

ENGL 263: Introduction to Shakespeare

Fall 2012

MWF 10:30-11:20 / ARM 112 / (section 1)
MWF 12:30-13:20 / BKH G25 / (section 2)

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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 2-4pm
other times by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class will approach a selection of Shakespeare's plays through several methods, examining them not only as historical artifacts rooted in the time and place of their creation, but also as spectacles that are best illuminated by live performance. In order to better enable us to consider the ways that staged properties and special effects are crucial parts of Shakespeare's stagecraft, this section of "Introduction to Shakespeare" is especially interested in the practical means through which Shakespeare's plays resonate with both historical and contemporary audiences. Through exercises, excursions, and class discussions in costuming, casting, producing and directing, we will seek to answer questions like: "How was the English stage of 1592 different from a typical American stage of 2012?" "How does a production pretend to cut someone's hands off?" "How can two unrelated actors simulate playing twins?" "What did Elizabethans think a medieval battle looked like?" "How does a dead character returning as a ghost look differently from the way he did when he was alive?" Class progress will be evaluated by short writing assignments, quizzes, a group project and a final exam.

TEXTS

Texts for all of the plays can be found in the course textbook, *The Norton Shakespeare (Based on the Oxford Shakespeare)*. Because Shakespeare's works are highly mediated by modern editors and publishers, there can significant differences between the text of one edition of a play and another; as a result it is important that you acquire the course textbook. *The Norton Shakespeare* comes either as a 2 volume set, a 4 volume set or as a single volume -- the contents are identical; which you choose to buy depends on how much book you want to carry to class every day (for a variety of reasons, the e-reader version of the text is not considered an acceptable substitute for the print version). Additional required readings will be available on library short-term loan. You are expected to make your own copy of these readings and to bring them to class. Students are expected to take notes in their textbooks -- you will need these notes for the final exam.

Selected Texts

- *The Comedy of Errors*
- *The First Part of Henry VI (1 Henry VI)*
- *Titus Andronicus*
- *Julius Caesar*
- *The Merry Wives of Windsor*
- *Henry V*
- *Othello*
- *The Winter's Tale*

ASSIGNMENTS, summary

- 3 short (1,000 word) papers: **45% (3 x 15%)**
- Material Object Study Group Presentation: **15%**
- Study Comprehension Quizzes: **20% (worst 3 dropped)**
- Final exam: **20%**, dates set by university

All the writing assignments and the final exam must be submitted in order to pass the course.

ASSIGNMENTS, detail

The assignments in this course are designed to fulfill the expectations of work required for a B.A. degree, particularly those skills in 1) interpreting texts within diverse literary, cultural, and historical contexts; and 2) demonstrating a general knowledge of the social and structural aspects of the English language.

Assignment: Reading and Responding

Due: September 7

This exercise is designed to help you develop your skills in synthesizing information contained in secondary resources in order to prepare you for writing research papers. After reading Bernard Beckerman's "The Use and Management of the Elizabethan Stage", briefly summarize his main points about the ways that Elizabethan stagecraft is different from that of the modern age. The remainder of your paper should be a response or consideration of Beckerman's ideas, including a discussion of the implications of his work for your future reading of Shakespeare's plays. How does this new information change the way you think about drama? What were you most surprised to learn? Remember that quotations from the reading or from the plays you are examining should be kept very short (1-2 lines/sentences) and be directly relevant to the point you are making. Beckerman should be referred to by his last name (e.g. "Beckerman's point is that..."). Make sure you include a "Works Cited" page.

Assignment: Casting and Directing (15%)

Due: October 17

This exercise is designed to help you understand the relationship between the text of a play and its form in theatrical performance. From one of the plays on the syllabus, choose a short scene or part of a long scene that you feel is a defining moment, and explain its significance to the play as a whole. Select a well-known contemporary actor to play each role, and in your paper, explain how you would direct the scene to emphasize your own particular reading of the play's theme(s) or message(s). Be sure to discuss any cuts to the text, costuming, blocking (the actors' movements), and **the ways in which your directorial decisions will highlight the meaning of the text for your audience**.

Assignment: Glossing Shakespeare's Language (15%)

Due: December 3

This exercise is designed to familiarize you with one of the best resources for the study of early modern English: *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Options for this assignment will be discussed more fully in class.

Assignment: Material Object Study Group Presentation (15%)

Due: Week 13 (Nov 12-14-16)

This exercise is designed to familiarize you with i) the conditions of performance in early modern theatre and ii) some of the means by which changing conditions in performance affect popular and critical understanding of Shakespeare's plays. In the first week of class, students will sign up for a group presentation on one of the eight plays we will examine in this course. Groups will identify a meaningful property crucial to the development of the plot of that play, and note all the times when it appears onstage. If appropriate, students will also note how that prop is variously used by different characters. Group presentations should also research how such a prop would have been presented in the early modern theatre, and explain how it has been presented in modern productions since then (you may need to visit the reference desk at the library to ask how to look up theatre reviews from around the world, or to find out how to view filmed productions of the play).

The presentation should attempt to answer the following questions: How can different renderings of the prop affect staging? How can they affect the meaning of the play? Presentations are expected to stage at least one approach a

director may take in making use of the prop during a production, and ideally should provide examples of variations that alter the meaning. In order to receive credit for the work of their group, students are required to be present and to speak during the presentation. Presentations should be 12-15 minutes long and be accompanied by a handout. Half of the grade will be determined by peer assessment.

Study Comprehension Quizzes (20%)

Due: Intermittent

Over the term, students will take a number of quizzes which will be a combination of multiple choice and short answer questions based upon the course readings and in-class discussions. There will be at least one quiz per play. At the end of the term, three of these quizzes will be dropped; the rest will be used to calculate the quiz grade, which is worth 20% of the final mark. No retakes or make-up quizzes will be scheduled.

SCHEDULE

Week 1 (Aug 20-22-24): Introduction to the Course: Shakespeare: Contexts and Vocabularies

*quizzes start this week with an initial quiz on this syllabus

Week 2 (Aug 27-29-31): *The Comedy of Errors*

*Recommended reading: Russ McDonald, "Fear of Farce." In *Bad Shakespeare: Revaluations of the Shakespeare Canon*, pp. 77-90. This article, along with its entry in the annotated bibliography of the Folger edition of *The Comedy of Errors*, will help prepare you for your first assignment.

Week 3 (Sept 3*-5-7^): Use and Management of the Elizabethan Stage

* Labor day; no class

^ Assignment 1 due

^ Field trip to the Creative Arts Center

Week 4 (Sept 10-12-14): *1 Henry VI*

Week 5 (Sept 17-19-21): *1 Henry VI/Titus Andronicus*

Week 6 (Sept 24-26-28): *Titus Andronicus*

Week 7 (Oct 1-3-5): *Julius Caesar*

Week 8 (Oct 8-10-12): *Julius Caesar/The Merry Wives of Windsor*

Week 9 (Oct 15-17*-19): *The Merry Wives of Windsor*

*Assignment 2 due

Week 10 (Oct 22-24-26): *Henry V*

Week 11 (Oct 29-31-Nov 2): *Henry V/Othello*

Week 12 (Nov 5-7-9): *Othello*

Week 13 (Nov 12-14-16): *Material Object Study Group Presentations*

***Week 14 (Nov 19-21-23):**

*Thanksgiving recess - No classes this week

Week 15 (Nov 26-28-30): *The Winter's Tale*

Week 16 (Dec 3*-5-7): *The Winter's Tale/Exam Preparation*

*Assignment 3 due



POLICIES

Cell Phones and Laptop Computers

Cell phones distract from the purpose of the course and **must be turned off** (not just silenced) in my class. Students using their phones for any purpose, including texting or "looking something up" will be asked to leave the classroom. If there is a genuine reason why you need to keep your phone on during class time, please speak to me privately. Similarly, because the internet itself is a significant distraction from class activities, I require students who wish to use their laptops to take notes to promise me in writing via email that they will keep their computers in "airplane mode" during class time. **Until you have requested and received my written permission, you may not use your laptop.**

Social Justice

WVU is committed to social justice. Students have the right to expect their campus to provide a positive and respectful learning environment free from discrimination and harassment both inside and outside the classroom. In ENGL 263, students are expected to uphold the WVU commitment to social justice by demonstrating curiosity, consideration, and tolerance for diversities in race, sex, political affiliation, gender identity, age, disability, economic status, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color, or national origin. I don't expect students to agree with each other, but I require that students listen thoughtfully to each others' points of view. Please let me know if you have questions or concerns about this matter.

Student Athletes and Special Needs

If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me as soon as possible. Athletes must provide me with a schedule of absences and conflicts from their sport supervisor; students requiring other forms of accommodation must make appropriate arrangements with the WVU Office of Disability Services at G-30 Mountainlair.

Phone: (304) 293-6700 Voice/TDD: (304) 293-7740 Email: access2@mail.wvu.edu.

Reading

Students are expected to do readings of both the play and its introductory/concluding material in **advance** of the lectures, in order that they may most fruitfully participate in classroom discussion. Please bring copies of the reading to class.

Writing

Clear and effective writing is expected from students at all times. Your writing is part of your voice, and as such it is an extension of you; it should be used with the same care and consideration that you use your body. Whether you're writing an essay, an assignment, or **even an email to your professor**, grammar and spelling *matter*, and you should always double-check your documents for accuracy before handing anything in. Reading your writing out loud engages a different part of your brain, and makes you more likely to see typos that you miss when you read in your head -- when you find me mumbling to myself in my office, this is most likely what I'm doing. If you are concerned about your writing skills, please come and see me and/or visit the University Writing Center (http://english.wvu.edu/centers/centers/writing_center).

Assignments

All assignments should be word-processed, double-spaced in 12 point font, and adhere to either Chicago or the Modern Language Association style guidelines. Every assignment should have a specific title that indicates the argument or purpose of the assignment itself (note: "ENGL263 Response" is emphatically **not** a title) and contain a properly-formatted "Works Cited" page listing ALL the resources that you examined while writing it. Please number your pages.

Unless special arrangements have been made in advance, I only accept essays in hardcopy. Please staple your pages together. You must hand in all of the assignments and the final exam in order to pass the course.

Incompletes

A grade of "incomplete" is warranted only if a substantial amount of course work has been completed by the end of the semester. If an emergency comes up, the Office of Student Life can be reached at (304-293-5611), and you should call them immediately for assistance.

Late Work

Papers may be handed in late on a case-by-case basis provided that the student has sought and been granted an extension **at least 3 days in advance of the due date**. Requests for extensions must be received in by email, and include a detailed outline or summary of the delayed paper, a rationale for the extension, and a revised due date. **You have not received an extension until I have sent you an email confirming that you have been granted one.** In the absence of an extension granted in advance, assignments will be penalized at the rate of 2% per day or 10% a week.

I am extremely unsympathetic to excuses based on technological failures, so back up your work by emailing it to your university email account and/or print out rough drafts to avoid the aftermath of printer disasters and nefarious electronic conspiracies. Provided they are legible, I will also accept short assignments the old-fashioned way – longhand.

Along with correct spelling and grammar, A and B-grade papers

- take a clear position on a questionable point worth debating (thesis) and use quotations from selected text(s) in order to support that position;
- have titles that accurately reflect their subject matter;
- properly cite the sources of their quotations and ideas;
- avoid the use of first person *I* or second person *You*;
- present their argument in a logical and coherent way that *supports* rather than *complicates* their position;
- offer an introduction that indicates the direction the paper will take, and a conclusion that sums up the argument as it was presented;
- use transitions between paragraphs to make the argument flow from point to point;
- avoid the use of summaries except where absolutely necessary;
- are within the assigned word/page length;

AND MOST IMPORTANTLY:

- are usually written after seeking instructor feedback on thesis structure and appropriateness of supporting evidence.

Plagiarism

Because it enables people to take credit for work they did not do themselves, plagiarism undermines not only the worth of a university degree, but the very foundation of the liberal arts tradition, which values students' scholarly engagement and the individual development of rational thought. As a result, university administrators and professors take plagiarism very seriously, and the academic penalties are high: a failure on the assignment or in the class, a note on your transcript (which can hinder your chances of getting into grad, law or medical school), academic probation, or even expulsion.

Plagiarism is often the result of poor time management – if you've left starting to write your paper until the night before it's due, the temptation to cut and paste your way to a finished essay can be overwhelming; it might take you three or four days to write the essay properly, and you've got other classes to study for. Sometimes it can seem like a good idea to cheat rather than take the late penalty of 2%/day or 10%/week. But such risks rarely pay off: besides being immoral, dishonest and a violation of academic honour codes, this kind of cheating is easy for professors to spot (I catch one or two plagiarizers a term – one term, I caught *five!*). And the academic penalties if you are caught plagiarizing are very high.

The WVU Student Conduct Code has this to say about plagiarism:

(from http://studentlife.wvu.edu/office_of_student_conduct/student_conduct_code)

“Plagiarism is defined in terms of proscribed acts. Students are expected to understand that such practices constitute academic dishonesty regardless of motive. Those who deny deceitful intent, claim not to have known

that the act constituted plagiarism, or maintain that what they did was inadvertent are nevertheless subject to penalties when plagiarism has been confirmed.

Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- i. Submitting as one's own work the product of someone else's research, writing, artistic conception, invention, or design; that is, submitting as one's own work any report, notebook, speech, outline, theme, thesis, dissertation, commercially prepared paper, musical piece or other written, visual, oral or electronic/computerized material that has been copied in whole or in part from the work of others, whether such source is published or unpublished;
- ii. Incorporating in one's submission, without appropriate acknowledgment and attribution, portions of the works of others; that is, failing to use the conventional marks and symbols to acknowledge the use of verbatim and near-verbatim passages of someone else's work or failing to name the source of words, pictures, graphs, etc., other than one's own, that are incorporated into any work submitted as one's own."

In other words, plagiarism is about gaining credit for another person's *work*, not just another person's *words* – you can still be guilty of plagiarism without copying someone else's words *verbatim*. Because any reader of your work will assume that an idea is yours unless you tell them otherwise, if you are endorsing or responding to someone else's ideas, you must cite your source even if you are reformulating the idea into your own words. If in doubt – just ask!