

ENG 403 SHAKESPEARE

Syllabus

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CREDIT HOURS:

Three Semester Hours

PREREQUISITES:

ENG 210 or Equivalent

CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

An advanced study of selected plays of William Shakespeare. The course will include an offering of the comedies, tragedies, and one history. Additionally, the course will focus on Shakespeare's progression as a playwright, regarding the development of language, structure, and themes. Emphasis will be placed on analysis, literary interpretation, Elizabethan/Jacobean world-view, and close reading. We will study the following plays: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Henry V*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

The student will:

- demonstrate the ability to recognize Shakespeare's development as a writer and his deserved, prominent place in the evolution of Western Literature.
- recognize various theories of literary criticism applied to Shakespeare's plays.
- critically evaluate the various plays studied in formal reaction essays.
- judge the universality of Shakespeare's plays and judge their value to contemporary society.
- identify the historical, social, and religious context in which the plays were written.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

The student will study the required readings and write eight critical reaction papers, one addressing each play under study. Each critical reaction paper is worth up to 50 points; the total will be calculated to reflect 50% of the total grade. The student will take a proctored final examination. The student will write a six- to ten-page research essay. The examination will reflect 25% of the grade; the essay will reflect 25% of the total grade.

COURSE MATERIALS:

Required Textbook:

Shakespeare, William. *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Ed. by Blakemore Evans et al. Second Edition, 1997p. Pub. by Houghton Mifflin. ISBN 0-395-74590-9.

This edition has a good general introduction, excellent introductions to each play, and up-to-date critical articles written by well-known Shakespeare scholars. If the price is too high for your budget, you may use individual books for each play or another edition of the *Complete Works*.

GRADE DISTRIBUTION AND SCALE:

In alignment with ASC academic policies, no D may apply to a major or minor field.

Grade Distribution:

Reaction Papers (8)	50%
Research essay	25%
Final Exam	<u>25%</u>
Total Points	100%

Scale:

900-1000	A
800-899	B
700-799	C
600-699	D
599 and below	F

COURSE INSTRUCTIONS

There are four options for the critical reaction essays. You need to choose each one twice. All essays should be well structured, thoughtful, and grammatically correct. Use the literary present tense and use the current Modern Language Association (MLA) documentation guidelines. Proofread carefully before attaching your essays to an e-mail.

Option One: Translating Shakespeare into Modern English

(Adapted from an exercise by Dr. Jane Carducci, Professor of English, Winona State University, Winona, Minnesota)

- 1) Select one passage of about 6 to 10 lines from the play under study; the passage must be of interest to you and have a Shakespearean feel to it. Do **NOT** choose the one I will use as an example.
- 2) Write out the original passage and below it write out your translation in **Modern English**. You should not attempt to write it in verse. Wherever possible, use words not used by Shakespeare.
- 3) Write a commentary about what has been lost in translation. Your commentary ought to consider, where appropriate, not only change in word meaning, but also sound, rhythm, dramatic context, and visual context. This requires a close reading and understanding of the original text. Your commentary ought to focus on what you think is most importantly sacrificed in translation.

Example: (from *Midsummer Night's Dream*)

Hippolyta: And then the moon, like to a silver bow
 New bent in heaven, shall behold the night
 Of our solemnities. (1.1.9-11)

Translation: And then the new moon, which reminds me of a silver bow that has been drawn in heaven, will shine on our wedding ceremony.

Commentary:

This reading of Shakespeare loses much in translation. The loss of the sense of night is a notable sacrifice, considering the play's title. Also in moving from poetry to prose, the poetic rhythm is disrupted. The simile is also lost ("the moon, like to a silver bow / New bent in heaven") indicated by the word "like" (9-10). The tautness of the bow is no longer felt, which in turn loses the precision and the tautness of the Amazon speaking; the Amazons were excellent wielders of the bow. In changing "behold" (10) to "shine," we lose not only the intimate personification of the moon but also the tone of grandeur and formality of the occasion, further lost in the changing from "solemnities" (11) to ceremony. Here too, remember that Hippolyta has been captured by Theseus in battle, wooed by his sword (1.1.16), and the use of wedding ceremony no longer reveals her specific **point of view**, her sadness at being forced into this marriage. Other poetic elements that have been sacrificed to the prose translation are the **alliterative** "B's" in "bow" (9), "bent" (10), and "behold" (10) and the O-sound in the passage, concentrated in the original: "moon" (9), "bow" (9), "behold" (10), "of" (11), "our" (11), and "solemnities" (11). These O-sounds slow the rhythm of the

poetry. The typographical use of the “O” helps to make the presence of the moon even more pronounced, and in losing the clusters of the letter “O,” there is no **visual reinforcement** of the full moon presented by the shape of the “O.”

Option Two: In-depth Character Study.

Choose one of the principal characters and incorporate the answers to the following questions in essay form; use lines from the text as evidence. Does the character’s name reveal anything about him or her? What does the character look like? What do some of the other characters say about him or her and/or react to him or her? What do behavior and/or thoughts reveal about the character’s psychological make-up? Is the character “flat” (one-dimensional, static, stock) or “round” (fully developed, deep, puzzling, in conflict, dynamic)? Pull your character sketch together and conclude with a description.

Option Three: Reader Response

Write an essay responding to each scene in a chosen act. Be careful not to merely summarize the events. Here are some guidelines adapted from Anne Herrington and the faculty of Bard College Language and Thinking Program.

Record your thoughts and your initial reactions. Are you intrigued and/or repulsed by certain characters, events, poetic lines? Make connections with your own experiences, other texts or concepts and events. Ask yourself questions about the text. What perplexes you about some passages? Try agreeing or disagreeing with the author on critical issues. Speak to Shakespeare. Wonder about his word choice, and use the Oxford English Dictionary to discover a word’s etymology and history.

Option Four: Focus on a recurring theme, image, and/or symbol.

Close reading of any play under discussion will reveal recurring images, themes, and symbols. Examples would be the themes of decay and disease in *Hamlet*, coupled with the sense of smell and the symbolism of flowers. Blood is a recurring image and theme in *Macbeth*. Nature and animal imagery are major concepts in *King Lear*. Classical mythology is woven as a sub-theme throughout *Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Trace the theme, images, and/or symbols, and discuss how these contribute to what the play tries to say about the human condition.

Research essay:

While you are reading, start thinking about the research essay. This essay needs to be six to ten pages in length; you need to use six to twelve secondary scholarly sources. This paper must adhere to the latest MLA documentation guidelines. You need to formulate a thesis on an aspect of Shakespeare’s portrayal of humanity and how society deals with the disorder by which it is surrounded. Some ideas are Shakespeare’s portrayal of women; he presents us with memorable women, from obedient daughters to rebelling nieces, from feuding sisters to bloodthirsty wives. Another idea is Shakespeare’s portrayal of those in power. Some new slants

would include colonial and ecocritical approaches to Shakespeare. I advise you to suggest some possible theses for my comments.

There are numerous sources for in-depth study of any aspect of Shakespeare's work. I would suggest perusing articles in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, *ELH (Early Literary History Journal)*, and *Shakespeare Magazine*. Some useful Web sites are www.bardweb.net and Shakespeare Online. There are numerous books with excellent critical essays on any aspect of Shakespeare's works. Two recent gems are Marjorie Garber's *Shakespeare After All* and Stephen Greenblatt's *Will In The World*. I suggest that you check your local college library for their offerings.

Proctored Final Exam:

Refer to the Guidelines for Proctored Exams and submit your Exam Request Form for the proctored final examination three weeks BEFORE you plan to take the exam. The proctored exam will be essay format and is closed book, no notes; you must complete it within the three-hour time limit.

ADA Statement:

Students who need special accommodation to complete this class should contact the instructor and the Office of Student Affairs, 719.587.7221 as soon as possible.

Note: Web sites are constantly changing and you may find that some have moved or are simply no longer available; contact your instructor with any questions.