

Spring 1-15-2013

ENG 3892-099: Honors Shakespeare

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"Such Seething Brains": Revenge, Desire, and Fantasy in Shakespeare
English 3892: Honors Shakespeare, Spring 2013

Prof. Caldwell

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Course Purpose and Expectations

As an honors section, we will undertake to examine a selection of the plays and poetry of Shakespeare in depth. We will read Shakespeare's works intently using the particular lens of early modern psychology and imagination to direct our study. When useful, we will consult outside primary documents on Renaissance psychology that will help us better understand Shakespeare's point of view. One goal of this kind of intense study is to give you more practice with the research and writing skills necessary to developing an honors thesis or major research project.

Participation, Attendance, and Plagiarism

Active and lively participation is required. By participation I mean not just that you should attend every class having done the reading with text in hand (although that is essential), but also that you should come prepared to engage in and even lead our discussions. If you bring questions, observations, insights, etc. with you to every class meeting, the class will be much more productive for everyone involved.

Attendance is required. After 4 absences, I reserve the right to lower your final grade by up to 1/3 a letter grade per each additional absence. If at any point in the semester you experience some difficulty—physical or personal—that prevents you from coming to class regularly, please come talk to me about it immediately.

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.

Assignments and Grade Distribution

Textual and genre history exercise: 5%

MLA exercise: 5%

Source exercise: 10%

First draft: 15%

Research project and "presentation exam": 30%

Midterm: 15%

Participation: 20%

Course Calendar

M Jan 7 Introduction: Early Modern Theater and Psychology

Shakespearean Comedy and Melancholy

W Jan 9 *Twelfth Night*, Act 1

F Jan 11 *Twelfth Night*, Act 2, Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy* (handout)

M Jan 13 *Twelfth Night*, Act 3-4

W Jan 15 *Twelfth Night*, Act 5

F Jan 17 *Merchant of Venice*, Act 1, Bacon, Montaigne, and/or Cicero "Of Friendship," Bacon "Of Usury" (handout)

Recommended Viewing: *Twelfth Night* (1997), dir. Trevor Nunn,

M Jan 21 MLK Holiday

W Jan 23 *Merchant of Venice* 2-3, **turn in research topic decision**

F Jan 25 *Merchant of Venice* 4-5, Seneca "Of Mercy" (handout)

Recommended Viewing: *Merchant of Venice* (2005), dir. Michael Radford

Renaissance Theories of the Passions

M Jan 28 *Othello* 1, Wright (handout)

W Jan 30 *Othello* 2-3

Feb 1 *Othello* 4-5

Recommended Viewing: *Othello* (2000), dir. Oliver Parker

M Feb 4 *Julius Caesar* 1, reading in stoicism (handout), **textual and genre history exercise due**

W Feb 6 *Julius Caesar* 2-3

F Feb 8 *Julius Caesar* 4-5

Recommended Viewing: *Julius Caesar*, live performance, Chicago Shakespeare Theater (to be discussed with members of the class)

Eroticism, Violence, and Ovidian Love Poetry

M Feb 11 *Venus and Adonis*

W Feb 13 *The Rape of Lucrece*

F Feb 15 Lincoln's Birthday

M Feb 18 *Titus Andronicus* 1-2

W Feb 20 *Titus Andronicus* 3, Ovid (handout)

F Feb 22 *Titus Andronicus* 4-5

Recommended Viewing: *Titus* (2006), dir. Julie Taymor

Skepticism and Revenge Tragedy

M Feb 25 *Hamlet* 1-2, selection from Montaigne (handout), **source exercise due**

W Feb 27 *Hamlet* 3, Bacon, "Of Revenge" (handout)

F Mar 1 *Hamlet* 4-5

Recommended Viewing: *Hamlet* (2010), dir. Gregory Doran; *Hamlet* (2000), dir. Kenneth Branagh; *Hamlet* (2000), dir. Michael Almereyda

M Mar 4 *Richard III*

W Mar 6 *Richard III*

F Mar 8 *Richard III*, **MLA exercise due**

Recommended Viewing: *Richard III* (2000), dir. Richard Loncraine

MWF Mar 11-15

Spring Break

M Mar 18

Class choice TBD

W Mar 20

Class choice

F Mar 22

Midterm

M Mar 25

Class choice

W Mar 27

Class choice

F Mar 29

Class choice

M Apr 1

Class choice

W Apr 3

Research and Writing Day

F Apr 5

Research and Writing Day

M Apr 8

Conferences

W Apr 10

TBD—research project topics

F Apr 12

TBD—research project topics

M Apr 15

TBD—research project topics, **First draft due**

W Apr 17

TBD—research project topics

M Apr 22

TBD—research project topics

W Apr 24

TBD—research project topics

F Apr 26

Final conclusions, evaluations

M April 29

Final revised research paper due

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)