

Please note that this syllabus is from a somewhat recent, lower division Shakespeare class. For the 300-level course, there will be some revisions, appropriate to course level. But I hope this gives you a sense of the approach. -- RM

ENGH 202.011 – Great Shakespeare Plays

 robertmatz.com/mason/engh-202-011-great-shakespeare-plays

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ENGH 202.011
MW 10:30 – 11:45
AB (Art and Design Building) 2026
Spring 2013 Office Hours:
Mondays and Wednesday 1 – 2 pm, or by appointment

In this course we'll be reading some great Shakespeare plays, but probably plays you haven't read previously. We avoid the usual suspects—*Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*—and read instead, among others, a spectacularly violent play of revenge (*Titus Andronicus*), a comedy built around practical jokes and sexual humiliation (*Merry Wives of Windsor*), and a rousing historical war drama (*Henry V*). I hope that in reading some less familiar plays, we'll be able to appreciate them more and read them in fresh ways. The course will focus on enjoying the plays, learning to read Shakespeare's language, recognizing its literary aspects, understanding the relationship between the plays and their historical moment in London of the English Renaissance, and, finally, on considering the possibilities of performance. Toward the last of these, we'll see one live play, watch parts of movie versions of the others, and enjoy our own group performances.



A performance of *Titus Andronicus*

Required Texts:

Shakespeare: *Three Classical Tragedies* (Bantam)

Shakespeare: *Three Early Comedies* (Bantam)

Twelfth Night (Bantam)

Henry V (Bantam)

Shakespeare: *The Late Romances* (Bantam)

Course Requirements: Readings, quizzes, blog postings and comments, attendance at the Synetic Theater performance of *The Tempest*, three 4-page essays, a group performance, a midterm and a final.

Schedule of readings (subject to change)

Date	Reading	Due Dates/Events	Blog Posts
W Jan. 23		Course Introduction	—
M Jan. 28	<u>Stern, <i>The Theatre of Shakespeare's London</i></u>	Discussion of Shakespeare's stage and world	—
W Jan. 30	<u>Woudhuysen, <i>Shakespeare's Writing: from Manuscript to Print</i></u>	Discussion of the history of Shakespeare's texts	—
M Feb. 4	<i>Titus</i> , act 1		—
W Feb.6	<i>Titus</i> , act 2		A-B
M Feb. 11	<i>Titus</i> , acts 3-4	Close Reading assigned	C-D
W Feb. 13	<i>Titus</i> , act 5	Scenes from Julie Taymor's <i>Titus</i>	E-F
M Feb. 18	<i>Henry V</i> , act 1	Close Reading exchanged	G-H-I
W Feb. 20	<i>Henry V</i> , act 2		J-K-L
M Feb. 25	<i>Henry V</i> , acts 3-4	Close Reading due	M-N-O
W Feb. 27	<i>Henry V</i> , act 5	Scene(s) from Kenneth Branagh's <i>Henry V</i> .	P-Q-R
M March 4	No reading	Midterm – in class	—
W March 6	No Class: credit for seeing <i>The Tempest</i>	(note: if we have already had a snow day before we will have class today)	—

SPRING BREAK

M	<i>Henry V</i>	S-T
March 18		
W	<i>The Tempest</i> , acts 1-2	<u>SparkNotes essay assigned</u>
March 20		—
	See <u>Synetic Theater production of the Tempest</u> Thursday March 21 (make up dates March 20 – 24). <u>Buy Tickets</u> <u>Directions to theater</u> (Note especially “via Public Transit” on the directions page)	
M	<i>The Tempest</i> , act 3	Discussion of Synetic Theater <i>Tempest</i>
March 25		A-B
W	<i>The Tempest</i> , act 4	<u>SparkNotes essay exchanged</u>
March 27		—
M	<i>The Tempest</i> , act 5	E-F
April 1		
W	<i>Merry Wives of Windsor</i> , act 1	<u>SparkNotes essay due</u>
April 3		—
M	<i>Merry Wives of Windsor</i> , act 2	Scenes from <i>Globe Merry Wives of Windsor</i>
April 8		G-H-I
W	<i>Merry Wives of Windsor</i> , act 3	<u>Performance essay assigned</u>
April 10	Performance 1	J-K-L
M	<i>Merry Wives of Windsor</i> , acts 4-5	Performance 2
April 15		M-N
W	<i>Twelfth Night</i> , act 1	<u>Performance essay exchanged</u>
April 17		—
M	<i>Twelfth Night</i> , act 2	Scenes from <i>New Globe Performance of Twelfth Night</i>
April 22		O

W	<i>Twelfth Night</i> , act 3	P
April 24		
M	<i>Twelfth Night</i> , act 4	Performance essay due
April 29		Performance 3
		Scenes from Trevor Nunn's <i>Twelfth Night</i>
W	<i>Twelfth Night</i> , act 5	Performance 4
May 1		—
M	Course wrap up	Scenes from <i>She's the Man</i>
May 6		Performance 5
W	No Class	Final Exam (10:30 – 1:15)
May 8		

Other Important Dates

Tuesday Jan. 29	Last day to add classes Last day to drop with no tuition penalty
Tuesday Feb. 12	Last day to drop with a 33% tuition penalty
Friday Feb. 22	Final Drop Deadline (67% tuition penalty)
Monday Feb. 25 – Friday March 29	Selective Withdrawal Period
Wednesday May 8, 10:30 – 1:15	Final exam for this class

Grading

Quizzes

There will be quizzes on the reading nearly every day reading is assigned. Quizzes cannot be made up. The quizzes will test that you've done the reading and achieved a basic understanding of it.

Blog Posts

Each student is responsible for two approximately 250-word blog posts. These posts will make an argument about a play we're reading in order to initiate discussion about some aspect of it. Responsibility for these posts is designated by the first letter of your last name. See the schedule of readings above for your specific dates. The posts should be posted by 9:00 pm the day before the designated class, as determined by the first letter of your last name. **Note:** please remember to check the relevant category box to the right of the post writing area, so that the posts can be sorted by the plays to which they refer.

Blog Comments

Each student is responsible for 6 comments on the posts described above. You must provide at least 3 of these comments by Wednesday, March 27 @ 9 am. Comments can be to an original posting or to other comments about it. If you post after we've had a class on the particular text, you can also bring in class lecture or discussion or films/performances, but make sure you are responding to the online dialogue, not to class alone. Discussions will close one week after they start. Postings should be around 50 words—you don't need an extended argument, but "you're wrong" or "great point" will not qualify. Please treat fellow posters with the same respect and seriousness online as you would in class. Note, so that I can track your comments, you must set up an IntenseDebate account.

Blog Posts and Comments: Evaluation

I will evaluate posting—both originating blogs and comments—based on your consistent and rich participation in the online dialogue. I will not grade individual postings, however. Here is the scale I will use, based on 100 points total.

For each of 2 blog posts missed: -20 points

For each of 6 comments missed: – 6 points

For example, someone who missed no originating posts and 2 comments would score 88 or 88%, a B+. I reserve the right to adjust grades up or down based on the quality of what's posted.

Performances

One of the best ways to learn about Shakespeare is to engage with his plays as performance. To that end, you will be organized into small groups and asked to prepare a scene for in-class presentation. Groups will draw on theater reviews of the relevant play as they think about their own performance. Acting talent is not required, but you will be required to memorize your lines and rehearse with your group outside of regular class times. After you perform the scene, you will be asked to articulate not only why you made certain choices but also their effect on interpretations of the play. The group will also hand in before the performance a one-page discussion of these choices and their effect. Each member of the group will receive the same grade; hence all members of the group are expected to contribute equally to it.

Essays

This course will have three 4-page essays, one on the text of Shakespeare's plays, one on interpretation of the plays, and one on their performance. Each essay will have two due dates, the first for peer review a week after the essay is assigned, and the second for the final version of the essay a week after that. More details about each essay will follow.

Midterm

The midterm will test your knowledge of the plays, literary terms and ideas presented in class. It will cover all the reading up to Monday March 4, the date of the midterm. If you do not consistently do the reading and come to class, you will have a hard time doing well on the midterm.

Final

The final will test your knowledge of the plays, literary terms and ideas presented in class. It will cover all the reading up to the end of class, and be given on Wednesday May 8, 10:30 – 1:15. If you do not consistently do the reading and come to class, you will have a hard time doing well on the final.

Here is how I will weight the assignments

Quizzes = 12% (based on points achieved/total points of all quizzes)

Postings (blogs + comments) = 8 % (see above for how grade is calculated)

3 essays @ 12% = 36%

Group performance = 10%

Midterm = 14 %

Final = 20 %

Course Policies

Class attendance

You will not do well in this class if you do not attend consistently; a glance up at the course assignments and grading will demonstrate why.

Readings

Readings are due on the date listed. Come to class not only having read the assignment, but having reflected on it with curiosity and imagination. You will be a better reader if you always read with a pen or pencil in hand and annotate your text with questions and ideas. For this reason, electronic editions of texts should not be used. Short readings for this class made available online should be printed out and brought to class.

Class Participation

Often in an English class, the students and instructor, engaging with the text, create the content of the class. Although I will lecture occasionally, as much as possible we will open up the class to discussion. Contribution to class discussion will not be formally calculated into grades, but I will take participation into account for grades that are borderline. If you aren't in class, you can't participate in discussion, nor will active class participation wholly excuse excessive absences.

Email

Email is great for setting up meeting times and asking simple questions. However, please do not email about anything more complex, such as questions about an idea for an assignment (come to office hours) or why you can't complete an assignment (come to office hours).

Anything more than a simple question should be handled in person or (in a pinch) on the phone.

Emailing formal written work: Please do not email me your essays or other formal written work (as attachments or otherwise), unless I have given you permission in advance to do so.

Electronic devices in class

You may use a laptop/tablet in class for the purpose of taking notes, if you okay it with me first. There is no reason to have phones out during class, and if I see one I will ask you to put it away. Please also turn off your cell phones before class.

Paper Standards

The three essays should have standard formatting (12 pt Times New Roman or Times font, 1 inch margins all around, page number in upper right corner, stapled or paper-clipped), feature a specific and interesting thesis, and be concisely written, well organized and well proofread. More details about each essay will follow. Blog postings and comments can be somewhat more informal as long as they remain readable and substantive in content.

Late Papers

Final versions of essays handed in after the due date will be graded down a half grade for each day late. First versions of essays for peer review that are not done, not typed or obviously incomplete will result in a 1/2 grade deduction to grade on the final version of the essay. What you bring to peer review **should not be a “draft”** but your best attempt at the essay.

Paper Helps

I encourage you to come see me at my office hours or to make an appointment to see me. When we meet, try to have a draft of the paper you are working on. This will give us something more concrete to talk about. There is also available a Writing Center at Robinson A114 that can provide you with further individual attention to your writing. I encourage you to take advantage of this excellent facility.

I would also suggest that you give yourself plenty of time to work. Writing a paper at one sitting is, for most people, unpleasant, and the results are not likely to be satisfactory. Start early!

Plagiarism

Since this class emphasizes the development of your own close reading and interpretive skills, you are not encouraged to consult secondary sources other than those specifically required in assignments. If you do choose to look at additional work, you must cite, using a standard citation format, all the articles, books or other sources that your own writing draws on, either directly or indirectly. Such sources include (but are not limited to) introductions to editions of the texts we're reading, any kind study aid or internet resources.

Also note that uncited sources will constitute plagiarism even if they ended up in your work without your conscious knowledge (e.g. you forgot you read the material; you confused your own notes with notes on a source), since part of the scholarly responsibility that comes with using secondary sources is keeping track of which words or ideas were yours and which came from a source. If you do not wish to take on this responsibility then you should not consult additional secondary sources.

I will take all suspected cases of plagiarism to the Honor Committee.

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Resources at 703.993.2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

Best wishes for the semester. I look forward to meeting you.

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