Syllabus for ENGL/WMSTU 303: English Renaissance Drama

THE PERFORMANCE OF GENDER
ON THE EARLY MODERN ENGLISH STAGE

Section 01: Tue/Thu, 11:00-12:20 pm (L 309)


COURSE OVERVIEW. Like all popular entertainers, Shakespeare, his competitors, and his successors responded to their audience’s fascination with and anxieties about the performance of gender in their own lives and in the London society in which they lived. In this course, designed for upper-level English majors and minors, we will explore the intersections of gender and performance (while not ignoring other issues) in plays by several London dramatists whose plays were performed between 1585 and 1630, with help from recent critical scholarship on the plays and the issues involved.
Syllabus

Dr. Norman Boyer: N427, (773) 298-3233
Office hours: Mondays 2:30-3:30, Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30-1:30, and by appointment
Email: boyer@sxu.edu
Website: http://english.sxu.edu/boyer

Course Objectives

-- to develop the habit of mind that probes the cultural, social, and political context for the production of literature, especially drama
-- to gain an understanding of the historical, social, and cultural context for English drama and theatre, c. 1585-1630
-- to gain analytical and research skills for interpreting literary texts
-- to appreciate literature as a means for comprehending the semiotic systems involved in the creation of literature, especially drama
-- to further the development of informed habits of thought, research, discussion, and writing
-- to become familiar with several Early Modern English dramatists and plays from a variety of genres

Specific 300-level Guidelines and Research Levels Met

-- Guideline #2: Study of a single literary or historical period: Early Modern England
-- Guideline #3: Study of a specific genre: drama
-- Research Level #4: Demonstrate the ability to formulate the basis of critical controversy and/or disagreement in the sources on a topic, and to apply that disagreement in the exploration of a topic.
-- Approaching Research Level #5: Demonstrate the ability to engage in independent research/study and to formulate new topics of inquiry.

Research and Writing Requirements

I expect research from students taking this course. That means that you should expect to spend a fair amount of time during the semester on the Web or in the library. Your assignments will reflect this research emphasis. You will be shown how to use some of the key online sources for the Early Modern period.

-- Two essays (5-8+ pages each) will require you to research one or more primary texts (plays) in order to define within and outside the text specific relationships between that text and some aspect of its cultural, social, political, context. This process of writing first requires identifying and establishing the basis of critical agreement/disagreement that targets the text and its author. A one-paragraph proposal for each essay is required.

-- Short essays: You will also write two short preliminary essays (1-2 pages each) that explore primary or secondary sources on a play in support of writing the longer, Research Level Four essays.

-- Midterm and final exams.
Texts

-- David Bevington, Gen. Ed., *English Renaissance Drama* (Norton)  **This edition is required.**
-- Gordon Harvey, *Writing with Sources* (Hackett)
-- Additional essays available as handouts or on Blackboard

Assignments and Course Grading

-- Daily informal responses and discussion-provoking questions; presentation on one scholarly article (10%): (1) for each class session you are to bring an informal response paper on an issue related to the day’s discussion or responding to a previous discussion of the same play and two questions designed to provoke lively class discussion; (2) you report to the class on one scholarly article (see the class schedule and the separate presentation rubric)
-- Midterm Exam (15%): essay format
-- Final Exam (15%): essay format (exam week)
-- Two short papers on finding and using sources (10%)
-- Two essays (4-5+ pages each), plus a one paragraph proposal for each that identifies your theoretical approach:
  -- Essay #1 (25%) (5-8 pages): Research one of the social, political, religious, or theatrical aspects of the period that we study in the first half of the course (roughly 1595-1600), and write an essay reflecting on its influence on one or more of the plays covered. A few examples (more later): forms of madness and *The Spanish Tragedy*; the European-Turkish conflict over the Mediterranean and *The Jew of Malta*; sexuality and sexual roles in *Edward II*; the dissolution of the monasteries and *Arden of Faversham*; immigrant labor and *The Shoemakers Holiday*
  -- Essay #2 (25%) (5-8 pages): The same as Essay #1 but work on the plays covered in the second half of the course or expand the cultural aspect of the first paper to other, second-half plays. Examples will be provided later

Rubrics for Assessment

I will grade your work based on how well you demonstrate the following:

1. The ability to apply contemporary critical, theoretical and historical models to literary texts.
2. An understanding of the interrelationship of culture and literary texts.
3. The ability to engage in effective close reading of literary and theoretical/critical texts.
4. The ability to acquire, demonstrate, and apply literary research skills.
5. An understanding of the controversies, agreements, and disagreements inherent in literary study.

Course Policies

1. Class attendance is required. If you must miss, email me first.
2. Class begins promptly at 11:00 and ends at 12:20. You are expected to be here on time and remain for the entire period. Leaving the classroom during class is extremely rude and insulting to the instructor and your classmates.
3. I will give incompletes only by student request and only for verifiable illnesses or other personal or family emergencies at the end of the semester.
4. Plagiarism (failing to give credit for the words, ideas, or images of others) will not be tolerated. You will fail the paper and most likely the class. Your case may also be sent to the department and/or the University for possible further disciplinary action, which can be as severe as expulsion from the University. See Writing with Sources.

5. Use the MLA Handbook or The Chicago Manual of Style for essays. See Writing with Sources.

Schedule of Readings (listed) and Assignments (bold underlined):

1  8/22  Introduction to the course
    8/24  Davis, “Women on Top” (handout)

2  8/29  Kyd, The Spanish Tragedy (entire play); General Introduction pp. xiii-xxvi, xlix-lvii
    8/31  The Spanish Tragedy; General Introduction pp. xxvi-xlvi; Jones and Stallybrass, “Introduction: Fashion, Fetishism, and Memory in Early Modern England and Europe” (handout)

3  9/5   Marlowe, The Jew of Malta (entire play)
    9/7   The Jew of Malta; article presentation: Maston, “Playwriting: Authorship and Collaboration”

4  9/12  Marlowe, Edward II (entire play)
    9/14  Edward II; article presentation: Bartels, “Christopher Marlowe”

5  9/19  Anonymous, Arden of Faversham (entire play)
    9/21  Arden of Faversham; article presentations: (1) Orlin, “Domestic Tragedy: Private Life on the Public Stage”; (2) Belsey, “Alice Arden’s Crime”

6  9/26  Dekker, The Shoemaker’s Holiday (entire play)
    9/28  The Shoemakers Holiday; article presentation: Bevington, “Theatre as Holiday”

7  10/3  No class – Faculty Development Day

8  10/10 Jonson, Epicene (entire play)
    10/12 Epicene; article presentation: TBA. **Source Paper and Proposal for Essay #1 due**

9  10/17 Jonson, Bartholomew Fair (entire play)
    10/19 Bartholomew Fair; article presentation: TBA

10 10/24 Thomas Middleton (?), The Revenger’s Tragedy (entire play)
    10/26 The Revenger’s Tragedy; article presentation: TBA. **Essay #1 due**

11 10/31 Middleton and Dekker, The Roaring Girl (entire play)
    11/2  The Roaring Girl; article presentation: TBA
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>11/7</td>
<td>Middleton, <em>A Chaste Maid in Cheapside</em> (entire play)</td>
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<td>11/9</td>
<td><em>A Chaste Maid in Cheapside</em>; article presentation: Paster, “Leaky Vessels: The Incontinent Women of City Comedy”</td>
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<td>11/16</td>
<td>No class meeting – instructor attending NCTE Conference</td>
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<td>11/22</td>
<td><em>The Changeling</em>; article presentation: TBA. <strong>Source Paper and Proposal for Essay #2 due</strong></td>
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<td>11/23</td>
<td>No class – Thanksgiving</td>
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<td>11/28</td>
<td>Webster, <em>The Duchess of Malfi</em> (entire play)</td>
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<td>11/30</td>
<td><em>The Duchess of Malfi</em>; article presentation: TBA</td>
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<td>12/5</td>
<td>Ford, <em>'Tis Pity She’s a Whore</em> (entire play)</td>
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<td>12/7</td>
<td><em>'Tis Pity She’s a Whore</em>; article presentation: TBA; Conclusions. <strong>Essay #2 due</strong></td>
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**Final Examination 10:00-11:50 Tuesday December 12**