakespeare's Drama Illustrated* (1775): Excerpts

George Bernard Shaw, "Better than Shakespeare?" (1901)

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (1929): Excerpt

James Baldwin, "Why I Stopped Hating Shakespeare" (1964)

Harold Bloom, "Shakespeare, Center of the Cannon" (1994)

Christina Torres, "Why I'm Rethinking Teaching Shakespeare in My English Classroom" (2019)

Week 11: English-Language Adaptation and Appropriation

Students select text(s) from the following list:

Robert Browning, "Caliban upon Setebos" (1864)

Oscar Wilde, *Portrait of Mr. W.H.* (1889)

James Joyce, *Ulysses* (1922): "Scylla and Charybdis"

Cyril Hume and Fred M. Wilcox, *Forbidden Planet* (1956)

Duke Ellington, *Such Sweet Thunder* (1957)

Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead* (1966)

Neil Gaiman, *The Sandman*, #19, "A Midsummer Night's Dream" (1990)

Disney, *The Lion King* (1994)

Marc Norman, Tom Stoppard, and John Madden, *Shakespeare in Love* (1998)

Diane Paulus and Randy Weiner, *The Donkey Show* (1999)

Lisa Klein, *Ophelia* (2007)
Beau Willimon, *House of Cards* (2013-19.)
George R.R. Martin, *Game of Thrones* (2011-19)
Aaron Posner, *District Merchants* (2016)
Margaret Atwood, *Hag-Seed* (2016)

Week 12: Globalization

Students select a text from the following list:

Akira Kurosawa, *The Bad Sleep Well* (1960)
Aimé Césaire, *Une Tempête* (1969)
Sulayman Al-Bassam, *Richard III: An Arab Tragedy* (2007)
Abdelkader Benali, *Yasser* (2001)
Vishal Bhardwaj and Basharat Peer, *Haider* (2014)

Week 13: Theory

M. H. Abrams, “Orientation of Critical Theories” (1953)
Douglas Bruster, “The New Materialism in Early Modern Studies” (2003)
Evelyn Gajowski, “Beyond Historicism: Presentism, Subjectivity, Politics” (2010)
Douglas Lanier, “Shakespearean Rhizomatics: Adaptation, Ethics, Value” (2014)
Valerie M. Fazel and Louise Geddes, Introduction to *The Shakespeare User* (2017)

Week 14: Shakespeare Across the Disciplines

Students select texts from the following list:

Ernest Jones, “The Oedipus-Complex as an Explanation of Hamlet's Mystery: A Study in Motive” (1910)
Laura Bohannon, “Shakespeare in the Bush: An American Anthropologist Set Out to Study the Tiv of West Africa and was Taught the True Meaning of *Hamlet*” (1966)
Roberto Fernandez Retamar, “Caliban: Notes Toward a Discussion of Culture in Our America” (1971)
R. Driscoll, K. E. Davis, and M. E. Lipetz. “Parental Interference and Romantic Love: The Romeo & Juliet Effect” (1972)
Nick Schifrin, “Reading Shakespeare in Kandahar” (2011)
Laura Turchi and Ayanna Thompson, “Shakespeare and the Common Core: An Opportunity to Reboot” (2013)
Jeffrey Wilson, “Shakespeare and Criminology” (2014)
Laura Estill, Dominic Klyve, and Kate Bridal, “‘Spare your arithmetic, never count the turns’: A Statistical Analysis of Writing about Shakespeare, 1960–2010” (2015)
Ian Smith, “We Are Othello: Speaking of Race in Early Modern Studies” (2016)

Week 15: Public Shakespeare

Hannah Walser, “I Crave the Law” (2014).
Stephen Greenblatt, “Shakespeare Explains the 2016 Election” (2016)
Walt Hunter, “When Hamlet Starts Showing Up in Federal Court” (2018)
Laura Kolb, “The Very Modern Anger of Shakespeare’s Women” (2019)
Marcos Gonzalez, “Caliban Never Belonged to Shakespeare” (2019)
Jonathan Beecher Field, “Got Shakespeare?” (2019)

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

- 20% A five-page single-source essay on *Hamlet*.
- 10% A small-group performance of a scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.
- 20% A seven-page multi-source essay on *Richard III*, *1 Henry VI*, *Merchant*, or *The Tempest*.
- 10% A 10-minute presentation on a text related to Canonization, Adaptation, Appropriation, Globalization, Theory, Shakespeare Across the Disciplines, or Public Shakespeare.
- 30% A 10-page research paper on Shakespeare’s reception in a modern culture or setting.