Syllabus for ENGL 304: Shakespeare

STAGING GENDER AND POLITICS FROM EARLY TRAGEDY AND COMEDY TO LATE ROMANCE

Section 01: Mon/Wed, 1:00-2:20 pm (L 213)

COURSE OVERVIEW. This course is an introduction to the study of Shakespeare designed for upper-level English majors and minors. We will approach Shakespeare’s plays through the lens of New Historicism, a theoretical/methodological approach developed by Stephen Greenblatt and others in the 1980s and still influential in the study of Shakespeare and Early Modern literature. The theme of the course is “staging gender and politics.” After considering Shakespeare’s world and theatre, we shall use a close reading of several plays and New Historicist essays by Greenblatt and others to explore such questions as these: How does Shakespeare perceive gender? How does he perceive politics? How do gender and politics relate to each other? Is violence inherent in politics? In gender relations? As we work through the plays, careful attention will be paid to the different contexts – genre (comedy, tragedy, romance), Early Modern history and culture, modern critical and performance traditions, and current teaching issues – in which the topics of gender and politics occur.
Syllabus

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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 Shakespeare’s plays, c. 1590-1612
-- 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 Shakespeare plays from a variety of genres

Specific 300-level Guidelines and Research Levels Met

-- Guideline #1: Study of a single author: Shakespeare
-- Guideline #4: Emphasis on a specific contemporary theory/method: New Historicism
  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.

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.

-- Two essays (4-5 pages each) will require you to research a primary text (a play) in order to define within and outside the text specific relationships between that text and some aspect of its cultural, social, and political context. This process of writing first requires identifying and establishing the basis of critical agreement/disagreement that targets the text. A one-paragraph proposal for each essay is required. You will be given the secondary sources for the first paper but will need to conduct your own research for the second paper. You will be shown how to use some of the key online sources for Shakespeare and the Early Modern period.

-- 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

-- Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* (U of California P)
-- 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 (10%): 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
-- Midterm Exam (20%): essay format
-- Final Exam (20%): 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 (20%) (4-5 pages): Find one thing that connects *Titus Andronicus*, Mullaney’s “The Place of the Stage,” and Greenblatt’s “The Circulation of Social Energy,” and write an essay using that connection as the basis of your paper.
  -- Essay #2 (20%) (4-5 pages): Research one of the social, political, religious, or theatrical aspects of Shakespeare’s time, and write an essay reflecting on its influence on one or more of the plays we have read. *A few examples* (more later): sexuality and sexual roles in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* or *Twelfth Night*, political performance and the Henry IV-V plays (or one), early modern views of madness and *Hamlet* or *King Lear*, Bedlam beggars and *King Lear*, *Hamlet* and religion, *The Tempest* and the New World.

Rubrics for Assessment

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

1. The ability to apply critical, contemporary theoretical models to literary texts (New Historicism).
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 1:00 and ends at 2:20. 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 (underlined):

1  8/21  Introduction to the course
    23  Titus Andronicus act 1; Norton Shakespeare (NSh) 1-24

2  28  Titus Andronicus acts 2-5; NSh 30-41
    30  Mullaney, “The Place of the Stage” (handout); Greenblatt, “The Circulation of Social Energy” (Shakespearean Negotiations [ShnN] 1-20)

3  9/4  No class – Labor Day
    6  A Midsummer Night’s Dream (entire play); NSh 41-65

4  11  A Midsummer Night’s Dream; NSh 3281-3301
    13  Montrose, “Shaping Fantasies”; Dent, “Imagination in A Midsummer Night’s Dream” (handouts)

5  18  Henry IV Part 1 (entire play)
    20  Henry IV Part 1. Source Paper and Proposal for Essay #1 due

6  25  Henry IV Part 2 (entire play)
    27  Henry IV Part 2

7  10/2  Henry V (entire play)
    4  Henry V. Essay #1 due

8  9  Greenblatt, Invisible Bullets (ShnN 21-65)
    11  Midterm Exam

9  16  Twelfth Night (entire play)
    18  Twelfth Night

10  23  Greenblatt, “Fiction and Friction” (ShnN 66-93)
    25  Hamlet through 4.4

11  30  Hamlet (to the end)
    11/1  Mack, The World of Hamlet” (handout)
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>12/6</td>
<td>Greenblatt, “Speaking with the Dead”; Shapiro, selection from <em>1599</em> (handouts)</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/8</td>
<td><em>King Lear</em> (entire play; read the conflated version beginning on p. 2479)</td>
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<td>12/13</td>
<td><em>King Lear; NSh</em> 25-29 and 65-76</td>
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<td>12/15</td>
<td><em>King Lear.</em> Source Paper and Proposal for Essay #2 due</td>
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<td>12/22</td>
<td>No class – Thanksgiving holiday</td>
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<td>12/27</td>
<td><em>The Tempest</em> (entire play)</td>
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<td>12/29</td>
<td><em>The Tempest</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>12/6</td>
<td>Conclusions; discussion of final exam</td>
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Final Examination 12:00-1:50 Friday December 15