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Spring 2-1-2017

LIT 520.01: Seminar in British Literature - Uncommon Shakespeares

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The University Of Montana

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LIT 520.01

UNCOMMON SHAKESPEARES

SPRING, 2017; CRN 38311

T 6-9:10

LA 233

CASEY CHARLES

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Office Hours: Tuesday 1-3; Friday 11-12

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Description:

“Be bold, be bold—but be not too bold,” Britomart reads as she moves through the House of Busyrane in Book Three of Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*—the prevailing epic of Elizabethan literature. The waning of Spenser and Sidney studies has as its counterweight the waxing of bardolatry (Hazlitt’s coinage)—the literal colonization of early modern studies by the author or coauthor of over 30 plays in 25 years. Shakespeare, whoever he was—the “upstart crow” from Stratford—had a long career as a minor actor and major stockholder in the Globe Theatre. He was also penning plays in the green room, according to legend, while waiting for his cue as the servant Adam in *As You Like It*. When the plague closed the theatres in the 1590s, he penned his “sugared sonnets” and wrote the eypllia “Venus and Adonis” and “Rape of Lucrece” for his beloved patron, the young Earl of Southampton, Henry Wriothsley, thought by many to also be the dedicatee (W.H.) and “young man” of the sonnets.

Within the cultural phenomenon that is Shakespeare, a canon within the canon has formed. This course attempts, without being too bold (i.e. subjecting the student to *King John*) to study some of the plays and poems that normally do not make the greatest hits list (witness the *Romeo and Julietization* of secondary education) for a number of different reasons: 1) form (the non-dramatic *Venus and Adonis* and *Rape of Lucrece*), content (the gruesome *Titus Andronicus*), authorship attribution (*Pericles*), and genre (the problematic *Measure for Measure*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and *Cymbeline*). Still we are covering most of the major genres: lyric, comic (?), historic (classical), tragic, and romance.

Reading on the periphery of the canon of the most canonical of authors will provide insight into historicism, genre norms, and questions of the fetishism of biographical scholarship. We will work to engage in what might be called “critical Shakespeare studies,” whereby the injunction of aesthetic worship is lifted in favor of a more

juridical mode, in which we engage critical “theory” (that vexed term) not so as to assess excellence in an Arnoldian sense, but to explicate, question, deconstruct, problematize. Of course, close reading or *explication de texte* will ground our engagement with the works we read, but we need to be bold enough to critique Saint Will even as we appreciate his craft.

Required Text:

The Norton Shakespeare, Third Edition

Essays posted on Moodle

Work:

- Weekly assignments will vary but may include, for example, a) 1-2 page papers on topics such as researched allusions or references, b) in-class writings on passages, and c) threads or discussions on Moodle **(33%)**
- A final research essay (a composite of prospectus, presentation, rough draft, and final essay) (15 pages) due Wednesday May 10 at 1 PM **(66%)**
- Attendance and participation: students are expected to come to class ready to ask and answer questions. More than two unexcused absences during the semester may result in a failing grade. Excellent participation will allow students with a grade point average on the cusp to have their grade rounded upward.

Ground Rules:

- I do not accept late papers unless the student contacts me with a reasonable excuse before the beginning of the class on the day the paper is due.
- There are no make-up assignments.
- Students must attend at least one conference with the teacher during the semester.
- Students with disabilities will be accommodated.
- Plagiarism (the stealing of another’s words or ideas) will result in a recommendation of expulsion from the university. See the Student Conduct Code.
- <http://www.umt.edu/umallies> This classroom is a safe space for diverse populations and adheres to the principles of nondiscrimination based on ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation as set forth by UM Allies.

Outcomes:

- Acquisition of skills in analyzing literature through close reading informed by the critical tradition of early modern studies.
- Familiarity with the vocabulary and discourse of critical theory in relation to Shakespeare studies
- Production of writing that demonstrates the ability to create coherent arguments about literature through the application of critical theory to text

For important dates and deadlines related to classes, visit the Registrar's page: <https://www.umt.edu/registrar/PDF/OfficialDatesDeadlinesSpring2017.pdf>

SCHEDULE (subject to exchange)

Tuesday, January 24

Introduction to Shakespeare

Sonnet 20

Tuesday, January 31

selected sonnets (12, 35, 92-3, 121, 137-8)

Rape of Lucrece lines 1-996)

Introduction to the Norton Edition

Tuesday, February 7

Lucrece

Tuesday, February 14

Titus Andronicus (Acts 1-3)

Tuesday, February 21

TA (Act 4 and 5)

Tuesday, February 28

Venus and Adonis

Tuesday, March 7 **Measure for Measure (Acts 1-2)**

Tuesday, March 14 **MM (Acts 3-5)**

Spring Break March 18-26

Tuesday, March 28 **Troilus and Cressida (Acts 1-3)**

Tuesday, April 4 **T and C (Acts 4-5)**
Prospectus and Annotated Bibliography
Presentations

Tuesday, April 11 **Cymbeline (Acts 1-3)**
Presentations

Tuesday, April 18 **Cym (Acts 4-5)**
Presentations
Rough Draft

Tuesday, April 25 **Pericles (Acts 1-3)**

Tuesday, May 2 **Per (Acts 4-5)**

Finals Week May 8-12 FINAL ESSAY DUE 1 PM Wednesday May 10