English 230: Shakespeare’s Major Plays  
TR 9:30-10:45 AM, Buckman 212  
Professor Finlayson; Palmer 317  
Office Hours: T11-12 and 1-3; R2-3  
finlayson@rhodes.edu; 843-3293


Course description and goals: In this class, we’ll read a variety of Shakespeare plays—comedy, tragedy, and romance—while focusing on generic conventions, characterization, structure, historical context, themes, and production (both in film and on-stage). The goal of this course is to both introduce you to the issues of Shakespeare’s dramatic literature and to develop your ability to read and write analytically about literary texts.

Please read the entire play by the first day of discussion and re-read as we go along. Generally, we’ll split each play as follows. Day 1 will be spent on the Norton introduction to the play and Act 1; Day 2 on Acts II and III; and Day 3 on Acts IV and V. You should plan to set aside about 6-8 hours to read each play and about 1 hour for rereading each act. I strongly caution you against substituting your reading of the Norton edition with SparkNotes or other such “study aids.” This kind of short cutting violates the very premise of the course—literary analysis—and will ultimately rob you of the best opportunity to do well on the papers and exams, which require a seasoned and sophisticated demonstration of close-reading and textual analysis.

| Thursday, 1/11 | Intro | Tuesday, 3/6 | Othello  
| Tuesday, 1/16 | Norton Intro | Tuesday, 3/8 | Othello.  
| Thursday, 1/18 | Twelfth Night | Thursday, 3/10 | SPRING BREAK  
| Tuesday, 1/23 | Twelfth Night. | Tuesday, 3/13 | SPRING BREAK  
| Thursday, 1/25 | Twelfth Night. | Tuesday, 3/15 | Hamlet  
| Tuesday, 1/30 | Midsummer Night’s Dream Visiting Candidate | Tuesday, 3/20 | Hamlet  
| Thursday, 2/1 | Midsummer Night’s Dream Visiting Candidate | Tuesday, 3/22 | Hamlet.  
| Tuesday, 2/6 | Midsummer Night’s Dream Visiting Candidate | Tuesday, 3/27 | King Lear  
| Thursday, 2/8 | As You Like It | Tuesday, 3/29 | King Lear  
| Tuesday, 2/13 | As You Like It | Thursday, 4/3 | EASTER BREAK  
| Thursday, 2/15 | As You Like It | Thursday, 4/5 | King Lear  
| Tuesday, 2/20 | Measure for Measure | Tuesday, 4/10 | TBA: Film  
| Thursday, 2/22 | Measure for Measure | Thursday, 4/12 | Paper 2 due by noon.  
| Tuesday, 2/27 | Measure for Measure | Thursday, 4/13 | Paper 2 due by noon.  
| Thursday, 3/1 | Exam 1. | Tuesday, 4/17 | Tempest.  
| | | Thursday, 4/19 | Tempest.  
| | | Tuesday, 4/24 | Tempest.  
| | | Thursday, 4/26 | Exam 2.  


ASSIGNMENTS

**Formal papers:** There are 2 formal papers of 1500-2000 words/5-7 pages each for this class. I will give you a list of topics to choose from about a week before the due date. You should not use any outside sources for these papers, including critical articles (cited or not), Spark Notes, or the like. Formal papers must conform to the following requirements:

- Typed in 12-point Times Roman font with 1.25” margins and double spaced.
- Pledged in full
- Identified on the front page with your name, my name, a word count, and your critical title and on each subsequent page with page numbers.
- PROOFREAD for grammar and spelling. Use spell check and grammar check, but don’t trust the program entirely. When in doubt, consult a grammar guide book and a dictionary. Habitual reckless proofreading will result in a lower paper grade.
- Formatted according to MLA.

I encourage you to visit the Writing Center in Barret to have a writing tutor review your draft for argument and structure. Finally, always keep a spare hard copy of your paper and plan ahead for printer and computer mishaps.

**Presentation:** In pairs, each student will sign up for a formal presentation on the second or third day of a play. If for any reason you and your partner are not able to present on the day you’ve indicated, you are responsible for switching with classmates and emailing me of the change. The schedule will be very tight because we only meet twice per week. Your presentation should last approximately 10-15 minutes. For the assignment:

- Plan to spend 10-15 minutes presenting an argument.
- Isolate a scene or passage from the reading assigned for the day that you both consider particularly significant to the larger critical issues raised by the play.
- Read aloud and **dramatize** 20-30 lines of the scene or passage. You’ll receive extra credit for memorizing your lines and/or presenting in “costume.” You may be creative in your choices. A prerequisite for a dramatic reading is that you have a thorough and, if necessary, researched understanding of the language—its meaning, its nuances, its context.
- Explain why you selected this scene or passage as important to the play.
- Explicate the most critical lines and/or words and identify any literary devices.
- Contextualize the passage thematically and, if appropriate, historically.
- Include a visual aide, which can be a piece of art, a prop, an historical document, a costume (unless you’d like this to be your extra credit for your dramatization).
- Prompt class discussion by presenting (in a hand out) 3-5 questions regarding the passage specifically or the accompanying critical issues in the play generally.
- Each student should independently write and submit a 1000-word formal essay to accompany the issues and argument covered in your presentation. This essay will not necessary follow the structure of your presentation (and you should not read this essay as your presentation). It should be well-structured, thesis-driven, with an introduction, body/evidence paragraphs, literary analysis, and a conclusion.
- A portion of your grade will be based on the joint presentation and a portion on your individual essay.

**Response:** You will also sign up for a 500-word analytical response to a critical article regarding one of the plays we are reading for the semester. I will hand out a list of possible articles for you to choose from,
or you can locate one via the MLA database. Your article must have been published within the last 20 years and must have been written by a scholar in the field (i.e. have been published in a refereed literary journal or book). If you are unsure, ask. Please include a copy of the article with your response.

Using critical sources can be tricky. Your response paper should not be a summary of the article (or the literature for that matter). Rather, it should take issue with or reinforce the critic’s comments with your own analysis of the literary text. In other words, use the critical source as a launching pad for your own thinking. And certainly feel free (in fact, I encourage you) to find fault with published critical opinions. You’ll need to quote from the article, paraphrase it, and comment on it. Make sure you know the difference between the three. You’ll also need to have both parenthetical citations and a full formal citation. The parentheticals should be throughout the response wherever you are quoting or paraphrasing as in (Greene 214). Use the MLA format for punctuating all citations.

GRADING

All assignments are subject to the Honor Code. If you cheat, you will receive an automatic F in the course. If you have questions about a grade you receive, please come see me during office hours anytime after the following class period. In other words, take a day or two to think about your questions and when you do come to chat, be prepared to explain exactly what your concerns are. Keep in mind, too, that the College awards a C for “satisfactory” work, awards a “B” to well above satisfactory work, and views “A” work as truly outstanding.

The best students are typically ambitious and independent in their thinking; they are self-disciplined and committed to the learning enterprise and demonstrate this through their thorough preparedness, their attentive reading and class commentary, their pursuit of resources and wisdom beyond the classroom (via library research, for example), and their attention to detail, accuracy, and clarity in their work. In their papers, they wrestle with fresh, challenging ideas and do not simply re-hash class discussion or invoke tired, predictable arguments. They privilege, certainly, sophisticated literary analysis over basic plot summary and their work reveals a deliberate, thoughtful, and analytical textual engagement that is polished, professional, revised, and proofread. Overall, they are students who are more interested in truly learning than they are about their grade.

Poor students suffer from failing to prepare fully, from reading for plot rather than meaning, from cutting corners, from failing to attend class, from responding to complex questions with banal or superficial answers, from generally being disengaged from the intellectual environment of a college course (both in and out of the classroom). They rarely challenge themselves; rather, poor students take the easiest and simplest approach to their work and circumvent real effort whenever possible. Their papers lack originality and have not been drafted, revised, or proofread. They demonstrate an attitude of “just enough to get by” and are more concerned with their grade and the basic requirements than with what they can actually learn.

Your final grade for the course will be computed as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal Papers:</td>
<td>20% each (40% total)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exams:</td>
<td>15% each (30% total)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation and essay:</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical response:</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation:</td>
<td>10%</td>
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</tbody>
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Late assignments: All written work is due in class on the day stipulated on the syllabus or on the day you’ve signed up. I will grant extensions in special circumstances. If you need an extension, you must contact me at least 48 hours before the assignment is due. Any unexcused late assignment will be penalized a one-tier reduction per day late; in other words, an A becomes an A-, a B+ becomes a B, and so on. Weekends (Friday-Monday) count as three days, and so the impact on a late assignment is an
automatic three-tier deduction. If I have not received your work within 7 days of the original due date, you will fail the assignment; if I never receive it, you will fail the course.

**ABSENCES**

You are allowed two (2) absences free-of-charge; use them wisely. Beyond those two, any absences and/or habitual tardiness will cost your final course average three tenths of a point. If you miss more than six classes, you will fail the course. If you miss class on the day a paper is due, you must leave it outside my office door by 11 am to avoid late penalties. Do not email your papers. Note: you are responsible for finding out from a classmate what happened in class the day you were absent. I will not respond to emails asking me for this information.

**PARTICIPATION**

Participation in a 200-level literature course is critical to your learning experience, particularly in a class where one of the primarily goals is to become an active reader and critic of early modern texts. Students who fail to contribute verbally and thoughtfully to the class discussion on a regular basis are not only impeding their own academic and intellectual growth, but also that of the other students. In other words, we all benefit when you are actively engaged, and this means the following: arriving on time, speaking up, paying attention, bringing your book, reading aloud, asking questions, offering answers. If you appear bored, disengaged, preoccupied, I will assume you are not participating. I take this aspect of your grade very seriously and expect you to, as well. Please note: If you fail to bring your book to class on any day of the semester, your final participation grade will be automatically lower by a full letter grade each time.

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**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 lower grade, in some cases 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.