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ENG 3802-001: Art and Ethics in Shakespeare

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3802-001

Art and Ethics in Shakespeare
English 3802: Shakespeare, Fall 2012

Prof. Caldwell

Office: Coleman 3050

Office Hours: M 4:15-5:15, W 1-2, Th. 4:00-5:00 (group reading hour)

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Course Purpose and Expectations

This course is designed to introduce you to the sonnets and a selection of the major plays of William Shakespeare. A course devoted entirely to Shakespeare comes with many difficulties and rewards: sixteenth and seventeenth-century verse is rarely easy for the twenty-first century reader, but the experience of studying Shakespeare in depth—if undertaken seriously and with care—will make you a better reader and a more astute thinker. Be patient, give yourself plenty of time to do the reading carefully, and do not flinch when confronted by difficulty.

In order to succeed in this class, it is *absolutely essential* for you do the reading, attend class with your text in hand, and take notes. Much class time will be devoted to discussing the conventions of Elizabethan theater and the political, religious, and intellectual context of Shakespeare's works; the material on the exams will come from class lectures and discussions. I will take role every day: I expect you to arrive to class on time, and I reserve the right to raise or lower final grades on the basis of active, consistent class participation or poor attendance/excessive tardiness, respectively. After 4 absences, your final grade will likely suffer; if I see you texting in class, I will ask you to leave and count you absent. If you are enrolled in this course, you must have passed English 1002. Plagiarists will be reported to the Office of Student Standards and will fail the course. These policies are non-negotiable; your enrollment in my class constitutes your agreement to this state of affairs.

Office Hours

My office hours have a single purpose: to meet with you as you require. Whether you are worried about your performance in the course, are confused about a moment in the text, or simply want to talk about the reading, please use my office hours as often as you desire. In addition to regular office hours, please note that I have also designated a "reading hour" for our class. Those who are interested will gather for an hour every week to read whatever work we will be working on in class in the following week (e.g. if we are discussing *Merchant of Venice* on Monday, Feb. 6, the reading hour on Thursday, Feb. 2 will be devoted to *MV*). Plays are written to be performed, and while we probably can't simulate performance, we can read the plays aloud together to help us get a feel for the rhythm of Shakespeare's verse, the humor and quick wit of his characters, and the emotions of tragedy and comedy (or tragicomedy!). This hour is *entirely optional* on your part. It's an opportunity I am offering to you to enhance your understanding of Shakespeare, to develop an intellectual community, and perhaps to have a bit of fun while doing so. You may come some weeks and not others, as your schedule allows. Meeting place TBD.

Assignments and Grade Distribution

Sonnet recitation and explication: 5%
Textual and genre history exercise: 5%
2 short papers: 10% each (20% total)
Research project and presentation: 30%
Midterm: 15%
Final: 25%

Course Calendar

M Jan 9	Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Theater: Genius or Businessman?
W Jan 11	<i>Sonnets</i> , 1-126 (esp. 1-5, 12, 14, 15-21, 23, 29, 36, 39, 40-42, 55, 67, 68, 71-74, 93, 94, 105, 109, 110, 116, 126)
M Jan 16	MLK Holiday
W Jan 18	<i>Sonnets</i> , 127-154
M Jan 23	<i>Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , Act 1-3 (all subsequent numbers refer to act of the play)
W Jan 25	<i>Midsummer Night's Dream</i> 4-5
M Jan 30	<i>Twelfth Night</i> 1-3, turn in research preferences
W Feb 1	<i>Twelfth Night</i> 4-5
M Feb 6	<i>Merchant of Venice</i> 1-3
W Feb 8	<i>Merchant of Venice</i> 4-5
M Feb 13	<i>Henry IV, Part I</i> , 1-3
W Feb 15	<i>Henry IV, Part I</i> 4-5, textual and genre history exercise
M Feb 20	<i>Titus Andronicus</i> 1-2
W Feb 22	<i>Titus Andronicus</i> 3, reading group discussion
M Feb 27	<i>Titus Andronicus</i> 4-5
W Feb 29	<i>Macbeth</i> 1-2
M Mar 5	<i>Macbeth</i> 3, short paper 1 due
W Mar 7	<i>Macbeth</i> 4-5, sonnet recitation due by this date
MW Mar 12-14	Spring Break
M Mar 19	Midterm
W Mar 21	<i>Hamlet</i> 1-2
M Mar 26	<i>Hamlet</i> 3, short paper 2 due
W Mar 28	<i>Hamlet</i> 4-5
M Apr 2	<i>King Lear</i> 1-2
W Apr 4	<i>King Lear</i> 3
M Apr 9	<i>King Lear</i> 4-5
W Apr 11	<i>Tempest</i> 1-2
M Apr 16	<i>Tempest</i> 3-5
W Apr 18	Group meeting day to discuss presentations
M Apr 23	Group Presentations, final papers due
W Apr 25	Group Presentations

Theories of Drama and the Dangers of Theater

"To poets [and dramatists]...we must issue orders requiring them to portray good character in their poems or not to write at all...and prevent them portraying bad character, ill-discipline, meanness, or ugliness...and if they are unable to comply they must be forbidden to practice their art among us. We shall thus prevent our [leaders] being brought up among representations of what is evil and so day by day and little by little, by grazing widely as it were in an unhealthy pasture, insensibly doing themselves a cumulative psychological damage that is very serious."

Plato, *The Republic*, Book 3, On Education

"The argument of Tragedies is wrath, cruelty, incest, injury, murder either violent by sword, or voluntary by poison. The persons, Gods, Goddesses, juries, friends, kings, queens, and mighty men. The ground work of comedies is love, cozenage, flattery, bawdry, sly conveyance of whoredom; the persons, cooks, knaves, bawds, parasites, courtesans, lecherous old men, amorous young men."

Stephen Gosson

Schoole of Abuse, containing a pleasant invective against Poets, Pipers, Players, Jesters and such like Caterpillars of the Commonwealth (1579)

"To declare ourselves by words or by gestures to be otherwise than we are, is an act executed where it should not, therefore a lie...In Stage Plays for a boy to put on the attire, the gesture the passions of a woman; for a mean person to take upon him the title of a Prince with counterfeit [behavior and demeanor], is by outward signs to show themselves otherwise than they are, and so within the compass of a lie, which...is naught of itself and to be fled.

Stephen Gosson

Plays Confuted in Five Actions (1582)

"Poetry is the art of imitation....that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth—to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture—with this end, to teach and delight."

"Comedy is an imitation of the common errors of our life, which [the comic] represents in the most ridiculous and scornful sort that may be, so as it is impossible that any beholder can be content to be such a one. Now, as in geometry the oblique must be known as well as the right, and in arithmetic the odd as well as the even; so in the actions of our life who sees not the filthiness of evil, wants a great foil to perceive the beauty of virtue... And little reason hath any man to say that men learn evil by seeing it so set out; since, as I said before, there is no man living, but by the force truth hath in nature, no sooner sees these men play their parts, but wishes them *in pistrinum* [in jail], although perchance the sack of his own faults lie so behind his back, that he sees not himself to dance the same measure,—whereto yet nothing can more open his eyes than to find his own actions contemptibly set forth."

"The right use of comedy will, I think, by nobody be blamed, and much less of the high and excellent tragedy, that opens the greatest wounds, and shows forth the ulcers that are

covered with tissue; that makes kings fear to be tyrants, and tyrants manifest their tyrannical humors; that that with stirring the effects of admiration and commiseration teaches the uncertainty of this world, and upon how weak foundations gilt roofs are built... But how much it can move, Plutarch yields a notable testimony of the abominable tyrant Alexander Pheræus; from whose eyes a tragedy, well made and represented, drew abundance of tears, who without all pity had murdered infinite numbers, and some of his own blood; so as he that was not ashamed to make matters for tragedies, yet could not resist the sweet violence of a tragedy."

Sir Philip Sidney

The Defense of Poesy (written ca. 1581; pub. 1595)