

English 403: Shakespeare, The Early Works

Tuesdays/Thursdays 11:00-12:15, Tawes Hall 0236

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Office hours: Tuesdays/Thursdays 3:00-4:00 and by appointment
Tawes Hall 3243

This is a course on the early career of William Shakespeare. We will begin with Shakespeare's sonnets and his narrative poem *Venus and Adonis*, attending closely to language and meter. From there we will move to the stage, tracking the intersection between written and theatrical traditions in histories, comedies and tragedies. Throughout the course, we will ask how and why embodied performance becomes so prominent and dynamic a vehicle for Shakespeare's art, how the theater engages with its historical and political moment, and what ideas, themes, philosophies and emotions emerge in Shakespeare's work as he rises to prominence during the 1590s.

This course requires immersing yourself in Shakespeare in a new way. Many of you will know Shakespeare from other courses and contexts: that is not enough. You will need to draw connections between Shakespeare and contemporary culture, to reimagine his work in performance today, and to read extremely closely, with fresh eyes.

Books:

- William Shakespeare. *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare*. Ed. Stephen Orgel and A. R. Braunmuller. Penguin, 2002. ISBN: 0141000589.

It is best to use an edition of the complete works, since you will likely consult passages from plays not on the syllabus, and we will sometimes flip back to texts from earlier in the semester. *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare* is available cheaply online, and good to own.

If you have a problem carrying around the complete works, you may use the Pelican editions of the individual texts we will be reading, edited by Orgel and Braunmiller. Careful to purchase the recent Pelican editions *only* (this can be confusing: we will *not* be using the previous editions by Alfred Harbage, *nor* the "new Penguin Shakespeare").

You may use another edition of the complete works if you already own one (such as the Riverside or the Norton). It is possible to get by with recent Oxford, Signet, Cambridge, Folger, Norton or Arden editions of individual texts - but remember that, in addition to the plays on the syllabus, you will need editions of the sonnets and *Venus and Adonis*. Check editions not mentioned with me in advance: online editions and some print editions are not acceptable.

Check www.addall.com and www.amazon.com for used copies.

Additional required texts will be available for download as pdfs on our ELMS course site. Make sure to download and print them in advance.

Shakespeare Today:

- This semester you will have a unique opportunity to think and write about Shakespeare in contemporary performance. There will be two exciting productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* available to you inexpensively: you won't want to miss them.

I have arranged for discounted (70% off) tickets to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at The Shakespeare Theatre Company in Washington. Tickets are \$29, which is an excellent value.

Please make every effort to attend this performance on the evening of Thursday, November 15. The Shakespeare Theatre's audience enrichment manager has agreed to discuss the performance with us on that date. In order to reserve your ticket, please pay me \$29 (exact cash or check) by Thursday, September 13.

There will also be a bilingual (English and Chinese) production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center from September 27-30. Student tickets are \$10.

I strongly encourage you to attend one or both of these productions. If you have unavoidable conflicts, you may attend another production of Shakespeare instead. One way or another, you are required to attend a production of Shakespeare by November 15.

Course requirements:

- Active participation in class discussion (10%)
- Reading quizzes at the beginning of each class, and sonnet memorization (10%)
- Weekly blog submissions (15%)
- First paper, 4-5 pages (15%)
- Second paper, 8-9 pages (30%)
- Final exam (20%)

Policies

- Come to every class, and come on time. Reading quizzes begin on time at the beginning of every class, and they cannot be made up.
- If you have an unavoidable absence, please post a reaction to that day's readings on the blog. A substantial post will help offset a missed quiz. This is in addition to your weekly required blog posting. Make the post on the day you have missed, or before.
- Your participation grade is not based on the number of times that you comment during class. It is based on your sustained engagement in our discussions throughout the semester. Your participation grade improves (for example) when you are attentive to your peers, when you ask a thoughtful question, when you suggest a new topic and when you try out a new idea. It's okay to make mistakes and change your

mind: what that tells me is that you are processing new ideas and pushing yourself.

- Turn off phones and computers completely (not to vibrate or silent) and leave them in your bag.
- You are responsible for following the university code on academic honesty. If I detect plagiarism, I will report it to the Honor Council, and you will be subject to receiving an "XF" for the course, with the notation on your transcript, "Failure due to academic dishonesty." For information on plagiarism, visit: <http://www.lib.umd.edu/guides/citing.html>

Bookmark our course blog and sign up for email alerts:

<http://english403fall12.wordpress.com/>

You are required to contribute to the blog at least once per week. Vary your entries so that some are posts and some are comments. Each week's contribution should add up to one substantial post, or a few shorter comments.

I encourage you to be informal and creative. Try posting further thoughts about something that came up during class discussion. Or, bring up a passage that we didn't discuss in class. Or, try out an idea you have been mulling over in a paper. Experiment with pairing texts on the syllabus with texts from other courses, literature of other periods, or media from contemporary culture. For example, you might link to a clip on YouTube that helps to illuminate something at stake in an early modern play. Make sure to explain how your pairing helps us understand the course text in a new way.

I will occasionally provide blog prompts, but in general I would like you to generate the discussion. Any topic that relates to the issues of the course is welcome. Your grade will depend upon how thoughtfully you respond to your classmates as well as the quality of your own posts.

Please complete your contribution by 5PM Monday every week. Make sure to check the blog regularly.

One of your blog posts will be a lengthier (500-word) response to Shakespeare in performance. I will discuss my expectations for your two formal papers early in the semester.

You will be required to memorize a sonnet of your choice. You will write down your sonnet from memory early in the semester, and again (the same sonnet) in the final weeks of class.

If you have a disability that needs accommodation, please let me know during the first two weeks of class.

Thursday, August 30

- Introduction

Tuesday, September 4

- Sonnets 1, 12, 15, 18, 20, 29, 31
- David Bevington, "Shakespeare the Man" (download) (Kastan, ed. *Companion to Shakespeare*, 9-24)
- Ben Jonson, "To the Memory of My Beloved, the Author, Mr. William Shakespeare, and What He Hath Left Us" (download, and see the facsimile from Shakespeare's Folio in the opening pages of the Pelican edition)

Thursday, September 6

- Philip Sidney: *Astrophel and Stella*, Sonnets 1 and 45 (download)
- Edmund Spenser: *Amoretti*, Sonnets 1 and 75 (download)
- Shakespeare: Sonnets 33, 35, 42, 55, 60

Tuesday, September 11

- Sonnets 71, 73, 94, 106, 107, 127, 128
- James Shapiro, from *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* (download)

Thursday, September 13

- \$29 due for Shakespeare Theatre Company tickets
- Choose the sonnet that you will memorize
- Sonnets 129, 130, 136, 138, 144, 147, 152

Tuesday, September 18

- Shakespeare: *Venus and Adonis* (read the whole poem by this date)
- Ovid, from *Metamorphoses* (download)
- 1-page abstract due

Thursday, September 20

- Sonnet memorization due
- Shakespeare: *Venus and Adonis* (continued)
- Christopher Marlowe: "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" (download)
- Walter Raleigh: "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd" (download)
- John Donne: "The Bait" (download)

Tuesday, September 25

- *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: Acts 1-2

Thursday, September 27

- *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: Act 3
- Dorothea Kehler, "Marion McClinton's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the La Jolla Playhouse, 1995: Appropriation Through Performance" (download)

Tuesday, October 2

- *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: Acts 4-5
- First paper due

Thursday, October 4

- *As You Like It*: Acts 1-2

Tuesday, October 9

- *As You Like It*: Acts 3-5

Thursday, October 11

- *The Merchant of Venice*: Act 1
- Julie Crawford, "The Homoerotics of Shakespeare's Elizabethan Comedies" (download)

Tuesday, October 16

- *The Merchant of Venice*: Acts 2-3

Thursday, October 18

- *The Merchant of Venice*: Acts 4-5

Tuesday, October 23

- *Richard III*: Act 1
- Andrew Gurr, "Shakespeare's Playhouses" (download)

Thursday, October 25

- *Richard III*: Acts 2-4

Tuesday, October 30

- *Richard III*: Act 5

Thursday, November 1

- *Henry IV, Part 1*: Act 1

Tuesday, November 6

- *Henry IV, Part 1*: Acts 2-3

Thursday, November 8

- *Henry IV, Part 1*: Acts 4-5

Tuesday, November 13

- *Romeo and Juliet*: Acts 1-2

Thursday, November 15

- *Romeo and Juliet*: Act 3
- Shakespeare Theatre Company performance

Tuesday, November 20

- Writing workshop: bring 3 copies of 6-7 pages

-- Thanksgiving Break --

Tuesday, November 27

- *Romeo and Juliet*: Acts 4-5
- Peter Holland, Introduction in the Pelican edition

Thursday, November 29

- Final paper due
- *Hamlet*: Act 1

Tuesday, December 4

- *Hamlet*: Acts 2-3

Thursday, December 6

- *Hamlet*: Acts 4-5
- Michael Bristol, "'Funeral Bak'd-Meats': Carnival and the Carnavalesque in *Hamlet*" (download)

Tuesday, December 11

- Sonnet memorization (second round)
- Review

Tuesday, December 13 at 8:00 AM

- Final Exam