Dr. Emily Thomas
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Office Hrs: M 2-3, F 2-4, & by appt

Course Description: The selection of texts for this course will engage you with some Shakespeare’s most sympathetic representations of human relationships, along with some of his most violent, unkind, and incomprehensible. In our readings of The Taming of the Shrew, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, The Merchant of Venice, Titus Andronicus, and Hamlet, we will cover a range of Shakespeare’s most beloved and most problematic plays. Over the course of the term, students will enhance their reading proficiency, strengthen close reading skills, and—most importantly—develop their own sense of Shakespeare’s plays. I have also chosen these particular texts in part because of the interesting film versions available, and we will focus considerably on performance interpretation. Topics of discussion will include theatricality, education, constructions of female agency and misogyny, masculinity and male relationships, cross-dressing, representations of religion and race, genre constraints, and more.

Required Texts:
- Hamlet (The Pelican edition will be available at the Duckstore later in the term, but it is also okay with me if you decide to use a different edition)

Grade Breakdown:

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Film Screening Attendance</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation &amp; Attendance</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
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<td>Letter to the Director</td>
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<td>Midterm</td>
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<td>Final Essay Proposal</td>
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<td>Final Essay</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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Assignments:
- **Quizzes** will take diverse forms; I design quizzes to test your comprehension of the material and also to give you an opportunity to think critically and respond to the texts. Quizzes cannot be made up (they will often take place at the beginning of class—don’t be late!), but I will drop your lowest quiz score from your grade.
- The **Letter to the Director Assignment** will help you develop close reading skills by requiring you to focus on specific passages of either The Taming of the Shrew or A Midsummer Night’s Dream that you believe make the character more complex. You are required to come to my office hours (or make an appointment) to discuss you two quotes with me during Weeks Three or Four. You will receive further instructions in Week Two.
- The **Final Essay/Creative Project** will be a more flexible assignment in which you will have two choices. Your first choice is to write a 4-5 page paper in response to specific prompts, which I will provide; in this case, you will submit an Essay Proposal in Week Nine, which will identify your central claim and primary support. Your second choice is to design an independent or group “Creative Project.” Creative Projects will be
accompanied by a 3-page Justification Essay (due in Finals Week), which will rely on textual evidence from the play to justify the importance of the Creative Project. Creative Projects may include scene performances, sketches of costume designs or staging, a script rewriting a key scene from a play, recording a sound track, or really any other format that you think would lead to a deeper understanding of some aspect of one of our plays. Performance projects may be shared with the class during Week Ten. Those interested in doing a Creative Project must clear it with me no later than Friday of Week Eight. I will distribute prompts, assignment descriptions, and grading criteria later in the term.

- The Midterm and Final Exams will be comprehensive and cumulative (although the final will focus more heavily on post-midterm material). Exams cannot be rescheduled, so plan accordingly.

- Film Screenings: I will screen five plays outside of class meeting times. You must attend one film screening over the course of the term, and you should look over the syllabus early on and select a film screening that will work with your schedule. You will earn a small amount of extra credit for attending more than two screenings (see below).

- Extra Credit: You are required to attend one film screening during the term. You can earn extra credit by simply attending additional film screenings (½% per screening—note that this can add up to a considerable impact on your grade). If you are unable to attend the additional film screenings (again, one is mandatory) but would still like extra credit, you may obtain the same film version and watch it on your own; you can then earn the extra credit by coming to my office hours with a few prepared thoughts about how the movie compares to our class discussions of the play, and I will ask you a few questions about the film at that point. All extra credit assignments will be due by the last day we discuss that play in class. Note that extra credit means you went above and beyond in our class, and I will only award it to students who take the initiative to find a way to take advantage of these opportunities in a timely and responsible manner. You need to follow these directions precisely, and I will not be able to make alternative assignments or provide you with copies of our films if they are checked out of the library by the time you want them.

Policies

Academic Honesty: All work submitted for this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course (this means you may not turn in a paper you wrote for another class, even if you’ve read the material before). The use of sources (for ideas, quotations, and paraphrases) must be properly documented. In cases where Academic Dishonesty is established, you will receive an F for the final course grade, and I will submit paperwork to ensure that any future conduct issues go onto your permanent record. Please see me if you have any questions about your use of sources. Most academic dishonesty cases happen when students panic at the last minute; I will usually be happy to grant you an extension, so please don’t resort to cheating.

A note on using online summaries, paraphrases, and other sources: A lot has been written on Shakespeare in the past 400 years. It is easy to pull up hundreds of analyses of Shakespeare with the click of a button, and, unfortunately, once we read what someone else has said about a play, it becomes very difficult to have our own interpretations. What I hope to see in your writing for this course is your own individual struggle with understanding and finding meaning in Shakespeare, even if you feel your take may not be correct (usually there is no single “correct”
interpretation). Online summaries are interpretations; the choices other people make about what to include and what to emphasize are themselves arguments, and paraphrases of Shakespeare erase some possible meanings while solidifying others. You may choose to look at summaries to supplement your ability to understand what is happening in a play, and that is fine. But remember that online summaries are generally not written for college-level courses, and they are only a good supplement if you are struggling; the only way you will become more fluent in reading Shakespeare is by practicing. If you do look at any online source as you work on any paper, even if you do not quote from it, you should include that source in a “Works Consulted” list at the end of your paper. Failure to cite any source that may have influenced your reading of the play (including, but not limited to, summaries, paraphrases, and articles) may be treated as Academic Dishonesty and penalized accordingly. If you want to read good interpretations of the plays to help you with your own work, please rely on the introductions to the plays in the Norton book, and feel free to quote and cite them in your essays; these introductions are written by prominent Shakespeare scholars and may help you generate strong ideas.

Attendance and Participation: An “A” student in this course will be in class every day with the appropriate text in hand, ready to contribute; if you are sick and cannot be in class, you should tell me that through email and check with a classmate to find out what you missed. Absences are the #1 reason students fail this class. Remember that many students become ill in flu season, and you should not miss class for any other reason than illness or emergency—save your absences for extenuating circumstances (as in all college courses, you are given three excused absences for extenuating circumstances—not three absences to use as you wish plus more for extenuating circumstances). You may miss up to one week of class (3 class sessions) without penalty. After that, I will subtract 2% from your overall course grade for each additional absence. If you are absent, you still need to get assignments to me by beginning of class, otherwise they are late (see policy on emailing papers for details about how to turn in your work if you are absent).

Late Work: If you need extra time on an assignment, you should arrange that with me in advance. If you have an arranged extension, you will not lose points, although I am unlikely to offer extensions on multiple assignments. Otherwise, any work that is not turned by the time I ask for it in class is late, even if you are absent. I will reduce your score by one full letter grade (10%) per day it is late.

Printer problems: If for any reason you cannot turn a hard copy of your work in when it is due at the beginning of class (due to printer problems or unexpected absence, for instance), you can only get full credit by emailing me your work before class so that I can verify that you have done it on time (assignments emailed during class time will also lose 10%--please don’t skip class to finish assignments). If you have to email work to me, paste the assignment into the body of the email, and bring the assignment to me as a hard copy at the next class meeting. I will not print your work or remind you to bring the hard copy—that is your responsibility. If you fail to paste the assignment into the email and I cannot open the attachment, or if you do not bring the hard copy to the following class session, your assignment will receive a late penalty. Work that is not submitted as a hard copy at the time it is due will be graded and returned to you at my discretion.

Formatting: Use standard formatting (12-point Times New Roman, 1.25” margins, double spaced) on all assignments. Include page numbers and a header on the first page that indicates your name, the course name, my name, the assignment title, and the assignment due date. The use of outside sources is not required or encouraged, but any outside/additional sources (including the Norton introductions, articles, or online summaries you may have read—even if
you don’t quote them) must be documented in a Works Consulted list at the end of your assignment.

**Contacting me:** If you have extensive questions about an assignment or about the material, or if you miss a class and want to find out what you missed, please attend office hours or schedule an appointment with me; I love to meet with students in person, and it is a great way for me to get to know you better. I also extend the courtesy of responding to your emails, even when I’m not in my office or at work! As in all your classes, you should put time into making sure that emails to me are clear, concise, and professional. Even if you are emailing from your phone, remember to proofread your email in order to be sure that I will be able to understand your question. On weekdays, I will *try to* respond to your clear and professional emails within a day. I do not guarantee email responses over weekends. If more than a full business day has passed and I have not responded to a question you had, you are welcome to send me a polite reminder email. Please note that I do not send confirmation emails to everything students send me to let them know I received their notes about absences, emailed assignments, etc.

**A note on the Gradebook:** Blackboard is a great tool for keeping students and teachers connected and up to date; I will use it to post course readings, Powerpoints, handouts, and assignments. If you have trouble finding any of these things on our site, please feel free to let me know. However, updating the Gradebook on Blackboard is not a primary teaching priority for me; I *may* update online grades throughout the term, but I will always lesson plan, grade work, and meet with students before doing so. I strongly encourage you to keep track of the grades you receive on your work so that you can tally up your total any time you are curious.

**Student with Extracurricular Commitments:** The attendance policy applies to all students, so student-athletes, student-musicians, etc., often need to take extra care to reserve absences for other commitments. I am not able to develop alternative assignments even for arranged absences; if you must be absent during a quiz and would like to make it up, you will need to give me the contact information for an official proctor who can administer the quiz while you are away. Speak to me early in the term if you have questions or concerns.

**Incompletes:** Approval for incompletes will be granted only in cases when students through unforeseen circumstances beyond their control cannot complete some minor but essential aspect of the course.

**Access:** If you have a disability (physical or learning) that you think may affect your performance in this class, please see me during the first week of the term so we can make arrangements, if necessary, for your full access to all classroom activities.

**Schedule:**

(Please note that assignments are subject to change, in which case I will notify you)

**Week One:**

- **Mon, Jan 7**
  - Welcome to Shakespeare!

- **Weds, Jan 9**
  - *Taming* Inductions and Act I

- **Fri, Jan 11**
  - *Taming* Act II
    - In class: Reading Comprehension Practice Activity
Week Two:
Mon, Jan 14th  Taming Act III
Distributed: Letter to the Director Assignment

Weds, Jan 16th  Taming Act IV

Weds, Jan. 16th  Film Screening #1 (6:00pm, Location TBA)

Fri, Jan 18th  Taming Act V
Quiz

Week Three:

NOTE: You are **required in Weeks 3-4** to come to my office hours to show me your two quotes for the “Letter to the Director” assignment and discuss them

Mon, Jan 21st  **Class cancelled in observance of MLK Day**

Weds, Jan 23rd  *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Act I-II
Quiz

Fri, Jan 25th  *Midsummer* Act III
In class: Letter to the Director Worksheet (bring your two quotes to class)

Week Four:
Mon, Jan 28th  *Midsummer* Act IV
Quiz

Tues, Jan. 29th  **Film Screening #2** (5:00pm, location TBA)

Weds, Jan 30th  *Midsummer* Act V
Bring: Draft of “Letter to the Director” Assignment for peer editing

Fri, Feb 1st  Midterm preparation
**DUE:** Letter to the Director Assignment

Week Five:
Mon, Feb 4th  **Midterm Examination**

Weds, Feb 6th  *Merchant of Venice*, Act I

Fri, Feb 8th  *Merchant*, Act II
Quiz

Week Six:
Mon, Feb 11th  *Merchant* Act III
Mon, Feb. 11th  **Film Screening #3** (6:00pm, Location TBA)

Weds, Feb 13th  *Merchant* Act IV-V
Quiz

Fri, Feb. 15\textsuperscript{th} Final Discussion of \textit{Merchant of Venice}

\textbf{Week Seven:}

Mon, Feb 18\textsuperscript{th} \textit{Titus Andronicus} Act I
Quiz

Weds, Feb 20\textsuperscript{th} \textit{Titus} Act II

Fri, Feb 22\textsuperscript{nd} \textit{Titus} Act III

\textbf{Week Eight:}

Mon, Feb 25\textsuperscript{th} \textit{Titus} Act IV
\textit{Mon, Feb. 25\textsuperscript{th}} Film Screening #4 (6:00pm, location TBA)

Weds, Feb 27\textsuperscript{th} \textit{Titus} Act V
Quiz

Fri, Mar 1\textsuperscript{st} Final Discussion of \textit{Titus}
In class: Final Essay Assignment Distributed
\textit{Last day to propose Creative Final Projects}

\textbf{Week Nine:}

Mon, Mar 4\textsuperscript{th} \textit{Hamlet} Act I
Quiz

Weds, Mar 6\textsuperscript{th} \textit{Hamlet} Act II

\textit{Thurs, Mar. 7\textsuperscript{th}} Film Screening #5 (5:30, Location TBA)

Fri, Mar 8\textsuperscript{th} \textit{Hamlet} Act III
\textbf{DUE: Proposal for Final Essay Assignment}

\textbf{Week Ten:}

Mon, Mar 11\textsuperscript{th} \textit{Hamlet} Act IV

Weds, Mar 13\textsuperscript{th} \textit{Hamlet} Act V

Fri, Mar 15\textsuperscript{th} In class: Final Exam Preparation

\textbf{Finals Week:}

Mon, Mar. 18\textsuperscript{th} \textbf{Final Exam at 3:15pm}

Weds, Mar. 20\textsuperscript{th} \textbf{DUE by noon:} Final Essay, with graded Essay Proposal attached
(or Creative Project Justification Essay)