English 207--Shakespeare's Natural Magic
Winter 2011; CRN 22297
189 PLC, 10:00-11:20 Tuesday, Thursday

Professor Louise Westling
Office: 827 PLC; phone 6-3938
Hours: Wed. 2-3; Thurs. 1-3
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Texts
Books available at UO Bookstore/Duckstore; PDFs on Blackboard

Shakespeare, *Midsummer Night's Dream*
"As You Like It"
"King Lear"
"The Winter's Tale"

*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (PDF)
Early Celtic Texts (PDF)
Selected *Idylls* of Theocritus (PDF)
Selected *Eclogues* of Virgil (PDF)
Selected British folk poetry and pastorals (PDF)

Course Description

This course will explore how William Shakespeare uses all sorts of comedy to dramatize the human immersion in the transformations continually bubbling through the natural world of forest and meadow. His comic deflations of human efforts to control the world show our interconnections with other species, wild and tame, with the cycle of the seasons in plant life and the movements of stars and planets. In the comedies *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *As You Like It*, he fuses traditions of Celtic folklore, myths and pastorals from Greece and Rome, and rolicking pictures of rural English life in his own time. We will see how this restorative comic vision is balanced in *King Lear* and *The Winter's Tale* by recognition of how the violence and destruction of wild storms and harsh seasons shows itself just as intensely in human affairs as in the landscapes outside the structures built to shelter us. Deep backgrounds will be provided by readings from ancient traditions which underlie and energize the dramatic plots and characters of Shakespeare's Early Modern plays.

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 and short papers, as well as a mid-term and a final exam. Participation will be worth roughly 20% of the final grade, papers 30%, and each exam 25%. 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 http://www.uoregon.edu/~conduct/sai.htm for further explanation.

Term Schedule  (Readings are to be completed by date indicated.)

Week 1  Tuesday, Jan. 4--Introductions, dramatic structures and verse forms. For Thursday, read "The Dream of Oengus" (http://www.ancienttexts.org/library/ancient/ctexts/oengus.html) and *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Introduction and Act I.

Thursday, Jan. 6--Informal reports on British folklore, Greek & Roman myth. Discussion of "Dream of Oengus" and interwoven traditions operating in Act I of *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Sign-up sheet for Week 2 reports; oral presentations to be accompanied by one-page, typed paper, double-spaced in 12 point font.

Week 2  Tuesday, Jan. 11--*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Blackboard, pdf); Act II of *Midsummer Night's*
Dream. Reports on Sir Gawain, fairy hills, Celtic cult of the head, Midsummer folk traditions and rituals. Selected Celtic poems (Blackboard, pdf).


Week 3
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Thursday, Jan. 20--Pastoral tradition; Terry Gifford on pastoral (Blackboard, pdf); Act 1 of As You Like It.

Week 4
Tuesday, Jan. 25--Acts II-III of As You Like It, popular ballads and Roman models from Plautus and Terence. Reports on forest legends, e.g. Robin Hood, Hogwarts Forest & Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows.

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Thursday, Jan. 27—Act IV, As You Like It. Short paper due. Comic deflations of pastoral conventions.

Week 5
Tuesday, Feb. 1—Act V, As You Like It. The Comus in English Renaissance drama and Classical antecedents.

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Thursday, Feb. 3 Mid-Term Exam

Week 6
Tuesday, Feb. 8—Geoffrey of Monmouth's legend of ancient British King Leir (Blackboard, pdf); Shakespeare's King Lear, Act I. Reports on Court Fool, Natural Fool, Medieval treatment of mental illness.

Thursday, Feb. 10--King Lear, Acts I & II; Concepts of tragedy; Aristotle's "Poetics" and Shakespeare's uses of comedy.

Week 7
** Tuesday, Feb. 15—King Lear, Act III. Short paper due on the word "Nature." Inner and outer storms, humanity/animality, Lear's mad truths and relationship to the fretful elements.

Thursday, Feb. 17—King Lear, Act III--Anti-pastoral pastoral

Week 8
Tuesday, Feb. 22—King Lear, Act IV. Students lead discussion of scenes and act a few.

Thursday, Feb. 24--King Lear, Act V. and a kind of "natural" resurrection. What is "natural" now? What is Nature? Who was the Fool? Why did Shakespeare change the legend of British King Leir?

Week 9

Thursday, March 3--Act III, The Winter's Tale

Week 10


Final Exam: Wednesday, March 16; 8:00 a.m.