

SHAKESPEARE’S MAJOR PLAYS
“METAMORPHIC IDENTITIES”
ENGLISH 230-01 — BUCKMAN HALL 214 — MWF 1:00–1:50

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 office hours: MWF 10–11:00; 2:00–2:50; 4:00–5:00

TEXT:

Norton Complete Shakespeare

COURSE DESCRIPTION: In this course, we will study many of William Shakespeare’s major works through *reading, discussion, and written analysis*. Each of these interlaced modes of engagement will be important to your success this semester, and each will add, in different ways, to your understanding of the plays and poems.



We will spend most of our class time discussing Shakespeare’s plays, all of which I will expect you to read carefully. I will require you to come to class prepared to analyze and discuss the works, and I will keep lectures to a minimum in order to allow for such discussion. We will frame our analysis of the plays by asking why Shakespeare was so fascinated with identity transformation and how such transformative effects work. Starting with *Two Gentlemen of Verona*—in which the lead character is named Proteus, meaning “changeable”—we will end with the play most famous for transformation, *The Winter’s Tale*. Along the way, we will explore the fluid boundaries of the “self” in characters such as Kate in *Taming of the Shrew*, Bottom in *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and Viola in *Twelfth Night*. Selections from one of Shakespeare’s favorite texts, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, will serve as a reference point for transformative identity effects. This discussion frame will give us a way into the texts and a common set of terms, but the course will remain a general introduction to Shakespeare’s plays.

I will give a midterm designed to test your knowledge of the plays (part one) and provide an opportunity to engage Shakespeare criticism (part two). Throughout the semester you will write short analyses and online “blog” posts. Toward the end of the semester you will present your analyses to the class. Your work in the course will culminate in an analytical essay that you will have been developing throughout the latter part of the semester. The goals of the course can be summarized as follows:

- Become fluent in reading, interpreting, and discussing Shakespeare’s works.
- Advance in understanding Shakespeare’s concerns with sexuality and desire
- Consider the differences in structure and style among Shakespeare’s various plays
- Appreciate Shakespeare’s work for “subjectivity effects”—representations of selves under threat, in flux, transformed

GRADING		Short Analyses	10%	A = extraordinary
Discussion Posts	10%	Midterm part one	10%	A–/B+ = very good
Presentations	10%	Midterm part two	15%	B = good
Participation	10%	Final Paper	35%	C = satisfactory

SCHEDULE		reading	assignment	moodle posts
<i>August</i>	25 th W	Introduction: syllabus		
	27 th F	Selections: <i>Sonnets</i>		
<i>September</i>	30 th M	<i>Two Gentlemen of Verona</i>		question response
	1 st W	<i>Two Gentlemen of Verona</i>		
	3 rd F	<i>Two Gentlemen of Verona</i>	short analysis	
	---	LABOR DAY		
	8 th W	Selections: Ovid's <i>Metamorphoses</i>		
	10 th F	Selections: Ovid's <i>Metamorphoses</i>		
	13 th M	<i>Titus Andronicus</i>		question response
	15 th W	<i>Titus Andronicus</i>		
	17 th F	<i>Titus Andronicus</i>	short analysis	
	20 th M	<i>Titus Andronicus</i>		
	22 nd W	<i>Taming of the Shrew</i>		question response
	24 th F	<i>Taming of the Shrew</i>		
<i>October</i>	27 th M	<i>Taming of the Shrew</i>		
	29 th W	<i>Taming of the Shrew</i>	short analysis	
	1 st F	<i>Midsummer Night's Dream</i>		
	4 th M	<i>Midsummer Night's Dream</i>		
	6 th TH	<i>Midsummer Night's Dream</i>		
	8 th F	<i>Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	Midterm (part one)	
	10 th S	TSC Othello 2:00pm (Germantown)		
	11 th M	<i>Othello</i>		question response
	13 th W	<i>Othello</i>		
	15 th F	<i>Othello</i>		
	---	FALL BREAK		
	20 th W	<i>Othello</i>	Midterm (part two)	
	22 nd F	<i>Twelfth Night</i>		
	25 th M	<i>Twelfth Night</i>		question response
	27 th W	<i>Twelfth Night</i>		
	29 th F	<i>Twelfth Night</i>	short analysis	
<i>November</i>	1 st M	<i>Measure for Measure</i>		question response
	3 rd W	<i>Measure for Measure</i>		
	5 th F	<i>Measure for Measure</i>		
	8 th M	<i>Measure for Measure</i>	short analysis	
	10 th W	<i>Merchant of Venice</i>		
	12 th F	<i>Merchant of Venice</i>		
	15 th M	<i>Merchant of Venice</i>		
	17 th W	<i>Merchant of Venice</i>	short analysis	
	18 th Th	U Memphis <i>Comedy of Errors</i>		
	19 th F	<i>Winter's Tale</i>		
	22 nd M	<i>Winter's Tale</i>	Précis	
	---	THANKSGIVING BREAK		
<i>December</i>	29 th M	<i>Winter's Tale</i>	presentations 1&2	
	1 st W	<i>Winter's Tale</i>	presentations 3&4	
	3 rd F	<i>Winter's Tale</i>	presentations 5&6	
	6 th M	<i>A Lover's Complaint</i>		
	8 th W	<i>A Lover's Complaint</i> ; Conclusions		
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— This schedule is subject to change. —

SHORT ANALYSES: I require four short written analyses (700 words). The schedule gives you six dates marked “short analysis.” You need only turn in analyses on four of those dates. For these papers, you will consider our discussions in class as you write about the assigned texts. I will provide guidelines for these assignments early in the semester. I will not expect you to draw on secondary sources other than those we discuss in class; should you use such sources, however, they must be acknowledged. Papers should be word-processed (i.e. not handwritten) in 12 point, Times New Roman font with one inch margins.

DISCUSSION POSTS: This form of engagement provides you with an ongoing opportunity to discuss your interpretation of the plays with your colleagues. It will also help focus our in-class discussion. Where the schedule says “question,” frame an interpretive question about the play and post it online. About three to five sentences should be adequate. Where the schedule says “response,” post a thoughtful response to a colleague’s question. Again, three to five sentences should be fine. Post by midnight the night before the class meets. I will not grade posts that are too brief, insufficiently analytical, or disrespectful. I will say more in class about what qualifies as an “interpretive question” and a “thoughtful response.”

MIDTERMS AND FINAL PAPER: I will give a midterm in two parts: an objective test and a take-home analysis. Your semester’s work will culminate in a research paper of 2500–3000 words. I will provide detailed guidelines for these activities in class.

READING AND PARTICIPATION: You should complete the reading by the assigned class period and be ready to discuss it. Remember, reading passively is not reading. Active reading requires writing, so be sure to mark your text and make notes. Plan to read each play twice: read the entire play once before it appears on the schedule, and then re-read act by act as we discuss the play in class. Class participation is a mandatory part of this course. Since this course runs as a discussion section, individual preparation and participation are crucial to group success. If you are not ready to speak, listen, and engage when you come to class on any given day, then you are not prepared for class. Participation is a large percentage of your grade, so be sure to come to class with something to contribute. I reserve the right to give unannounced quizzes should I feel that students are not reading the text carefully enough.

ATTENDANCE: You may miss up to three class periods without any penalty. If you accrue more than three absences, your participation grade will drop. Should you miss a class for any reason, you are responsible for knowing what went on, including changes of assignment. If you have a school sanctioned absence (e.g. for sickness or special academic opportunities), I will do my best to give you the opportunity to make it up, but you must discuss it with me in advance (for planned absences) or in a timely manner (for unplanned absences). If you miss eight class sessions or more, I will consider you habitually absent and you will fail the course. LATENESS: Walking into class late is a disruption. Please be on time. If you are more than ten minutes late, I will consider you absent.

COURTESY: Class time is for discussion and engagement with the text. You do not need (and I do not allow) electronic devices in class. Please do not bring food into class. In all activities related to this course, I will expect courtesy and respect in communications with me and your classmates.

OFFICE HOURS: If you want to talk with me but you are not available during my listed office hours, please send me an email or talk to me after class. I am happy to find a time to meet with you. On occasion I may not be available even during listed office hours. If you would like to meet, it is generally a good idea to speak to me after class or send me an email. We can always find a time to meet that works for both of us, usually within a day or two.

A FINAL DISCLAIMER: The policies, procedures, schedules, and requirements in this syllabus are subject to change. I do not anticipate such changes, but should any occur I will make every effort to give you plenty of notice.

Department of English Expectations and Policies

A college course is more than simply a set of assignments; it is an intellectual process, one which requires active engagement from beginning to end in order to achieve its intended results. With this in mind, the Department of English has formulated a number of expectations and the policies that support them. If you have questions about how these policies relate to the syllabus for a particular course, you should address them to the instructor.

Attendance: The success of a course depends to a significant extent upon the presence of students alert and prepared to address the subject under discussion. Unavoidable absences should be discussed with the instructor, ideally before they occur. Excessive absences will result in a lowering of grade, in some cases to an F.

Deadlines: Writing assignments, tests, etc., are carefully scheduled as stages toward the fulfillment of the course's goals and cannot be indefinitely deferred without frustrating those goals. Brief extensions for good reasons may be permissible with the instructor's prior approval; otherwise, late assignments will be penalized and may result in their not being accepted for credit.

Submission of all work: All major assignments are integral to the goals of the course. Failure to complete any major assignment will result in a grade of F for the course.

Intellectual honesty: All work is assumed to be the student's own and produced exclusively for the course in which it is submitted. Papers written for one course, even if revised, are not to be submitted in another without the instructor's prior approval. Borrowing of ideas or language from other sources (including published material, other student papers, the internet or other electronic resources, etc.) must be carefully documented. Students are advised against posting their work on the internet since doing so may lead to suspicion of plagiarism. Students are advised to maintain drafts of their work to verify its originality. Cases of suspected plagiarism will be referred to the Honor Council, and the student if convicted will receive a grade of F in the course in addition to sanctions assigned by the Council. Carelessness in documenting sources, even if not technically plagiarism, will be penalized as the instructor deems appropriate. If you are uncertain about how or whether to document sources, consult your teacher.