

English 207: Shakespeare in His World
CRN 17289
Tues., Thurs. 5:00-6:20
PLC 253

Fall Term 2014
Prof. L. Westling
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Texts (available at Duck Store or Smith Family Bookstore, and on Blackboard)

William Shakespeare---*Richard III*
Midsummer Night's Dream
Merchant of Venice
Henry IV, Part I
Hamlet

(Selected scholarly essays on Blackboard; You Tube videos of performances, and other online materials)

Course Description

William Shakespeare lived in and helped to shape an explosively creative time in English life and culture, centered in the reign of Elizabeth Tudor whose leadership brought her country into a global position of power. Our course will emphasize the life of the poet in his world, focusing on five early plays that established his unusual position among his fellow playwrights. We will read the plays closely with attention to their rhetorical and dramatic forms but always understanding that these texts are **scripts** for live performance, to be **heard and spoken and acted**, not chiefly to be read on the page. Everyone in the class will participate in reading and speaking the lines of these plays. Elizabethan theatre was the most popular and controversial entertainment of its time, and William Shakespeare was the dominant writer of plays both respected and loved by his fellow writers and actors. Historical struggles in blood and gore, revenge plots, folklore and traditional country rituals, political intrigues and the fall of princes, love plots and explorations of character--all these ingredients made his plays as popular as Hollywood blockbusters and hot TV serials are today.

Requirements

Because this class meets only twice a week and has a seminar format, regular attendance is essential. Your grade will drop a letter for every class missed beyond two. Active class participation and punctual completion of all assigned work are required. There will be regular reports, short papers, and oral activities (discussion, readings, declamations, performance of short scenes), as well as a mid-term and a final exam. Participation will be worth roughly 20% of the final grade, papers 40%, and each exam 20%. These are approximate percentages, however, because improvement will be rewarded. **Papers must be turned in during class on the due date to receive full credit. Make-ups and incompletes are not possible except in cases of documented disaster. All written work must be your own; academic dishonesty of any kind is a serious ethical breach and can result in failing the class. Please review university policy at <https://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/AcademicMisconduct.aspx> for further explanation.**

Learning Outcomes

In addition to gaining a preliminary understanding of texts and contexts of Shakespeare's early work, this course's assessment procedure is built around six desired learning outcomes. Students are expected to:

1. read Shakespeare's works with discernment and comprehension and with an understanding of their poetic, rhetorical, and dramatic conventions; and their historical contexts.
2. write focused, critical analyses of literary and other cultural texts in clear, grammatical prose;
3. employ logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to produce original, persuasive arguments;
4. engage primary and secondary sources, with proper acknowledgment and citation, as they contribute to a critical essay's thesis.
7. participate actively in discussion and present ideas clearly orally and in writing.

Tentative Course Schedule--Readings due on date listed.

- Week I Sept. 30--Introductions, Tudor England, Shakespeare's Life, Theatre, and Language and the Historical Richard III.
 Oct. 2---Read Dennis Kay, "Small Latine and Lesse Greeke" from *William Shakespeare, His Life and Times* (Blackboard) and *Richard III*, Introduction and Act 1. **Short Paper Due: Explain exactly where in the seduction of Lady Anne (I, ii, lines 43-203) Richard begins to break her resistance and why.**
- Week II Oct. 7 *Richard III*, Acts 2-3 and Dennis Kay, "Shakespeare's London" from *William Shakespeare, His Life and Times* (Blackboard). Memorize a passage. **In-class poem kit exercise.**
 Oct. 9 *Richard III*, Acts 4-5
- Week III Oct. 14 *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Introduction and Acts 1-2. **Reports on Celtic/British Folklore & Classical Mythology**
 Oct. 16 *Dream*, Act III--Reading & performance.
- Week IV Oct. 21 *Dream*, Acts IV--V; **Short Paper Due. Visit by John Schmor, Theatre Dept.**
 Oct. 23 **Mid Term Exam**
- Week V Oct. 28 *Merchant of Venice*, Introduction and Acts I-II.
 Oct. 30 *Merchant of Venice*, Act III; **In-class writing**
- Week VI Nov. 4 *Merchant of Venice*, Acts IV-V; **Short Paper**
 Nov. 6 Final discussion of *Merchant*; *I Henry IV*, Introduction and Act I
- Week VII **Monday, November 10--Special Visit & performance by Oregon Shakespeare Company: attend a workshop in Gerlinger Lounge at 9 or 2; performance at 4, Hope Theatre.**
 Nov. 11 *I Henry IV*, Acts II-III
 Nov. 13 *I Henry IV*, Act IV; readings & recitations.
- Week VIII Nov. 18 *I Henry IV*, Act V, **Short Paper Due.**
 Nov. 20 *Hamlet*, Introduction and Act I
- Week IX Nov. 25 *Hamlet*, Acts II-III
Thanksgiving Holiday
- Week X Dec. 2 *Hamlet*, Act IV; **Short Paper Due.**
 Dec. 4 *Hamlet*, Act V

Exam, 5:00, Thursday, December 4, final day of class.