

# English 305: Shakespeare and His Contemporaries

Mondays/Wednesdays 3:30-4:45, Tawes Hall 1321

**Professor:** Scott Trudell  
trudell@umd.edu

**Office hours:** Mondays 11:30-1:30 and by appointment  
Tawes Hall 3228

The flourishing theatrical culture of Elizabethan and Jacobean England involved many playwrights. Shakespeare borrowed from Thomas Kyd, revered Christopher Marlowe, competed with Ben Jonson, and collaborated with Thomas Middleton. This course places Shakespeare alongside the other dramatists of his era, exploring connections between early modern plays and contextualizing them in their historical moment. We will ask how the theater became such a vibrant and commercially successful artform during the reign of Elizabeth I, how it expanded and changed under James I, what makes Shakespeare unique among his peers, and what themes and philosophies emerge across the drama of the period. We will also draw connections between Shakespearean England and contemporary culture, asking why and how the drama of this period raises pressing questions about our own historical moment.

## Books:

- Cary, Elizabeth. *The Tragedy of Mariam*. Ed. Ramona Wray. Arden Early Modern Drama, 2012. ISBN: 9781904271598.
- Smith, Emma, ed. *Five Revenge Tragedies*. Penguin, 2012. ISBN: 9780141192277.
- Marlowe, Christopher. *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays*. Ed. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen. Oxford University Press, 2008. ISBN: 0199537062.
- Shakespeare, William. *Richard III*. Ed. Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine. Folger Shakespeare Library, 2015. ISBN: 9780743482844.

Check [www.bookfinder.com](http://www.bookfinder.com) and [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) for used copies. If you already own other editions of any of the course texts, please check with me. Online editions are not acceptable for this course.

Additional required texts will be available for download as pdfs on our ELMS course site. **You are required to bring all required reading in hard copy on the days we discuss it.** I strongly advise purchasing a printer if you do not already own one.

## Course requirements:

- Paper of 1750-2250 words (20%)
- Preparedness and active participation in class (20%)
- Weekly blog submissions and play review (20%)
- Wikipedia assignment (20%)
- Final exam (20%)

What to expect:

**The Engliſhe is according to the tyme it was written in, and  
the fence ſomewhat darcke, but not ſo hard; but that it maye  
be vnderſtaunde of ſuch as wyll not ſticke to breake the ſhell  
of the nutte for the kernelles ſake,**

-Robert Crowley on *Piers Plowman*, 1550

This course requires no previous experience with early modern English. We will work on reading comprehension in class. Just make sure to put in the effort right away, especially by reading aloud (my #1 tip for getting the hang of it) and by going through and re-reading the language once you understand the plot. Work on it, hang in there, and you will see rapid improvement.

I may give unannounced reading quizzes; the only preparation necessary is to complete the assigned reading for each class. Failing quizzes after having done the reading may be a warning sign of comprehension problems, or it may be a warning sign that you have not read closely enough. If you are having reading comprehension trouble, email me to make an appointment or drop into my office hours.

The final exam will take the form of five short essay questions, each asking you to pair two texts on the syllabus. The exam touches on many texts and rewards those who have read attentively throughout the course. I will provide a sample exam so that you are able to practice your responses on the blog and on your own. You will be allowed to use your books and your marginal notes (but not notebooks or loose sheets of paper) on the exam, so it is to your advantage to take notes in your books over the course of the semester (using post-it notes if you don't want to write in them).

Your first writing assignment will be a paper of 1750-2250 words (approximately 5-6 pages) on *The Spanish Tragedy*. Your first draft will be due **Feburary 17** and your final draft will be due **February 25**.

Your second writing assignment will take place on Wikipedia, where our goal as a class will be to improve the article on *A Game at Chess*. All components of this assignment will be laid out for you in a detailed course module developed through the Wiki Education Foundation: make sure to register and keep up to date with the module **beginning March 25**.

You are required to attend and review at least one Shakespearean play this semester. I will arrange class trips (with discounted tickets) to the Shakespeare Theater Company production of *Richard III* and the Folger Theatre production of *Love's Labor's Lost*. Please make sure that your review makes use of what you are learning in class, including your historical understanding of early modern drama and your tools for critical analysis. Your review should be **500-700 words long** and should be posted on the blog en lieu of a given week's required post **by May 12 at the latest**.

Please pay close attention to the due dates on the syllabus: most of your assignments have deadlines outside of class, in electronic form.

**Blog requirement:**

Blogging will be a key part of this course: you will do a lot of your writing in this format, and class discussion will emerge from what you say online. By Sunday night each week, you are required to make a blog post about the upcoming week's readings and to make at least one comment on peer's post.

I will occasionally provide blog prompts, but in general I prefer for you to generate the discussion. Your posts will be the starting points for your papers; they will respond to and inspire threads of discussion in class; and they will allow you to draw connections between course texts and contemporary culture.

Posts should generally focus on the reading for the coming week. This means that you will need to have completed the reading by Sunday night each week. That said, it's okay to pick up on something that came up during the previous week's discussion. Try connecting the upcoming reading to what we discussed in class, for example. It's also okay to focus on something from the previous week that we did not have time to discuss in class. Just make sure that most of your posts touch on new material.

I encourage you to experiment with pairing texts on the syllabus with texts from other courses, literature of other periods, or digital media. For example, try linking to a clip on YouTube that helps to illuminate something at stake in that week's reading. Make sure to explain how your pairing helps us understand the course text in a new way.

Any topic that relates to the upcoming week's readings is welcome. This is your chance to set the agenda for discussion: if there are characters or issues you'd like to talk about in class, you should bring them up on the blog!

Please bookmark the blog here and sign up for email updates:

<<https://english305spring19.wordpress.com>>

The first step will be responding to an auto-generated invitation that you will receive via email. Check for messages from a Wordpress email address, accept the invitation, and follow the instructions for registering with the site.

Remember to make a post of your own **and** at least one comment per week. To make a post, it is best to use the "Write a new post" link, in the "Get to work" column on the right (using the drop-down menu sometimes leads to confusion). Your grade will reflect how thoughtfully you engage with fellow students, so you will need to read the blog each week and respond to your classmates' ideas.

**Policies:**

- Attendance and participation are extremely important in this course.

- I grade participation based on thoughtful, consistent engagement with the class. This is not simply about speaking often: more important is how you listen and respond to your peers.
- I take attendance daily. Absences that are not excused will result in failing participation grades. You may submit written documentation of excused absences before class begins or during my office hours. For the University policy on absences, see <<http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html>>
- If you miss class for any reason, follow these steps:
  - 1) Send me a brief email before class begins to let me know that you cannot attend.
  - 2) Post a reaction to that day's readings on the course blog. Make-up posts are in addition to your weekly blog posts: they do not count as your post for the week. Post within three days of the class you missed and title it "Make-up post." Failing to submit make-up posts will result in lower or failing grades for participation and blog performance.
  - 3) Obtain notes. Find a partner and exchange contact information early in the semester to help with this.
- Turn off phones and computers completely (not to vibrate or silent) and leave them in your bag. Some students may require an exception: see me if this is the case.
- 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."
- If you have a disability that requires accommodation, please let me know during the first two weeks of class.
- If there are hardships that will affect your course performance, I encourage you to let me know early in the semester. We can discuss strategies for succeeding.
- It is my intent that students from diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and learning needs be well served by this course and that the diversity students bring to class be viewed as a resource and strength. Dimensions of diversity include intersections of sex, race, age, national origin, ethnicity, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, intellectual and physical ability, primary language, faith and non-faith perspectives, income, political affiliation, marital or family status, education, and any other legally protected class. I endeavor to present materials and activities that foster a positive learning environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Please let me know of ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or other students or student groups.
- For further information on course policies and related resources, see <<http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html>>

**Course schedule:**

**Monday, January 28**

- Introductions
- Marlowe: from *Tamburlaine the Great* (handout)

**Wednesday, January 30**

- Set up your Wordpress account
- *The Spanish Tragedy*: Act 1

**Sunday, February 3**

- Blog post due by midnight

**Monday, February 4**

- *The Spanish Tragedy*: Act 2
- Stephen Gosson: from *The School of Abuse* (course reserves)
- Philip Sidney: from *The Defense of Poesy* (course reserves)

**Wednesday, February 6**

- *The Spanish Tragedy*: Act 3

**Sunday, February 10**

- Blog post due by midnight

**Monday, February 11**

- *The Spanish Tragedy*: Act 4 and "The Additions"

**Wednesday, February 13**

- *Richard III*: Act 1

**Sunday, February 17**

- Paper draft due: post an extract on the blog

**Monday, February 18**

- Paper workshop: bring a hard copy of your draft to class

**Wednesday, February 20**

- *Richard III* (read the entire play by this date)

**Sunday, February 24**

- Paper due by midnight (via ELMS)

**Monday, February 25**

- *Richard III* (continued)
- Anna Blackwell, "Tweeting from the Grave: Shakespeare, Adaptation, and Social Media" (course reserves)

**Wednesday, February 27**

- Folger visit

**Sunday, March 3**

- Blog post due by midnight

**Monday, March 4**

- Jonson: *Masque of Blackness, Masque of Queens* (course reserves)

**Wednesday, March 6**

- *Tragedy of Mariam* (read the entire play by this date)

**Sunday, March 10**

- Blog post due by midnight

**Monday, March 11**

- *Tragedy of Mariam* (continued)
- Ramona Wray, Introduction to the Arden edition of the play, pp. 1-8 and 16-27

**Wednesday, March 13**

- *Tragedy of Mariam* (continued)
- Ramona Wray, Introduction to the Arden edition of the play, pp. 38-44

-- Spring Break! --

**Sunday, March 24**

- Blog post due by midnight

**Monday, March 25**

- *Edward II*
- Begin Wikipedia module

**Wednesday, March 27**

- *Edward II* (continued)
- Make preliminary Wikipedia groups and determine what version of *A Game of Chess* to read. Half of each group will read 'An Early Form' and half will read 'A Later Form,' divided alphabetically.

**Sunday, March 31**

- Blog post due by midnight

**Monday, April 1**

- *Edward II* (continued)

**Wednesday, April 3**

- *A Game at Chess* (course reserves)

**Sunday, April 7**

- No blog post due this week: concentrate on the Wikipedia module. By this point you should have: 1) Created a Wikipedia account and registered with our course module; 2) Read the pdfs on Editing and Evaluating Wikipedia; 3) Completed the training on "Wikipedia Essentials" and "Editing Basics"

**Monday, April 8**

- *A Game at Chess* (continued)
- Gary Taylor, Introduction to the Oxford edition of *A Game at Chess* (course reserves)

**Wednesday, April 10**

- Wikipedia workshop I. Come to class up to date on the module and prepared to discuss questions including: Who might read the article on *A Game at Chess*, and why? Why would the article need updating? What can we do to improve it? What kind of expertise do we need?

**Sunday, April 14**

- No blog post due: concentrate on making sure that you are up to date on the Wikipedia module.

**Monday, April 15**

- *A Game at Chess* (continued)
- Musa Gurnis, selection from *Mixed Faith and Shared Feeling* (course reserves)

**Tuesday, April 16**

- Wikipedia team proposals due: team representatives should post them on the blog by midnight

**Wednesday, April 17**

- Wikipedia workshop II. Come to class having completed all preparatory modules, ready to discuss and evaluate team proposals.

**Sunday, April 21**

- Wikipedia individual implementation plan due: submit via ELMS

**Monday, April 22**

- *Antonio's Revenge*

**Wednesday, April 24**

- *Antonio's Revenge* (continued)

**Sunday, April 28**

- Blog post due by midnight
- Last day to make Wikipedia edits

**Monday, April 29**

- *Antonio's Revenge* (continued)

**Wednesday, May 1**

- *The Revenger's Tragedy*

**Sunday, May 5**

- Wikipedia reflection essay due: submit via ELMS

**Monday, May 6**

- *The Revenger's Tragedy* (continued)

**Wednesday, May 8**

- *The Revenger's Tragedy* (continued)

**Sunday, May 12**

- Blog post due by midnight

**Monday, May 13**

- Course evaluations: meet in Tawes 0223
- Review

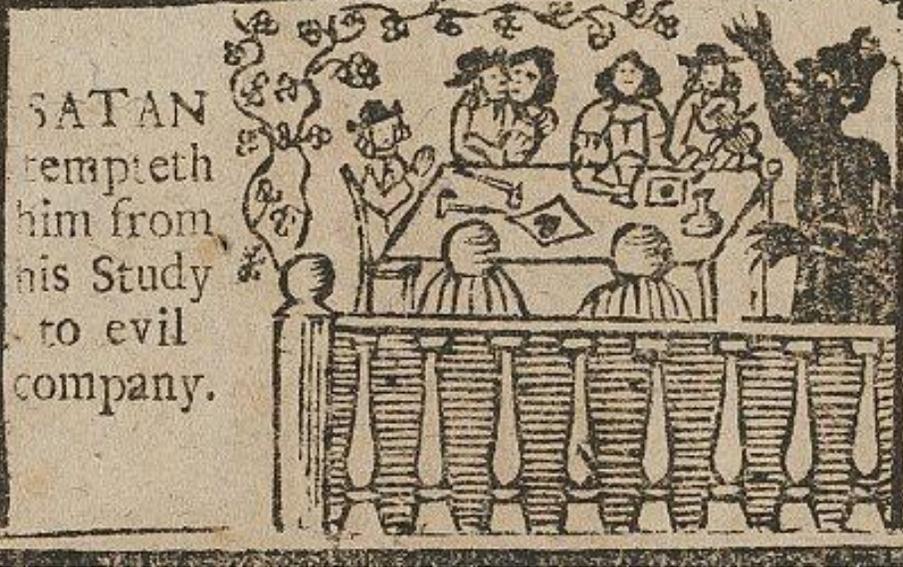
**Saturday, May 18, 1:30-3:30 in our regular classroom**

- Final Exam: open-book



The Vertu-  
ous Student

...NOW is the Way, and stright is the Gate, that



SATAN  
tempteth  
him from  
his Study  
to evil  
company.