

**English 309-002/History 388-002: Shakespeare's Histories
Fall 2015, George Mason University**

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Course goals: Was Shakespeare a Tudor propagandist? Was there a coherent Tudor worldview for him to transmit? Did he view history as providential in design? Do Shakespeare's plays offer moral lessons in the manner of earlier mystery plays, or do they have a Machiavellian view of power? Do they offer a critique or a defense of absolutist monarchy? How different is narrative history from dramatized history? What happens when fictional characters are mixed in with historical ones? How does the production and reception of these plays in different historical contexts change their meaning—and why? How do Shakespeare's history plays—considered as texts and performances—connect the past of fifteenth and sixteenth century England to the present? In an attempt to answer these questions we will read a selection of Shakespeare's history plays, historical accounts of late medieval English history, see selected scenes drawn from films, and attend the performance of a play at the Folger Theatre.

Required Texts:

Bantam Classics Shakespeare: Richard II, Henry IV Part 1, Henry IV Part 2, Henry V, and Henry VIII. If you have another edition with notes and line numbers (that is, a scholarly edition of the plays), you may use it.

Selections of the following texts available on Blackboard or on-line:

- Bullough, Geoffrey. *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*
- Froissart, Jean. *Chronicles*
- Gottschalk, Paul. "Hal and the Play Extempore in *I Henry IV*"
- Greenblatt, Stephen. "Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority and its Subversion in Henry IV and Henry V"
- Hall, Edward. *The Union of the Two Noble and illustrious Families of Lancaster and York*
- Holinshed, Raphael. *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*
- Kantorowicz, Ernst. *The King's Two Bodies*
- Machiavelli, Niccolò. *The Prince*
- Tillyard, E.M.W. *The Elizabethan World Picture*

General Requirements:

In addition to the required reading above and writing assignments below, you will be required to attend a performance of "Pericles" at the Folger Theatre, 201 E. Capitol Street, SE, Washington DC 20003 (it is three blocks from the Capitol South Metro station

on the Orange line). The play's run starts on November 13. You can attend any performance you like, but you must attend no later than Sunday, November 22, as we shall be discussing the play in class on Monday, November 23. College Night is Friday November 20, where all tickets are \$15 with a student ID (can also be purchased in advance with ID being shown at the door). For any unsold seats at any performance there are half-price "student rush tickets" available one hour before curtain at the box office. Finally, students can get a \$10 discount on any ticket for any performance not included above, and these can be purchased in advance as well. To purchase tickets in advance, call 202-544-7077, or go to the theatre's web site at <http://www.folger.edu/theatre/> and click on "Pericles." College Night, Friday, November 20, is clearly the cheapest option.

Bring your copy of Shakespeare's text to every class, as we shall use it for close readings.

We do not want to ban electronic devices from the classroom unless you force us to. We know many of you prefer to read from an iPad or Kindle and take notes on your laptop, and we do not want to discourage you from doing so. But texting, tweeting, surfing the web, and checking email or Facebook are not allowed during class time. We want you to be able to consult texts on Blackboard or on-line when we are discussing them in class, and we shall trust you, unless you give us a reason not to, to use your electronic devices for these purposes only. Any violators will have the participation portion of their grade (see below for what this entails) lowered for each violation. And if there are multiple offenders we may have to ban all electronic devices from the classroom altogether. We are well aware that students of your generation consider multi-tasking as easy as breathing; you've been doing it all your life. But trust us old fogies on this one: multi-tasking is not good for concentration, and we want all your concentration to be focused on what is going on in the classroom.

Papers must be submitted in hard copy in class on the appropriate due date. **Late assignments will be marked down one half grade per day late.** Please note: papers should be double-spaced and in 12 pt. font.

How to use quotations from the plays in your papers:

When you cite four lines or fewer from a play, do not indent them, but always give act, scene, and line numbers. For example: In *Richard II*, Richard says the following to Bolingbroke: "Ay, no; no, ay: for I must nothing be./Therefore no, no, for I resign to thee./Now mark me how I will undo myself." (IV.i.200-03) Notice that a slash mark is used to indicate the end of a line. For a long quotation (more than four lines in length), please indent the quotation and single-space it. Indented quotations do not need quotation marks to set them off—or slash marks at the ends of lines. The line numbers go outside of the period not within it. If you are not using the Bantam Classic edition of the play, please provide an endnote in the first instance providing complete information about the edition that you are using.

For documenting secondary sources, use either MLA format (if you are in English) or Chicago format (in you are in History).

E-mail: Be sure to sign-up for GMU e-mail, if you haven't done so already. We will be using your GMU email account to contact you throughout the semester. Important University information will also be sent to your GMU e-mail account. If you regularly use a private email account, then please put in a set-forward command to your GMU account so that all our messages will be forwarded to your private email address.

Academic honesty: Plagiarism is a violation of the GMU Honor Code. Always cite sources—and ideas drawn from them—carefully and properly in the MLA format. Using un-cited words as if they were you own, even if you accidentally lost track of a source, constitutes plagiarism, which is a form of theft. Keep careful track of your sources.

Other Campus Resources:

The Office for Disability Services: <http://ods.gmu.edu/students/>

Writing Center: <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

Ask a Librarian: <http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>

Counseling and Psychological Services: <http://caps.gmu.edu>

Assignments and Grading:

I. Class Participation: 10% This class is explicitly collaborative. It is based upon the collaboration of professors from two different disciplines and it depends upon the collaboration of students whose own training will be in literature or history. We hope to hear from all of you. Sometimes it can be hard to speak in a large class so students will have an opportunity to work in small groups.

II. Quizzes: 10% On the first day of our discussion of each play, students will take a short quiz as well as bring in three questions that arise as you read.

III. Response to a performance of a play at the Folger: 5% We shall discuss in class how the plays change when produced and enjoyed in new historical contexts. Using detailed evidence drawn from the production that we've asked you to see, consider how the casting, set, costumes, and/or music work to represent the historical context of the play. You may find that the play sets itself in more than one context. **This response paper will be written in class on Monday, November 23.**

IV. Short written assignment (2-3 pp.): 10% You will be given a choice of what to do for this assignment, and the options will be given to you in class at the beginning of the semester. They will range from studying the history of certain words Shakespeare used that we no longer use (fardel, bodkin, etc.), to comparing the text in Quarto, First Folio, and modern editions of the plays. **This short assignment is due Monday, October 5.**

V. Two essays: 15% each (5-7 pages)

(1) In our exploration of *Richard II*, we discussed the issue of historical causation, the way the play features both Machiavellian and Providential explanations for historical events. In this paper you will use examples from Holinshed's *Chronicles*, Froissart's *Chronicles*, and Shakespeare's *Richard II* to show how they handle the doctrine of divine right. Do the divine powers of the King trump political pragmatism or the reverse? Or do ideas of divine right and political pragmatism co-exist? Next, you will consider what these depictions of divine right mean for the idea of Tudor Myth. (Tudor Myth is the idea that the deposing of an anointed King, Richard II, led to punishment by God in the form of the Wars of the Roses and rise of Richard III. According to this myth, with Richard's defeat by Henry Tudor, order was restored.) There is much critical debate about the extent to which the play supports a pragmatic or Providential view of history so there is no simple, right answer to this question. **This essay is due Wednesday, September 23.**

(2) Following our class practice of closely considering literary and historical sources, use relevant class texts and three journal articles that you find on your own to discuss the interaction of literary and historical elements in either *Henry IV, Part 1* or *Henry IV, Part 2*. Your task will be to develop a thesis about one way in which Shakespeare is both using and making history in the play that you've selected—and the significance of this way of shaping history. History is shaped in multiple ways: by actively changing historical events, by adding fictional characters, and through decisions about what to leave in and what to take out. Here are few examples of changes made to history in these plays: Hal and Hotspur were a generation apart—not contemporaries as they are in the play—and Northumberland and Henry IV were a generation apart, too; Falstaff was invented, although there was a real Sir John Oldcastle (the name given to the Falstaff character in early performances of the play) and a real Sir John Fastolfe; Henry IV went on crusade near the end of his reign but, in the play, talks about it at the beginning of his reign; Hal probably didn't kill Hotspur, and so forth. There are also many examples of events that Shakespeare leaves out. For instance, Geoffrey Bullough notes that Shakespeare leaves out Henry IV's "abortive expeditions in Wales in August, 1402, and the defeat of the Scots at Nesbit, Henry's marriage to Jane, Duchess of Brittany, the French anger at Richard II's deposition and death, and their expeditions against the Isle of Wight, etc., the difficulties with Parliament, the rise of the Lollards" (Volume 4, 161). In this paper, you will not have the space to talk about all of these ways that history is depicted and transformed; you will need to focus on a particular example and discuss it thoroughly. Make sure that you carefully document all of your secondary sources. **This essay is due Monday, November 9.**

VI. Midterm exam on Wednesday, October 14: 15% (essay exam)

VII. Final exam on Wednesday, December 16, 1:30-4:15 p.m.: 20% (essay exam)

Class Schedule:

Week 1:

August 31: Introduction: Chronology and Course Overview: See “War of the Roses” <<http://www.warsoftheroses.com>> and “Who’s Who in Shakespeare’s History Plays” <<http://robertspage.com/shakhist.html>>.

September 2: Read *Richard II*, act 1 and Tillyard, chap. 2, “Order,” pp. 9-17.

Week 2:

September 7: Labor Day Holiday.

September 9: Read *Richard II*, act 2; Froissart, pp. 430-442; Hall (in Bullough, pp. 383-387); Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chaps. 17-18 and 25; and Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies*, pp. 7-9 and 24-41. Short quiz on *Richard II*, acts 1 and 2.

Week 3:

September 14: Read *Richard II*, acts 3 and 4; Froissart, pp. 442-462; and Holinshed, pp. 74-89.

September 16: Read *Richard II*, act 5; “An Homily Against Disobedience and Willful Rebellion,” pp. 174-179; and Mervyn James, “At a Crossroads of the Political Culture: The Essex Revolt of 1601,” pp. 416-431.

Week 4:

September 21: No reading for today. Play in performance, as we shall view selections from some filmed performances of *Richard II*.

September 23: No reading for today. **First essay is due in class today.**

Week 5:

September 28: Read *Henry IV, Part 1*, act 1; Holinshed, pp. 98-108; and Bullough, pp. 196-215. Quiz on *Henry IV, Part 1*, act 1.

September 30: Read *Henry IV, Part 1*, act 2; Paul Gottschalk, “Hal and the Play Extempore in I Henry IV,” *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* 15 (1974): 605-614 (online in JSTOR); and Bullough, pp. 219-221.

Week 6:

October 5: *Henry IV, Part 1*, act 3; and selections from Bullough, pp. 180-196.

The short assignment is due in class today.

October 7: Read *Henry IV, Part 1*, acts 4 and 5.

Week 7

October 12: No class as this is Columbus Day holiday.

October 13: Class meets on Tuesday this week only due to the Columbus Day holiday. Performing rebellion. No reading, though we shall see several filmed performances of the play in class today.

October 14: **Midterm exam is today.** Please bring an exam booklet and a pen that writes in blue or black ink.

Week 8:

October 19: Read *Henry IV, Part 2*, acts 1 and 2; Hall (in Bullough, pp. 286-288); and Bullough, pp. 282-286. Quiz on acts 1 and 2 in class.

October 21: Read *Henry IV, Part 2*, act 3; and Holinshed (in Bullough, pp. 268-281).

Week 9:

October 26: Read *Henry IV, Part 2*, act 4.

October 28: Read *Henry IV, Part 2*, act 5. Performing Rebellion Encore: Scenes of filmed performances of *Henry IV, Part 2* and other adaptations will be shown in class.

Week 10:

November 2: Read *Henry V*, act 1.

November 4: Read *Henry V*, acts 2 and 3.

Week 11:

November 9: **Second essay is due today in class.** No reading today.

November 11: Read, *Henry V*, act 4; Holinshed, pp. 119-131; and “Famous Victories of Henry V” (in Bullough, pp. 327-338).

Week 12:

November 16: Read *Henry V*, act 5; and selections from Holinshed, pp.131-42; and “Famous Victories of Henry V” (in Bullough, pp. 338-343).

November 18: Read Greenblatt, “Invisible Bullets,” pp. 56-65. *Henry V* in new contexts: World War II, Vietnam, and the Falklands War. See selected scenes from film performances by Lawrence Olivier (1944) and Kenneth Branagh (1989).

November 20: See “Pericles” at the Folger Theatre, College Night

Week 13:

November 23: Quiz and discussion of the Folger performance of “Pericles”

November 25: No class, Thanksgiving Recess.

Week 14

November 30: Read *Henry VIII*, acts 1 and 2. Quiz on acts 1 and 2.

Dec. 2: Read, *Henry VIII*, acts 3; Holinshed (in Bullough, pp. 452-485); and Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* (in Bullough, pp. 485-489).

Week 15:

December 7: Read *Henry VIII*, acts 4 and 5.

December 9: No reading today. See selections from filmed performances of *Henry VIII* and *Wolf Hall*.

Final Exam: Wednesday, December 16, 1:30 - 4:15 p.m. Please bring an examination booklet and a pen that writes in blue or black ink to the exam with you.