

English 332: Advanced Shakespeare Studies

Green Shakespeare: Ecocriticism and Renaissance Literature

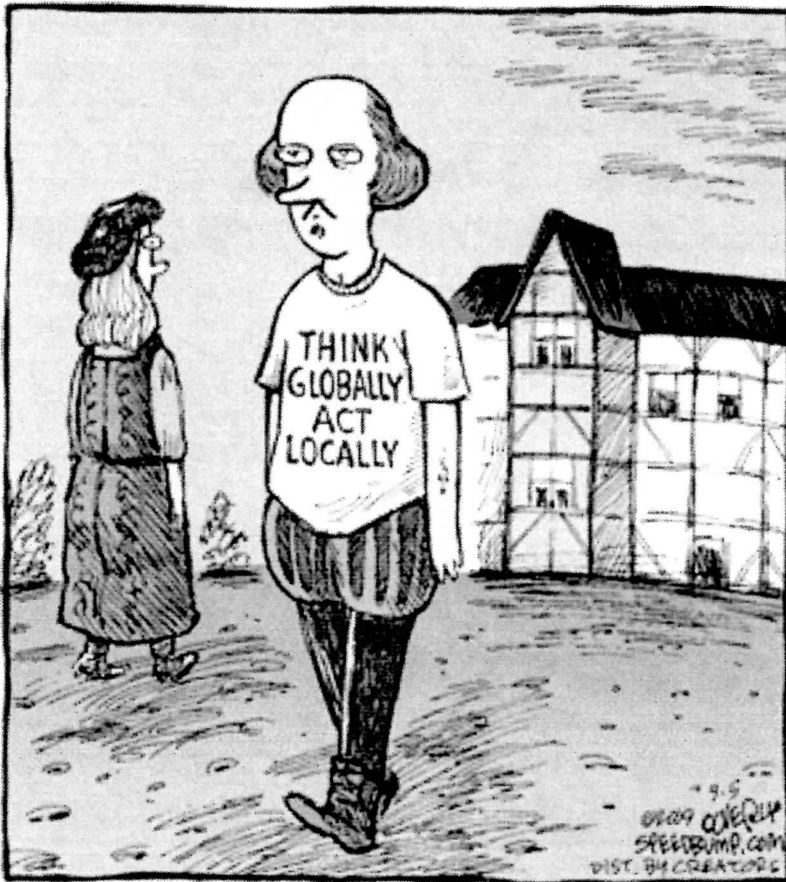
Professor Newstok

Spring 2010
TuTh 2:00-3:15pm
Palmer 203

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Office: Palmer 310

Office hours: TuTh 10am-1pm; or by appointment [please email]



The mind, that ocean where each kind
Does straight its own resemblance find;
Yet it creates, transcending these,
Far other worlds, and other seas;
Annihilating all that's made
To a green thought in a green shade.

—Marvell, "The Garden"

His beauty shall in these black lines be seen,
And they shall live, and he in them still green.

—Shakespeare, *Sonnet 63*

Why should we in the compass of a pale
Keep law and form and due proportion,
Showing, as in a model, our firm estate,
When our sea-walled garden, the whole land,
Is full of weeds, her fairest flowers choked up,
Her fruit-trees all upturned, her hedges ruin'd,
Her knots disorder'd and her wholesome herbs
Swarming with caterpillars?

—Shakespeare, *Richard II*

Course description

This seminar explores Shakespeare's plays through a "green," environmental studies lens. In response to this emerging critical practice, we will consider to what extent Shakespeare's poems and plays are conducive to being

interpreted "eco-critically," with special attention to topics such as: the pastoral mode, and fantasies of retreat from the city and court; early modern ecological ruination; the idea of "nature"; notions of "grafting"/manipulation of genetic stock; and relations between humans and animals. Throughout the course, we will also seek to question our own desire for a "green Shakespeare." Readings will concentrate on the late Romances in particular, but we will also survey other plays and sonnets, as well as literature and history by Shakespeare's Renaissance contemporaries. Students' work will culminate in a substantial research paper, surveying this critical practice and applying it to a close reading of Shakespeare's plays. This seminar coincides with a symposium on the topic on March 26, 2010, which students will be expected to attend.

As an advanced seminar in the English department, students will be expected to evaluate scholarly resources on a regular basis; write brief but regular critical reflections on primary and secondary reading; and complete a substantial (12-15-page) final research project that argues for their own interpretation in dialogue with the critical tradition within this field.

Schedule—subject to revision, per class interest and instructor's discretion

Have the texts read **before** our discussions each week, including the **Norton Introduction** to each play. Ideally, you will read them once over the weekend, and then **re-read** them during the week—good reading always entails **re-reading**. Read aloud, read slowly, and take notes. You should plan on **at least four hours** of preparation for every class session, and even more at the beginning of the semester. You must bring your **Norton Shakespeare** to each class.

INTRODUCTION

Thursday	Jan. 14	Reading through a “green” lens; Sonnet 15
Tuesday	Jan. 19	Garrard, <i>Ecocriticism</i>
Thursday	Jan. 21	“Graft” as a green keyword
Tuesday	Jan. 26	“Nature”—Collingwood/Thomas/Auden
Thursday	Jan. 28	“State of the Green”—Raber/O’Dair

GARDENS

Tuesday	Feb. 2	<i>Richard II</i>
Thursday	Feb. 14	<i>Richard II</i> ; Ostovich/Jones

PASTORAL RETREAT

Tuesday	Feb. 9	<i>As You Like It</i>
Thursday	Feb. 11	<i>As You Like It</i> ; Watson/Egan review of Watson

MINING THE EARTH

Tuesday	Feb. 16	<i>Timon of Athens</i>
Thursday	Feb. 18	<i>Timon of Athens</i> ; Waage/Jowett

SUPERNATURAL WEATHER

Tuesday	Feb. 23	<i>King Lear</i>
Thursday	Feb. 25	<i>King Lear</i> ; Egan/Watson review of Egan

WASTELANDS

Tuesday	Mar. 2	<i>Winter’s Tale</i>
Thursday	Mar. 4	<i>Winter’s Tale</i> ; Estok/Tigner

‘BLUE’ ECOCRITICISM

Tuesday	Mar. 9	<i>The Tempest</i>
Thursday	Mar. 11	<i>The Tempest</i> ; Brayton/Mentz

[March 15-19—Spring Recess—no class, but note **Hattiloo** begins March 11, TSC “**Julius Caesar**” March 26]

THE HUMAN AND THE ANIMAL

Tuesday	Mar. 23	<i>A Midsummer Night’s Dream</i>
Thursday	Mar. 25	<i>A Midsummer Night’s Dream</i> —Burke/Rambuss
Friday	Mar. 26	GREEN SHAKESPEARE SYMPOSIUM—BLOUNT, 2—5pm

SYMPOSIUM REFLECTIONS

Tuesday	Mar. 30	Roundtable discussion about the Symposium
Thursday	Apr. 1	No class—Easter Break

RESEARCH AND WRITING FINAL PROJECTS

Monday	Apr. 5	PROPOSAL DUE
Tuesday	Apr. 6	Peer feedback on Proposal
Thursday	Apr. 8	Library research session—meet in Barrett
Monday	Apr. 12	ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE
Tuesday	Apr. 13	Research & consultation with Professor Newstok
Thursday	Apr. 15	Research & consultation with Professor Newstok
Monday	Apr. 19	FIRST DRAFT DUE
Tuesday	Apr. 20	Peer feedback on draft
Thursday	Apr. 22	Presentations on work-in-progress
Monday	Apr. 19	REVISED DRAFT DUE
Tuesday	Apr. 27	Presentations on work-in-progress, continued
Thursday	Apr. 29	Final reflections
Friday	Apr. 30	URCAS
Monday	May 2	REVISED FINAL PAPER DUE

Requirements

Engagement (25%) is mandatory, and is broadly conceived to include active **participation** (*listening and responding* to your peers as well as the professor), consistent **preparation** of course readings, **enthusiasm** for assignments, **collaboration** with your peers, and **respect** for the course.

I presume that students will read and re-read assignments thoroughly in advance of discussion, arrive on time to class, and participate thoughtfully every day of the semester. As we meet only twice a week, and are devoting approximately half of the term to common readings, it is particularly important that you dedicate yourself to attending every class session.

Assignments (25%) involve weekly exercises designed to help prepare you for your final paper. Unless otherwise indicated, please submit hard copies (not email attachments) **on Mondays by 4pm in my office (Palmer 310). No late work**—there is not enough time in the semester to fall behind with your writing. Numerical ‘grades’ (a rough score out of 10) will be assigned to give you a sense of your progress. We will discuss the requirements for these in further detail as they approach.

Final papers (50%) involve engaging in a **critical dialogue** with other readers (critics) of “Green Shakespeare,” leading to a **12–15-page** research paper on a topic of your own choice.

Grading: A ‘C’ represents satisfactory work; a ‘B’ represents good work; a ‘B+’ represent very good work; and an ‘A-’ (and the occasional ‘A’) represent extraordinary achievement. This holds true for all of your assignments in the course.

Policies: As always, please observe and respect Rhodes guidelines regarding the **Honor Code**; academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, and an Honor Code violation (including plagiarism) will be grounds for **failure in the course**. Your essay for this course must consist of **original work** not previously submitted to another course. Respect the integrity of the course; please turn off **cell phones** and **remove hats** before entering the classroom; please **do not eat during class**. Treat email exchanges with one another and with the professor as **formally composed correspondence**. Finally, please also observe the attached policies, which apply to all courses in the English Department.

Required Texts

- *The Norton Shakespeare Anthology*, ed. Greenblatt et. al—**always bring this to class as our core textbook**
- Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism: The New Critical Idiom*
- J. A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (for reference—previously purchased for ENG-285/385)

Recommended bookmarks on your computer

- *Shakespeare at Rhodes:* <http://www.rhodes.edu/shakespeare>
- *The Oxford English Dictionary (OED):* <http://www.oed.com/>
- *Early English Books Online (EEBO):* <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>
- *The Dictionary of National Biography (DNB):* <http://www.oxforddnb.com/>
- *Association for the Study of Literature & Env. (ASLE):* <http://www.asle.org/>

Notes toward reading Shakespeare's plays

Keep in mind is that a *play is not a novel*. What does this distinction entail?

- English Renaissance dramatists were not as preoccupied with the modern idea of **character** as we might expect. Characters can fall away from the plot with relatively little notice, or appear with just as little preparation. Their 'motivation' is based much less on psychological or biographical consistency than on cultural expectations for the roles in which they are placed. It helps, in this respect, to think of characters not as fully developed people but rather as 'types'—'the wise old counsellor,' or 'the scorned lover.' This is not to say that playwrights only make caricatures, but it does mean that your sense of how a 'character' acts needs to be somewhat flexible.

- Shakespeare wrote much of his drama in **verse**; these plays are much more like poetry than like prose. Moreover, this is a highly stylized, rhetorically-inflected verse. The culture in which Elizabethan drama emerged was extremely well trained in producing different kinds of speeches and arguments, and even a boy with only a 'grammar school education' would have memorized, translated, and imitated far more elaborate Latin and Greek models than all but the most advanced students do today. On account of this, much of the language appears quite ornate and presents some difficulty for us. Keep reading, keep consulting the footnotes; after a while, you will recognize more than you might expect. But don't just read 'for plot'; let the words trouble you, and try to approach them with the same attention and intensity as you would a poem.

- We tend to take for granted a degree of **realism or naturalism** in many of our prose readings today; even experimental narrative forms presume a familiarity with novelistic conventions. This is not necessarily the case with English Renaissance drama: fantastical events can happen; great lengths of time can be compressed into the short span of a few hours; and distances across the globe can be traversed between scenes. Sometimes even the characters themselves express incredulity at these almost magical developments. Remain open to the plot as it exists; reserve judgment about its 'believability.'

Read the play closely. The unfamiliar style, vocabulary, syntax, and stories require a great deal of attention. If you read the play in the same amount of time required to see it performed, you're going too fast. (Consider that the performance was not achieved in those two or three hours, but rather after a sequence of hundreds of preparatory hours of interpretation, memorization, and rehearsal.) Here are some suggestions to get you into the text:

- *Good reading is re-reading*; to this end, read the play at least **twice**. You might want to read through the entire play quickly at first, then look at the Norton introduction, and then read more slowly, with an eye for detail (note, for instance, what you have already forgotten since the first reading).

- Read the play **aloud**; or listen to a **recorded audio version**. You'll find that you won't be able to gloss over passages you don't understand, and will have to stop to figure out what they mean. You'll also get a better sense of the rhythms of the lines by getting them into your mouth—again, like poetry. For these reasons, we'll also be reading aloud a good deal in class.

- Keep an eye out for **patterns**—where have you heard this kind of speech before? why does this particular image keep re-appearing? Keep track of what happens in each scene—you might even want to add a kind of descriptive subtitle to each one ('Hamlet contemplates killing Claudius'). Make an outline of the plot; what would happen if certain scenes were rearranged? Read with a pencil in hand, and make note of anything that seems important, or confusing, or surprising. Review these notes before class.

Most importantly, **be curious**. If you don't understand a word, look it up in the footnotes, or better yet, in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. If something doesn't make sense to you, make note of it, and bring it up during discussion. Check out the books in the Shakespeare section of the library; view videos of the plays in the AV center.

In your essays, begin with questions you can't immediately answer, and see where you can go from there.