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ENG 3802-001: Shakespeare

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Eng 3802: "Shakespeare"

spring 2013 / Section 001

Dr. Chris Wixson

syllabus

"Every age creates its own Shakespeare."

-Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All*

course philosophy

Ben Jonson's epitaph, memorializing Shakespeare as "not of an age but for all time" has proven prophetic. Last year, the Royal Shakespeare Company premiered *Such Tweet Sorrow*, an experimental five-week production of *Romeo and Juliet* performed via Twitter. A month earlier, the venerable Arden Shakespeare series officially welcomed an addition to the Bard's canon entitled *Double Falsehood*. In short, with a "brand new" play out and a central role in the vanguard of alternative media performance, Shakespeare is alive and well in the 21st century. Centering our inquiry around issues of desire and power, this course will read a selection of Shakespeare's plays, and their complexities of language demand rigor in reading, writing, and thinking. We will be approaching these plays as both literary *and* theatrical texts, discussing not only their political and historical thematic implications but also their potential for acting, directorial, and technical choices. The course has a demanding assignment schedule that necessitates time and planning, and all assignments must be completed in order to pass this course. Since English 3802 involves a fair amount of writing, we will spend time in class talking about the organization and construction of strong interpretive arguments. The format of each class will be relatively fluid, changing with regard to the material, my ideas, and your interests. There will be some discussion as well as informal lecture. However, this course should focus primarily on you, your questions, and opinions. Remember this is not MY class but ours.

Rather than a breakneck survey of crammed Shakespearean hits, this course will focus on six plays and read them closely, in depth. In a 2010 article in *Profession*, Marjorie Garber advocated reading Shakespeare in what she called "slow motion," that is to say putting off the interpretive move that has dominated study of the plays for the past two decades: historicizing. While we will approach the plays in historical ways at various times during the term, class discussion will focus very closely on the plays' language. Garber directed her students to "read until they are halted by something contrary to their expectation—something "wrong," something that stopped them in their tracks, something they did not already "know" from the cultural consciousness of what Shakespeare had said, written, intended, or meant in the play" (153). We will hunt for and tease out semantic playfulness.

Learning Outcomes

1. To provide strategies for reading and appreciating the works of William Shakespeare for the insight they provide about Early Modern England and our own time.
2. To allow each member of the class to engage the significant issues and questions raised by the plays through writing and class discussion.
3. To assist in the development of skills of critical reading, analytical thinking, and argumentative writing.

course texts

Individual editions of the plays

The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare, Russ McDonald

contact information

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Office Hours: TR 2-4 and by appointment

assignments

- * Short pieces of writing (2-3 pages) called “seed papers” in which you pose a productive question which relates to the inquiry issues of the course about the text and then attempt to answer it. You may be asked to present and conduct class discussion with your question once during the semester. However, you will be required to write four total, that deal specifically with the language of part of the reading due for that day. Because these papers are primarily for discussion, no late seed papers will be accepted.
- * Two critical papers that are engaged, engaging, and articulate. The first will be a *Notes and Queries*-style assignment while the second will involve theatre history. Writing and topic guidelines will be handed out in advance.
- *Active, Engaged Participation in Discussion — defined as TALKING productively.
- *A Midterm and a Final Exam

final grades

Your final grade in the course will be determined by your performance on the following assignments:

| | |
|---|-----|
| Four Seed Papers | 20% |
| Two Critical Papers | 40% |
| Midterm Exam | 10% |
| Final Exam | 20% |
| In-class Writings/ Quizzes / Active Participation | 10% |

**You must complete all written assignments and exams to complete the course. Failure to complete any one of the components represents incomplete work for the semester and anyone with incomplete work will not receive a passing grade for the course.

attendance

Mandatory.

I expect you to be in class awake and prepared every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon. In other words, arrive on time with your reading/writing assignment completed, prepared to participate in discussion. Because so much in this course relies upon in-class work, absences and habitual lateness will adversely affect your course performance. Attendance will be taken at each class session – you are allowed two unexcused absences before your grade is negatively affected. After two, each unexcused absence will lower your participation grade by half a letter. **More than six unexcused absences will result in a “0” for participation. More than eight unexcused absences will result in a grade of no credit for the course.** Habitual lateness (beyond once) will also affect your grade negatively since it is disruptive and disrespectful. Please notify me by email if there is unexpected illness or an emergency that causes you to miss class. Do not get in touch asking “for the assignment” or a “rundown of what you missed.” My responsibilities as an instructor lie with the students who do come to class. Excused absences are accompanied by appropriate legal or medical documentation. Any unexcused absence will seriously undermine your success in this course.

class participation

Mandatory.

Think of our meetings as potluck conversations and activities; You should come to class *prepared to talk* about the reading for that day. Participation in a college-level course means careful, full preparation of the reading, frequent contributions to discussions, risk-taking in writing and thinking. You should come to each session armed with observations, opinions, questions, and insights, ready to take an active part in the ongoing dialogue about the course materials. Class participation means that you work actively to stretch yourself intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually AND that you work actively to contribute to the class's overall movement and success. (This might mean, for example, moving from merely your position during class discussion to striving to promote dialogue between yourself and other students). In addition to your required short papers, what else you bring to share need not be written out but should refer to specific passages in the reading as the basis for formulating a broader discussion topic or questions. Reading quizzes will happen relatively frequently to ensure the quality of our discussions.

Coming to class and saying you are “frustrated” with the reading and thus have nothing to contribute is intellectually lazy and irresponsible. Shakespeare’s language is demanding but rewarding; while there will be frustration with its complexity at times, this course understands the complexity as part of the challenge to which we aspire to rise during the semester.

late papers

These are no fun for me to keep track of and only put you further behind. For each day beyond the scheduled due date, late papers will be penalized a third of a letter grade. **After a week, I will no longer accept the paper, and it becomes a “0.”** Again, if you become ill or the victim of emergency circumstances, please email me as soon as possible and stay in touch.

cell phone and computer use

You may bring your computer to class with you, assuming that you use it in a scholarly and responsible fashion. This means that you will only have applications and windows related to the current discussion open. **You may not check email, news, or box scores, surf the web, use chat applications, play games, or otherwise distract yourself and those around you from the class conversation with your computer.**

You are likewise expected to use cell phones in a responsible manner: **turn them off when you come in to class.** If you have an emergency for which you must be available, you must discuss it with me beforehand and keep your phone on vibrate. **Under no conditions are you allowed to text message, take pictures or video (illegal in class), play games, or use the cell phone in any other manner during class.** The nature of our scholarly endeavor together necessitates mutual respect and dedicated attention during the too short time we have to discuss these texts. Violating any of these policies will result in your participation grade being lowered by a full letter grade for each violation.

academic integrity

Any paper with your name on it signifies that you are the author—that the wording and major ideas are yours, with exceptions indicated by either quotation marks and/or citations. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use (appropriation and/or imitation) of others' materials (words and ideas). We will discuss how to avoid it. Evidence of plagiarism will result in one or more of the following: a failing grade for the assignment, an F in the course, and a report filed with the Student Standards Office.

special needs and situations

If you have a *documented* disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Eng 3802: Shakespeare

course calendar

Dr. Christopher Wixson

** Because this schedule can and probably will change, it is imperative that you bring it to each class meeting so as to make the appropriate revisions.

| | | |
|----------|----|--|
| January | 8 | Course Introduction / First 19 lines of <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> |
| | 10 | <i>Midsummer</i> / Acts One and Two Read Bedford: pp. 1-3; 109-14; 123-7; 134-7; 194-7; 221-4 |
| | 15 | <i>Midsummer</i> / Acts Three and Four / Seed Paper #1 due (A-F) |
| | 17 | <i>Midsummer</i> / Act Five / Seed #1 due (G-H) |
| | 22 | <i>Taming of the Shrew</i> / Inductions, Act One Bedford: pp. 81-5; 253-53; 265-8 (Marriage, Gender, and Economics) |
| | 24 | <i>Taming of the Shrew</i> / Acts Two and Three / Seed Paper #1 due (I-M) |
| | 29 | <i>Taming of the Shrew</i> / Acts Four and Five |
| | 31 | <i>Taming of the Shrew</i> / Alternate Ending Seed #1 due (P-Z) Bedford: pp. 285-90 ("Homily of the State of Matrimony") |
| February | 5 | <i>Titus Andronicus</i> / Seed Paper #2 due (A-F) Bedford: pp. 85-90 (Tragedy) |
| | 7 | <i>Titus Andronicus</i> / Seed #2 (G-H) |
| | 19 | <i>Titus Andronicus</i> |
| | 21 | Critical Paper #1 Due / Titus |

- 19 *Titus*
- 21 *Macbeth/ Seed #2 due (I-M)*
- 26 *Macbeth*
- 28 *Macbeth / Seed #2 due (P-Z)*

- March 5 *Macbeth*
- 7 **Midterm Exam**

HAPPY SPRING BREAK!!!!

- 19 *Hamlet*
- 21 *Hamlet / Seed #3 due (A-H)*
- 26 *Hamlet*
- 28 *Hamlet / Seed #3 due (I-Z)*

- April 2 *Hamlet*
- 4 *Hamlet*
- 9 *The Winter's Tale*
- 11 *The Winter's Tale / Critical Paper Due*
- 16 *The Winter's Tale*
- 18 *The Winter's Tale / Seed #4 due (A-H)*
- 23 *The Winter's Tale / Seed #4 due (I-Z)*
- 25 *The Winter's Tale / Evaluation*

****Final exam date: Wednesday, May 1st 8:00-10:00 AM**

English 3802 / Wixson
"Shakespeare"

"He was not of an age but for all time."

William Shakespeare

(Willm Shaksp, William Shakespe, Wm Shakspe, William Shakspere, willm Shakspere, William Shakspeare, and By Me)

April 26, 1564

1568

1570s

1576

November, 1582

May, 1583

January, 1585

???

Early 1590s

1595

1599 / 1613

1603

1612

April 23, 1616

1623

William Shake-spear

"Shakespeare"