

English 436
Course Time: MW 2-3:20
Course Location: 101 Volcanology Building

Prof. Brent Dawson
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Office Location: PLC 465
Office Hours: W 3:30-5 or by appt.

Advanced Shakespeare:
Arts of the Self

Description

When Shakespeare's villainous Iago declares, "I am not what I am," he raises a host of questions about selfhood that run throughout Shakespeare's plays: what is the relation between the performance of social identity and one's sense of inner self? Is the self something permanent and essential or transitory and created? What power dynamics are at play when one asks or answers the question, "Who are you?" How do these answers change depending on one's social status? In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, critics praised Shakespeare's ability to create characters with rich inner lives. More recently, critics have drawn on Shakespeare's works to articulate theories of the self as socially fabricated, split by lines of race and gender, unraveled by desire, and closely tied to the material and non-human world. In this course, we will read Shakespeare's plays in conversation with theories of the self that developed from reading Shakespeare. Students will complete short writing assignments throughout the semester, an in-class presentation, and a final paper.

Required Texts

The Norton Shakespeare. 3rd Edition. All other texts will be distributed electronically or in class.
*Additional readings must be brought to class in print.

Calendar

3/28: Introduction

3/30: Excerpts from Ben Jonson, Samuel Coleridge, et al.

4/4: *Midsummer* 1-2

4/6: *Midsummer* 3-4; René Girard, from *A Theater of Envy*

4/11: *Midsummer* 5; Louis Montrose, from *The Purpose of Playing*

4/13: *Othello* 1-2

4/18: *Othello* 3-4; Stephen Greenblatt, “The Improvisation of Power”

4/20: *Othello* 5

4/25: *12th Night* 1-2

4/27: *12th Night* 3-4; Laurie Shannon, “Nature’s Bias”

5/2: *12th Night* 5

5/4: *Sonnets* 1-75; Michael Schoenfeldt, from *Bodies and Selves in Renaissance England* **Close Reading Due**

5/9: *Sonnets* 75-154

5/11: *Antony & Cleopatra* 1-2; Ania Loomba, “The Imperial Romance”

5/16: *Antony & Cleopatra* 3-4 (In-class workshop on final paper proposals)

5/18: *Antony & Cleopatra* 5; Stanley Cavell, “Introduction” to *Disowning Knowledge*

5/23: *Tempest* 1-2

5/25: *Tempest* 3-4; Jonathan Goldberg, “A Different Kind of Creature”

5/30: Memorial Day

6/1: *Tempest* 5 (In-class workshop on final paper drafts)

6/8: **Final Papers due**

Assignments

Participation (10%): Discussion will be an important component of our class. Students should make a few comments in class per week that contribute meaningfully to our conversation. If a student is shy or has other difficulties with speaking in class, I'm happy to hear their thoughts in office hours or by email.

Weekly Writing (7, total 15%): Students will complete a total of seven weekly writing assignments throughout the semester. For the assignment, students will write about 500 words commenting on the week's reading. The comments must include at least one direct quotation from the week's reading, an analysis of that quotation, and 3-4 discussion questions for the class. Assignments are due on Sunday by 3 p.m. via email.

Discussion Leading (20%): Working in groups of two or three, students will lead discussion on the text we are reading the day of their choice for around twenty minutes. Discussions should focus on a particular topic, give some historical context, call attention to some moments in the text and offer thoughts on them, and chiefly ask questions to prompt discussion. The group will provide a 1-2 page handout to the class with the discussion. Each member of the group will turn in an outline for their portion of the discussion, a bibliography of at least two critical sources consulted, and a one-page reflection on how the discussion went.

Close Reading (25%): 4-6 pages. Analyze an ambiguous passage or image from one of the plays we have read, giving three (not necessarily equally) plausible ways of interpreting that ambiguity, using evidence from the text.

Analytic Paper (30%): 8-10 pages. Papers will analyze a specific topic in Shakespeare. Suggestions will be provided, though you are welcome to invent your own with my approval. The paper will be completed in stages, including a proposal, rough draft, and final.

Policies

Accessibility: Please let me know me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center (formerly Disability Services) in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu.

Formatting Papers: Your written assignments must be in twelve-point font, double-spaced, and have one-inch margins. Submitting assignments electronically is completely acceptable, but you need to use .pdf format (not .doc, .docx, .pages, or .odt). If you're not sure how to do that, ask me in advance. You can follow MLA or Chicago guidelines for citations, but be consistent. A great guide to either format can be found at Purdue's OWL website (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>). You are expected to proofread your work; too many errors will result in a small penalty to your grade.

Late Assignments: I give out extensions readily, but you need to ask in advance. The farther in advance you ask, the more likely I am to grant the extension. If you don't complete an assignment on time and you don't ask for an extension, I still encourage you to let me know your circumstances. Exceptions may be given for emergencies and other extraordinary circumstances. Late assignments are generally graded down one letter grade per day late. Assignments are due at the beginning of class unless stated otherwise; assignments turned in after that will be considered a day late.

Attendance: Coming to class with the day's reading printed is mandatory. If you have a job, a sport, or anything else in your life preventing you from coming to class, you need to let me know as soon as possible. Missing more than two classes unexcused will result in your final grade being lowered by one third a letter grade for each additional absence. For example, if you miss three classes, a B will become a B-, and with five classes it will become a C+. Five or more unexcused absences will mean you fail the course.

Plagiarism and Cheating: All work must be your own and be written solely for this class. Plagiarism can be unintentional, so be careful and make sure you understand the rules. If you don't, ask me. When you quote, paraphrase, or borrow ideas from an article, website, editor's note, friend, or any other outside source, you need to provide documentation. I encourage you to look at the library's guides for citing sources and avoiding plagiarism (<https://library.uoregon.edu/citing>). The same link will also allow you to access the university's official policy toward academic misconduct; you should read over the policy if you are unclear about what counts as cheating or plagiarism. If you're struggling with a paper, I encourage you to contact me. It's better to submit a paper late, unfinished, or that's not very good than to risk failing the class by plagiarizing.