

Skip
to
content

Search

Small Text Normal Text Large Text



Sections

[Home](#) [News](#) [Members](#) [Projects](#) [About](#)
Personal
toolsYou are not logged in [Log in](#)You are here: [Home](#) » [Projects](#) » [KnowledgeBase Syllabus Archive](#) » [Syllabuses](#) » [English 663](#)

Navigation

- [Home](#)
- [Projects](#)
- [cyhist](#)
- [KnowledgeBase Syllabus Archive](#)
- [Syllabuses](#)
- [Leonardo Electronic Almanac](#)
- [About the Center for Literary Computing](#)

Log in

Name
Password
Forgot your password?

English 663

Document Actions



**Jonathan Burton, ENGL 663, Spring 2004,
Shakespeare and the Writing of English History**

English 663: Why Shakespeare?

Professor Jonathan Burton

In this section of English 663 we will take up the questions that simultaneously fuel and plague Shakespeare Studies: What (if anything) makes Shakespeare great? And why do we still read and perform his works? In the past, answers to these questions have offered at least as many insights into the critics and cultures that offered them as they have into Shakespearean drama. Thus we will begin from an understanding of how arguments regarding Shakespeare's "universal" genius or his "invention of the human" may be yoked to various social and political agendas. Shuttling between early modern culture and our own, we will consider how Shakespeare's plays functioned in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as well as how they may function in alternative ways in the twenty-first century.

Nine weeks of our class will be devoted to reading some of Shakespeare's best known plays. Throughout this time, we will attend to questions of gender, genre, sexuality, performance, and postcoloniality. In the remaining sessions, we will concentrate on recent criticism that attempts to "make sense" of Shakespeare's place in early modern culture and in contemporary culture. ~

Reading List

Richard III

A Midsummer

Night's Dream

The Taming of

the Shrew Hamlet

As You Like It

Twelfth Night

A Winter's Tale

Cymbeline

Antony and

Cleopatra

Othello

The Tempest

Measure for

Measure

Catherine Belsey, *Shakespeare*

& the Loss of

Eden

David Bevington, *Shakespeare*

Germaine Greer,

Shakespeare: A

Very Short

Introduction

Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin, eds.,

Postcolonial

Shakespeares

Michael Taylor, *Shakespeare*

Criticism in

the Twentieth

Century

Assignments and Grading:

In lieu of a traditional seminar paper, each student will complete a portfolio of journal-worthy reviews of roughly 1200 words each over the course of the term. Reviews of Belsey, Taylor, Loomba & Orkin, and Bevington must be completed by the assigned date. These four, plus a fifth also dealing with a work of recent Shakespeare criticism and chosen by the student in conjunction with the professor, will comprise the bulk of a final portfolio. Portfolios will also include a 6-8 page analytical preface discussing trends in contemporary Shakespeare criticism. In addition, each student will make a 10-minute presentation of either secondary- or college-level pedagogy for a given play. Presentations should take the class through a set of notes and/or supplementary materials designed for teaching a particular play or scene.

Class Participation: 15%

Pedagogy Assignment 15%

Review Portfolio: 70%

January

13 Introduction

20 Norton Shakespeare 1-74, Richard III and Greer

27 Midsummer (and Shrew)

February

3 Hamlet

10 As You Like It (and Twelfth Night)

17 A Winter's Tale (and Cymbeline)

24 Belsey

March

2 Antony and Cleopatra

9 Othello (and Merchant)

23 Taylor

30 Tempest

April

6 Loomba and Orkin 5.

13 Measure for Measure

20 Bevington

27 Conferencing

Class Environment and Policies

This course will be run as a seminar in order to allow for extensive class discussion. There will be 10-15 minute periods when I will not speak at all. This is to assure that we address your ideas as much as mine. Students are expected to engage with each other's ideas in a respectful but still critical manner. Your goal should not be to prove your peers wrong; rather you are encouraged to help one another to clarify and develop your positions. No one is expected to come to class with fully formed analyses, just ideas and a willingness to share them. No more than one absence will be tolerated, each additional absence will result in a grade reduction.

Recommended Works of Shakespeare Criticism for

Review:

Stephen Bretzius, *Shakespeare*

in Theory: The

Postmodern

Academy and the

Early Modern

Theater

Michael Bristol, *Big Time*

Shakespeare

Douglas Bruster, *Shakespeare*

and the

Question of

Culture

Dympua Callaghan, *Shakespeare without Women*

Lawrence Danson,

Shakespeare's

Dramatic Genres

Richard Foulkes, *Performing*

Shakespeare in

the Age of Empire

Penny Gay, *As She Likes*

It: Shakespeare

's Unruly Women

(Gender and

Performance)

Jean Howard and Scott Cutler Shershow,

Marxist

Shakespeares

David Scott Kastan,

Shakespeare

after Theory

Ania Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race and Colonialism*

Stephen Orgel,

Impersonations:

The Performance

of Gender in

Shakespeare 's

England

Bryan Reynolds, *Performing*

Transversally:

Reimagining

Shakespeare and

the Critical

Future

Bruce Smith, *Shakespeare and Masculinity*

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