

Shakespeare (English 230) – Fall 2015

Professor Newstok, newstoks@rhodes.edu

Office hours (Palmer 306): MTu 2-4pm, or by appointment (please email)

*“Education should have a ‘depth-charge’ effect, the consequences of which might only reveal themselves years down the line. . . . Two invaluable lessons can be taught through Shakespeare. A) He’s **difficult** and there’s something to be said for sitting and working through something difficult, and B) Shakespeare demands that we deal with **ambiguity** and ask questions of the world around us.”—Jonathan Gil Harris*

Course description

A close-learning seminar on Shakespeare’s works, with special attention to the problem of **genre**. We begin by closely reading and memorizing selected sonnets. We then examine representative Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies from across his career, concluding with the generically mixed *Two Noble Kinsmen*. While we concentrate our efforts primarily on the **texts** of the plays, along the way we explore the greater **context** of Shakespeare, from the historical meanings of individual words to the continued influence of his works today, including contemporary performance practices. The course gives you extensive **practice** in critically exploring Shakespearean **craft**, and preparation for enjoying Shakespeare throughout your life. Students must attend the **symposium on Comedy (October 23, 2-5pm, McCoy)** and report on at least one local production (e.g. *Chimes at Midnight*, November 8).

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

Have the texts read **before** our discussions each week. 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**. Bring your **Norton Shakespeare** to each seminar.

<u>Week of</u>	<u>Readings</u>	<u>Assignments</u>
Aug. 27	Introduction	Review syllabus and handouts
Sep. 1	Sonnets 1-18	Sonnet terms quiz
Sep. 8	Sonnets 19-81	Memorization quiz
Sep. 15	Sonnets 82-154	Norton Introduction reading and quiz
Sep. 22	Titus Andronicus	Close reading of one word
Sep. 29	Comedy of Errors	Close reading of one line
Oct. 6	Love's Labour's Lost	Close reading of one speech
Oct. 13	A Midsummer Night's Dream	Rhetorical tropes
Oct. 20	[NO CLASS—Fall Break]	
Oct. 22	Visit with Nick Hutchison	What is comedy?
Oct. 23	Symposium on Shakespearean Comedy [2-5pm, McCoy]	
Oct. 27	Richard II	Function of the garden scene
Nov. 3	Henry IV, part I	Generic blending
Nov. 8	<i>Chimes at Midnight</i> [Indie Memphis Film Festival]	
Nov. 10	Henry V	Five-act progression
Nov. 17	Othello	Source study
Nov. 24	King Lear	Quarto vs. Folio editorial quandaries
Nov. 26	[NO CLASS—Thanksgiving recess]	
Dec. 1	Two Noble Kinsmen	Shakespearean recycling
Dec. 8	Review for exam	Chronology, Terms, Essay
Dec. 12, 8am	Final exam	!

Requirements

Engagement (30%) is mandatory, 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. Successful students are those who re-read thoroughly in advance of discussion, arrive on time to class, and participate thoughtfully every day of the semester. You are expected to attend every class session. To paraphrase Gertrude Stein: *absence is an absence is an absence is an absence*; I don't distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. If *for whatever reason* (including medical and personal emergencies, extracurricular events) you miss **more than five classes** (that is, **two full weeks of the semester!**), **you will fail the course.**

Short essays (50%) are arguments (one **full** page, single-spaced—**around 500 words**) designed to familiarize you with a number of different *kinds* of approaches to reading Shakespeare—from examining very minute details to considering larger issues across multiple texts. Essays are due **every Sunday by noon via email. No late work**—the responses prepare your thoughts in advance of Monday's discussion. A rough score (out of 10) will be assigned to give you a sense of your progress. See attached guidelines.

Final Exam (20%) requires that you be familiar with the **chronology** of Shakespeare's publications and historical events; literary and critical **terminology** pertinent to our readings; and a **retrospective essay**, synthesizing everything you have learned about 'craft' over the course of the semester.

Grading: 'C' (70–79%) represents *satisfactory* work; a 'B' (80–86%) represents *good* work; a 'B+' (87–89%) represents *very good* work; an 'A-' (90–93%) represents *excellent* work; and the infrequent 'A' (94% and above) represents *extraordinary* achievement. This holds true for your overall engagement, your short essays, and your final exam.

Policies: You must complete **all written work** to pass this course. As always, please observe Rhodes guidelines regarding the **Honor Code**; academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, and students caught plagiarizing **will fail the course**, in addition to being reported to the Honor Council. See attached departmental policies for further details. Respect the integrity of the seminar: please turn off **cell phones** and **remove hats** before entering the classroom; please **do not eat during class**; please **use the bathroom before our session commences**. Treat email exchanges with one another and with the professor as **formally composed correspondence**.

Typical Week

Weekend	<i>Read play twice in full</i>
Sunday noon	Email your weekly essay
Tuesday	Brief quiz ; overview of the play
Thursday	<i>More detailed immersion in play per student interest</i>
Friday	<i>Begin reading the next play</i>