

English 436
Course Time: MWF 10–10:50
Course Location: 301 Deady Hall

Prof. Brent Dawson
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Office Location: PLC 465
Office Hours: W 3–6 or by appt.

Advanced Shakespeare

Description

This course has three goals. First, students will closely read Shakespeare’s plays and poems. They will attend to Shakespeare’s rich, at times baffling, language, the nuanced characters of the plays, and persistent topics of Shakespearean interest around the self, desire, imagination, violence, gender, kinship, politics, and group identity. Second, students will learn about how Shakespeare became “Shakespeare,” the iconic figure of popular and high culture. Students will analyze how different cultures and historical eras have re-interpreted and transformed his plays and biography. Finally, students will read the plays alongside several recent critical approaches to Shakespeare, including animal studies, critical race studies, sense studies, and queer theory. Through studying these methodologies, students will assess whether and what continues to make Shakespeare relevant to contemporary issues.

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

Week 1: 9/26-9/30

Samuel Schoenbaum, from *Shakespeare's Lives*
Oscar Wilde, "The Portrait of Mr. W.H."

Week 2: 10/3-10/7

A Midsummer Night's Dream
Laurie Shannon, *The Accommodated Animal* 1-17

Week 3: 10/10-10/14

12th Night
Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* 13-32

Week 4: 10/17-10/21

Sonnets
Bruce Smith, *Phenomenal Shakespeare*, 38-68

Week 5: 10/24-10/28

Merchant of Venice
Midterm 10/28

Week 6: 10/31-11/4

Othello
Ayanna Thompson's *Passing Strange* 97-118

Week 7: 11/7-11/11

Time's Pencil Digital Exhibition

Week 8: 11/14-11/18

King Lear

Week 9: 11/21

The Tempest
Thanksgiving

Week 10: 11/2-11/6

The Tempest and Film
Essay due 11/11

Assignments

In-Class Writing, Quizzes, and Participation (15%): Classes may begin with in-class writing assignments or quizzes on the reading material for the week. These will test students' knowledge of the reading as well as serving as starting points for discussion. Discussion in general will be an important component of class. Students should make one comment in class per week that contributes 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 and Discussion Leading (30%): Each week, five students will post a blog entry to our course website by 8 pm Wednesday (750 words). All other students will write a response to one of the blog entries by 8 pm Thursday (300 words). Blog entries and responses must include at least one quotation from the week's reading different from other entries and responses. In Friday's class, each student who wrote a blog entry will lead a discussion of 5-10 minutes on their topic. Discussion should begin with a brief summary of the post and some of the questions that emerged in response to it. Students are allowed to miss two responses over the course of the term.

Essay (25%): 5-7 pages. Students will have two options for their essay:

1) Take one of the theoretical approaches we've studied to engage a different play than what is paired with during the term. Essays should ask how the theory changes how the play is understood, as well as what questions or resistances the play poses to the critical approach.

2) Analyze two or three adaptations or rewritings of a Shakespearean play alongside the source material. Essays should treat the later versions as interpretations of the original, comparing how each treats a particular topic.

Midterm and Final Exams (15% each): Exams will ask students to identify and analyze important passages from course readings taken from the first or second half of the term. There may also be multiple choice and essay questions.

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. Great guides 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 three 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 four classes, a B will become a B-, and with five classes it will become a C+. More than six unexcused absences will cause you to 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're not certain, 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're 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 in poor quality than to risk getting caught plagiarizing.