Course Description

In this course we will read *Macbeth*, *Measure for Measure*, and *King Lear* to think about how they represent cultural crisis at every scale: the large scale of a society, city-state, or country in turmoil, the small scale of individual errors, cruelties, deceptions, and self-deceptions, and the medium scale of failures within human relationships (family and political bonds, sexual and romantic desires), all centered on the figure of rulers who unleash chaos on their realms. Each of these plays investigates crises precipitated by or caught up in flawed rule by leaders who overindulge their desires and will to power, fail in self-control, empathy, or love, subordinate public health to personal obsessions, and/or refuse to meet cultural norms related to gender, sexuality, family obligations, healthy selfhood, and concern for their citizens. As we think about our own times of crisis and how these plays have been perceived, we’ll also consider the theories of rule and the ties between ruler and land that underpin Shakespeare’s and our interest in linking tragedy to depictions of compelling and terrifying leaders.

Learning Outcomes

ENG 436/536 will help students identify, compare, contrast, and think through historically distant understandings of familiar issues (cultural crisis; political failure; expectations of authority) in relation to their present-day counterparts, giving particular emphasis to the complex interplay between abstract principles of governance and authority, and the complications that necessarily arise from their entanglement with flawed human beings and their relationships. Students will practice several useful skills for this work. Students can expect to leave having (1) learned about and reflected in new ways on historical difference/change/continuity; (2) reflected on the additional tensions between fiction and history, and (3) learned to parse language and to think about theatrical representation to more fully access or trouble conclusions we derive from cultural texts. We’ll bolster this endeavor with varied writing and discussion exercises to build (4) logically powerful, evidence-based arguments that (5) allow us to be creative or speculative as we explore issues that matter to us, whether we prefer reading old texts to shine light on present political or cultural realities, recovering the past in its stark difference from our present, or exploring the artistic potential of influential cultural texts.

The course meets in-person MWF from noon-12:50 in Tykeson 240. See expectations and accommodations related to attendance below.

Email: bovilsky@uoregon.edu Email is the best way to reach me. I check it at least twice daily.

Office hours: Tuesdays, 3-4 pm; Wednesdays and Fridays, 1-2 and by appointment.

“By appointment” means that I can meet with students outside of the above hours. If you can’t meet at listed times, email me so that we can find a good time to meet. If you can
meet during the weekly hours listed, it is helpful to do so, to ensure my other times are free for students who can’t.) Note: I will initially default to meeting on Zoom or possibly outside. I will always let you know which/where!

**Link to office hours signup sheet: sign up here.** Zoom link for office hours: https://uoregon.zoom.us/j/99380867807

**Why should we meet?**

I meet with students for many reasons. I’m here to talk about anything that is exciting or confusing in the course material, to clarify and help you plan your approach to assignments, and to explain how the skills and ideas we work on in class relate to real-world issues and translate to life after college. I also help when students are have interests or concerns that may not be directly related to our course. I can help find resources and suggest new ideas when things aren’t working as you’d like. In general, I recommend that all students meet with me at least once a term. I look forward to getting to know you better!

**Communication**

All course announcements and general emails will be made via Canvas. These will be automatically forwarded to your UO email. (Check and adjust your Canvas settings under Account > Notifications if you would also like to receive announcements via text.) Please check Canvas before class – if there are any Covid-related disruptions to our course, I’ll let you know there, as quickly as I can.

When I need to get in touch with you, I will email you – please note that I am only permitted to email you through your uoregon email address. You can set up your uoregon email account to automatically forward to another account, but please check your UO account regularly in some way.

**Required Texts**

(available from the Duckstore and online) **Please use these editions, or you will struggle to find the text selections we discuss together in class.** Exception: if you have the Norton Shakespeare, you may use that in place of the Ardens.


Other readings will be made available in files on our course Canvas site. You will be expected to have access to course readings during class.

**Each week, you’ll have a guide to the week’s work in the “Modules” page on Canvas.**

**Course Schedule**

**September 27** Course introduction  
**September 29** *Macbeth* 1.1-1.5  
**October 1** *Macbeth* 1.6-2.2  
• Close reading exercise 1 due by noon
October 4   *Macbeth* 2.3-3.2
October 6   *Macbeth* 3.3-3.5
October 8   *Macbeth* 3.6-4.1

October 11  *Macbeth* 4.2-4.3  • Close reading exercise 2 due by noon
October 13  David Scott Kastan, *“Macbeth and the ‘Name of King,’”* chapter 9 in *Shakespeare After Theory*, pp. 217-239. (E-book; access through UO libraries website.)
October 15  *Macbeth* 5.1-5.3

October 18  *Macbeth* 5.4-5.9
October 20  *Measure for Measure*, 1.1-1.4
October 22  *Measure for Measure*, 2.1-2.2

October 25  *Measure for Measure*, 2.3-3.1.172
October 27  Shuger, *Political Theologies in Shakespeare’s England*, excerpt
October 29  *Measure for Measure*, 3.1 end of sce  • Close reading exercise 3 due (3-4 pp.)

November 1  *Measure for Measure*, 4.1-4.3
November 3  *Measure for Measure*, 4.4-5.1.245
November 5  *Measure for Measure*, 5.1 end of play

November 8  Catch-up
November 10 *King Lear*, 1.1-1.3
November 12 *King Lear*, 1.4-2.1

November 15 *King Lear*, 2.2, Berger, “Making Trifles of Terrors” excerpt
November 17 *King Lear*, 3.1-3.3  • Final paper prospectus due
November 19 *King Lear*, 3.4-3.7

November 22 Marcus, *“King Lear and the Death of the World”*
November 24 *King Lear*, 4.1-4.5
November 26 Thanksgiving Break: no class

November 29 *King Lear*, 4.6-4.7
December 1  *King Lear*, 5.1-5.3
December 3
December 5  • Final paper due (5-7 pp.)

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Participation**

Participation in class is required. You are expected to bring and ask questions or comments about the reading/viewing or to respond to those of your classmates. You can ask questions and/or
speak in class, type in our Canvas chat (also during class!), or submit questions or thoughts to a weekly discussion thread in Canvas. Let me know if you’d prefer to contribute in another way.

**Students are expected to contribute to class discussion in one or more of the above formats at least once a week.** (Formats = vocally in class, in class chat, or weekly Canvas discussion threads.) During class, please pay attention to the class conversation and generally be present, focused, and respectful. Active participation can raise your final grade (see grade breakdown below).

I hope that active engagement can help everyone feel included in the community of our class. The issues we’ll discuss are often presented fancifully in our class texts, but they include important considerations of our own moment about treatment of the vulnerable, what is necessary to be fully human, how we think about the full range of variable human traits and abilities, and whether we take others seriously. Thinking about these issues together can help us flourish as much as possible in an intellectual, ethical, and friendly learning community.

Meanwhile, in order that we can use the class to maximum advantage, we will need to let each other think in real time – which will of course include all of us sometimes saying things we later decide we don’t agree with or think were wrong. Such exploration is a great way to arrive at new ideas we agree with and feel excited about. For this reason, supporting your own and everyone else’s endeavors to develop new ideas and take risks, and to be open to error and setback without condemnation or recrimination of self or others, is also required in this class.

**Attendance**

Attendance is mandatory; more than four unexcused absences will result in your final grade being lowered as follows. Five unexcused absences will lower your grade two-thirds of a full letter grade (A- becomes B); six will lower your grade one full letter grade (A- becomes B-). Seven or more unexcused absences will mean a failing grade. (If you have to miss significant class for excused reasons, please try not to use as many of the unexcused absences, so that you won’t fall too far behind.)

**NOTE: Missing class for Covid-related reasons is an excused absence.** Remember that you help yourself and everyone around you when you stay home if you have symptoms of contagious illness or when someone you live with must quarantine. Thank you for taking care of others in and beyond our community.

If you need to stay home (e.g. you have symptoms of contagious illness, you are waiting for a test result per the Covid policies below, etc.), email me. These are excused absences and we will work out accommodations to make sure you don’t fall behind. If you are able to, you can attend class via Hy-flex through Zoom. I will also make class recordings available as needed (i.e. if you cannot attend synchronously).

In general, **illness and personal emergencies are excused absences: you will not be penalized for an excused absence.** If you are ill or need to offer care or help to others, contact me in advance of any missed class to touch base and find out what you will need to make up before next class. (Many more details about Covid policies are below.)
Reading/Writing

Students taking the class should expect to spend roughly 8 hours/week on class work outside of class meetings (reading, watching films, taking notes, and writing/revising papers – time will be more in some weeks, less in others). This number is the number UO policy requires me to program (2 hours/week of work per credit hour of the course).

Assignments

This course includes several assignments to help develop your sense of your interests in the course areas and to synthesize readings: 3 close readings and a final essay (5-7 pp.), preceded by a prospectus.

Assignments must be typed in 12-point font, be double spaced, and have reasonable margins (1 inch is generally standard; greater than 1.25 inch will not be accepted). You may work from MLA or Chicago format: just be consistent. All work will be submitted to Canvas.

Please proofread and revise your written work. Extensive sloppiness and mechanical errors will result in a lower grade.

Late papers will be penalized one third of a letter grade per day. However, you may ask for extensions if the due date of the assignment is more than 72 hours (3 days) later, and the earlier the better. When asking for an extension please specify how long an extension you are requesting. Even if you have not given 3 days warning, in case of a looming or unexpected disaster, consideration will be given if you keep me in the loop and communicate in advance. Stay in touch.

Note: it will always help if you hand in assigned work, even if it is quite late. I can give significant credit for almost any late paper, but I can’t give credit for no paper. Handing something in, even long after it is due, can keep students from failing.

No incompletes will be granted except in case of documented emergency.

GRADES

See above under “Assignments” for deadlines and grades.

A final grade of C or better in the course is required for English major credit.

Final grades will be calculated as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Close reading ex 1</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>October 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Close reading ex 2</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>October 11</td>
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PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING

In accord with English Department policy, academic dishonesty (plagiarism or cheating) will minimally result in an automatic failing grade for this course. In addition, all incidents of plagiarism will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct, as required by the University.

Plagiarism is the use of another person’s words or ideas without due acknowledgment. It may be intentional or unintentional. To make sure you have avoided plagiarism in your work, you should:

- Accurately quote the original author’s words if you are quoting.
- Enclose the quotation within quotation marks.
- Follow the quotation with an in-text citation. => (Shelley, p. 15)
- Introduce quotations with a phrase that includes the author’s name (Turing argues that...)
- If you are paraphrasing someone else’s ideas or words rather than quoting, you must still cite the source with in-text citation, footnote, or a phrase that includes the author’s name.
- Provide a list of references with full citation information at the end of the paper.

The bottom line is that all work submitted in this course must be your own, and written exclusively for this course. The use of all external sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented, and you are not allowed to cut and paste from Internet sites into your paper. (Note: Most internet essays aimed at students are not written at the college level. Stealing from this work, even in the case that you are not caught, often results in a lower grade.)

For further guidance, see the UO library website (under “How-To Guides” on the library homepage) for more on citation practices. If you remain uncertain as to what constitutes plagiarism, definitions are available in the “Student Conduct Code” section of the Student Life website (http://studentlife.uoregon.edu). Additional information is available at https://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism. You are welcome to contact me if you have any questions about these definitions.

Finally, if you are having trouble writing a paper or understanding what we are looking for, please let me know. I do not expect that you already know how to do what I am teaching you. Extra help is always available. There’s nothing wrong with getting something wrong; often it takes mistakes to learn, and this is not something to panic about. However, if you take ideas from elsewhere and pass them off as your own, you learn nothing—so the next paper will therefore be no easier—and risk incurring significant academic penalties.

COURSE CONTENT ADVISORY

The texts we will read this term deal with adult themes and subject matter and will often contain beliefs and opinions that are very different from our own and sometimes include upsetting or
offensive depictions. The ability to encounter unfamiliar and even disturbing ideas with an attitude of critical distance is fundamental to academic work and to forming arguments supporting your own beliefs. Not everything we read or watch will be likable. Indeed, many of these texts contain disturbing representations with the goal that their reader or viewer will think hard about them and their meanings and impacts; others are not as self-aware but offer important depictions for us to consider as we think about how cultures respond to crisis and failures of leadership. Cultivating such hard thinking is good practice not merely for us as students of literature and media; it can also help prepare us to have empathy, to build resilience, to think about the consequences of beliefs, and to live as ethical members of a diverse and inclusive society. We will be talking about these representations and the larger questions and challenges they pose in class.

ACCOMMODATIONS

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify 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 at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu or visit https://aec.uoregon.edu/.

COVID

The UO’s means of keeping us together in person and as safe as possible is following three strategies: Prevention, Containment, and Support. We will follow all these strategies in our class.

Prevention

- Get fully vaccinated or test weekly if unvaccinated/exempted from vaccination
- Wear masks indoors always on campus
- Stay distanced whenever possible; wear masks if you can’t, including off campus
- Do not come to class or to campus if you have any symptoms of contagious illness
- Fill out this Covid case/contact report if you test positive or have had contact with someone who tests positive or who is deemed presumptively positive: https://oregon.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6lfKVJkE0jAGPvn

Containment

- If one of us tests positive, the UO’s Corona Corps Contact Team will let us know. Requirements depend on our status and symptoms, if any:
- If you’re vaccinated and asymptomatic, you need not quarantine. Pay attention to how you are feeling daily. Sign up for a MAP test 3-5 days after notification. MAP info/signup here.
- If you are unvaccinated or partially vaccinated, you must quarantine for two weeks. Do not come to class in person (you can attend with Hy-flex/Zoom). If you have no symptoms, sign up for a MAP test 3-5 days after notification. If you develop symptoms, get a better test through University Health Services (541-346-2770) or your primary care provider.
• If you have symptoms (regardless of your vaccination status), immediately get a reliable test through University Health Services (541-346-2770) or your primary care provider.
• The university asks that we sit in the same spot each class, to help with contact tracing and calculating risks of exposure.

Support
• I am here for you and happy to answer your questions about the above and its details and implications for our class. I can and will make many accommodations related to Covid events and I will help you navigate the term. But you have many additional resources…
  • University Health Services or call (541) 346-2770
  • University Counseling Center or call (541) 346-3277 or (541) 346-3227 (after hrs.)
  • MAP Covid-19 Testing
  • Corona Corps or call (541) 346-2292
  • Academic Advising or call (541) 346-3211
  • Dean of Students or call (541)-346-3216

OUR COMMUNITY AND VALUES

Wow, this is the most stress-inducing (not to mention longest) syllabus I’ve ever written! Let’s be kind to ourselves and each other as we weather this latest stage of the pandemic.

I will repeat: I am here for you. What’s most important to me as an educator is to help my students holistically. I want to teach you things — mainly to help you learn to learn, to express yourself, and to analyze texts, ideas, and arguments with logical rigor and creativity. However, this class and our relationships do not begin and end with academics. I also want us to keep our values front and center, particularly at such a crazy time (again). Here are some of my values:

Learning skills and ideas is more important than grades (and your employers and future friends/family will agree). Focus on your largest goals — what will matter to you in the future — and do not worry about the small stuff.

Keeping each other safe and supported, while (and by) taking care of ourselves, is central to learning and living well. Right now that also includes helping each other feel as safe as possible and minimizing each other’s risk. Remember of members of our community may be vulnerable and may have vulnerable contacts. If you need more from me or others, please let me/them know respectfully, as a way of taking care of yourself. Do not assume that people know your needs.

Respecting each other’s opinions, differences, and needs supports our learning — both academically and more broadly, our learning to be citizens, community members, grown-ups, ethical agents, and many other roles.

At stressful times, we are not always able to be our best selves at every moment. I recommend that, all term, we take care of ourselves and each other, showing each other kindness and grace. We will take time in class to remember to be grounded, to think a bit about stress reduction in relation to Covid, academics, and other stressors that affect us.