

Shakespeare

Fall 2017

Instructor: Deb Streusand

Course Description:

This course examines selected plays of William Shakespeare through the lens of Shakespeare's relationship with his audience. We will look at how his plays portray spectators on stage and how they address Shakespeare's own audiences. As part of this exploration, we will work with performance choices and learn their role in a play's effect on an audience. In addition to audience, the course will engage with issues of genre, leadership, and language, as well as looking at the plays through the lenses of class, gender, sexual identity, and race. Our work will culminate with some short performances of scenes from Shakespeare's plays and an accompanying paper.

Course Goals:

Students will learn:

- about Shakespeare's life, his work, and the history surrounding his plays
- how to read and analyze Shakespearean language
- how to discuss how a play fits into a dramatic genre
- how to examine a play in its historical context
- how to read and discuss a critical article in a way that illuminates the play it's about
- how to analyze a play in the context of making decisions how about to perform it

Texts:

Folger editions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Henry V*, *Hamlet*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Tempest*, and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.

Scholarly articles and excerpts (Available on Moodle)

Assignments:

- Paper #1: Your first paper will address how to stage a moment in one of the plays we have read. You will use a close reading of the passage to argue for a specific staging choice. This paper will be 4-6 pages and will be worth 25% of your grade.
- Paper #2: Your final paper will analyze an interpretive question about one of the plays we have read. As evidence, it will incorporate close reading, at least one scholarly article, and what you learned from your experience preparing your in-class performance. (See below.) This paper will be worth 40% of your grade, 10-12 pages.
- Performance: You will collaborate with your classmates on a scene from one of the plays we read, which you will perform at the end of the semester. The performance is worth 15% of your grade. (You will not be graded on your acting ability!)
- Weekly Reading Responses: You will submit 5 2-page reading responses over the course of the semester. You may choose which readings to respond to, but don't let the responses pile up at the end of the semester when you also have your final paper to think about—if you do, you are likely to regret it! These responses will be worth 10% of your grade.

- Participation: Your participation in class discussion will be graded as well. I am aware that talking in class is easier for some than for others. If you are a quieter student, I will take note of whether your participation increases over the course of the semester and reward such engagement accordingly. Participation will be worth 10% of your grade.

Course Format:

Each 75-minute class period will include a 10-15 minute lecture, a 10-15 minute workshop of a scene, and 30-45 minutes of seminar-style discussion. There may be additional short in-class activities on occasion.

Schedule:

Day 1

- Introduction: Course Goals and Expectations
- Lecture: Intro to Shakespeare and Iambic Pentameter
- Discussion: Analyze a Sonnet

Day 2

- Due: Read Act 1 of *Measure for Measure*
- Lecture: Background for this play (general social, religious, moral)
- Scene Workshop: 1.2, Claudio's arrest
- Discussion: How does Act 1 set up your expectations for the rest of the play?

Day 3

- Due: Read Acts 2-4 of *Measure for Measure*
- Lecture: Social structure in Elizabeth and Jacobean England
- Scene Workshop: 2.4, Angelo propositions Isabella
- Discussion: Power relationships then and now

Day 4

- Due: Read Act 5 of *Measure for Measure*
- Lecture: Shakespeare's audiences
- Scene workshop: 5.1, the Duke reveals himself
- Discussion: What makes a good leader?

Day 5

- Due: Read Aebischer article, "Silence, Rape, and Politics in *Measure for Measure*: Close Readings in Theatre History"
- Lecture: Gender in early modern England, feminist readings of plays.
- Scene Workshop: 5.1, the Duke proposes to Isabella
- Discussion: How can staging choices convey different interpretations of controversial questions about the plays?

Day 6

- Due: Read Act 1 of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
- Lecture: Context on Greek history, Elizabethan fairies, etc.
- Scene Workshop: 1.1, establishing the conflict
- Discussion: How do all the elements of the play seem to fit together so far? How do you anticipate they will develop?

Day 7

- Due: Read Acts 2-3 of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
- Lecture: Early modern English theatre practices
- Scene Workshop: 3.1, the Mechanicals rehearse
- Discussion: Why portray these practices? What role do they play in the story?

Day 8

- Due: Read Acts 4-5 of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
- Lecture: Early modern plays within plays
- Scene Workshop: 5.1, a play interrupted
- Discussion: Why a play within a play here? Why amateur actors? What does the audience behavior tell us?

Day 9

- Due: Read the selection from C.L. Barber's *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*
- Lecture: The genre of comedy
- Scene Workshop: 4.1, fairy antics
- Discussion: How does *Midsummer* participate in and defy the expectations for Elizabethan comedy?

Day 10

- Due: Read Act 1 of *Love's Labour's Lost*
- Lecture: Early modern English rhetoric
- Scene Workshop: 1.1, building the play's linguistic world
- Discussion: How does rhetoric help us understand these passages from the play?

Day 11

- Due: Read Acts 2-3 of *Love's Labour's Lost*
- Lecture: Early modern women's roles and expectations
- Scene Workshop: 2.1, lovers' meetings
- Discussion: How is gender portrayed in this play? How does it relate to social expectations?

Day 12

- Due: Read Acts 4-5 of *Love's Labour's Lost*
- Due: Read Maus chapter, "Transfer of Title in *Love's Labour's Lost*"
- Lecture: Early modern English theatre design
- Scene Workshop: 4.3, overhearing

- Discussion: How would you stage difficult moments in *LLL* in an early modern English theatre?

Day 13

- Due: Read Act 1 of *Henry V*
- Lecture: The Elizabethan history play
- Scene Workshop: 1.2, Henry negotiates
- Discussion: How does what we have read so far demonstrate the features of this genre?

Day 14

- Due: Read Acts 2-3 of *Henry V*
- Lecture: Portraying Common Characters
- Scene Workshop: 3.2, holding back from battle
- Discussion: What role have the common characters played in the play so far?

Day 15

- Due: Read Acts 4 and 5 of *Henry V*
- Lecture: Historical context—what really happened?
- Scene Workshop: 5.2, a neatly tied package
- Discussion: How and why does Shakespeare change historical events to tell his story?

Day 16

- Due: Read Rabkin article, “Rabbits, Ducks, and *Henry V*”
- Lecture: Choruses in drama
- Scene Workshop: Ways of performing the Chorus
- Discussion: What does Shakespeare’s chorus do in this play?

Day 17

- Due: Paper #1
- Due: Read Act 1 of *Hamlet*
- Lecture: Early modern politics, legitimacy of monarchy.
- Scene Workshop: 1.2 vs 1.5, how kings show leadership
- Discussion: How does Claudius argue for his legitimacy? How does the Ghost undermine that?

Day 18

- Due: Read Acts 2-3 of *Hamlet*
- Lecture: Metatheatre
- Scene Workshop: 3.2, stage audience
- Discussion: Role of references to and representations of drama in the text.

Day 19

- Due: Read Acts 4-5 of *Hamlet*

- Lecture: Revenge tragedy
- Scene Workshop: 5.1, final showdown
- Discussion: How does this play fit into the genre of revenge tragedy, and how does it alter it?

Day 20

- Due: Read Booth article, “On the Value of *Hamlet*”
- Lecture: Relationship of Elizabethan/Jacobean theatre troupes with their audiences
- Scene Workshop: 3.2, advice to the players
- Discussion: How does the player/audience relationship work out in this play?

Day 21

- Due: Read Act 1 of *The Tempest*
- Lecture: Shakespeare’s late career/late plays/romances
- Scene Workshop: 1.1, the storm
- Discussion: How is this play different?

Day 22:

- Due: Read Acts 2-3 of *The Tempest*
- Lecture: Language, imagery, and themes of the late plays
- Scene Workshop: 3.2, hearing voices
- Discussion: Comparative analysis of Caliban and Ariel’s characteristic passages in terms of language and imagery

Day 23:

- Due: Read Acts 4-5 of *The Tempest*
- Lecture: Contemporary events surrounding this play
- Scene Workshop: 5.1, reconciliation
- Discussion: How are the political situations of Shakespeare’s day reflected in the play?

Day 24:

- Due: Read Skura article, “Discourse and the Individual: The Case of Colonialism in *The Tempest*”
- Lecture: Postcolonial readings of Shakespeare
- Scene workshop: 1.2, our first view of Caliban
- Discussion: Is Skura’s reading accurate? How can you apply current understandings of race and colonialism to the play?

Day 25:

- Due: Read Act 1 of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*
- Lecture: Same-gender friendships and relationships in the play
- Scene Workshop: 1.3, between women
- Discussion: How does this play portray “homosocial” relationships?

Day 26:

- Due: Read Acts 2-3 of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, excerpts from Chaucer's "The Knight's Tale" (Moodle)
- Lecture: Shakespeare as Adapter
- Scene Workshop: 3.6, arming each other
- Discussion: How do Shakespeare and Fletcher use and adapt what they get from Chaucer?

Day 27:

- Due: Read Acts 4-5 of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*
- Lecture: What Happens Offstage
- Scene Workshop: 5.3, staging offstage action
- Discussion: How do Shakespeare and Fletcher choose what to portray onstage on what not to?

Day 28:

- Due: Read excerpts from Masten, *Textual Intercourse*, and Guy-Bray, *Against Reproduction: Where Renaissance Texts Come From*
- Lecture: Shakespeare in Collaboration
- Scene Workshop: 2.1 vs. 2.2, Shakespearean vs Fletcherian style
- Discussion: How is this play different from the others so far? What in it is and is not "Shakespearean?"

Day 29:

- Performances

Day 30:

- Due: Paper #2
- Performances