

English 436/536
Course Time: MW 10:00–11:20
Course Location: 116 Esslinger Hall

Prof. Brent Dawson
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Office Location: PLC 473
Office Hours: W 2-5 or by appt.

Shakespeare Now

Description

Students in this course will closely read Shakespeare's plays and poems, attending to their rich language, nuanced characters, and persistent fascination toward topics of the self, desire, imagination, and group identity. In the first part of the course, students will look at examples from several recent critical approaches to Shakespeare, including animal studies, post-colonial studies, sense studies, and queer theory. In the second part, students will learn about how Shakespeare became "Shakespeare," the iconic figure of popular and high culture, examining how different cultures and eras have re-interpreted his plays and biography.

Required Texts

Complete Sonnets and Poems. Oxford World's Classics. ISBN: 978-0199535798

A Midsummer Night's Dream. Oxford World's Classics. ISBN: 978-0199535866

The Merchant of Venice. Oxford World's Classics. ISBN: 978-0199535859

King Lear. Oxford World's Classics. ISBN: 978-0199535828

*Additional readings must be brought to class in print.

Calendar

Week 1: Biography

9/26: Introduction

9/28: James Shapiro, from *Contested Will*

Jorge Luis Borges, "Everything and Nothing"

Week 2: *Midsummer*

10/3: Acts 1-2

10/5: Acts 3-4, Laurie Shannon, *The Accommodated Animal* 1-17

Week 3: *Midsummer/Merchant*

10/10: Act 5, Valerie Traub, "Performing Lesbian History," 55-74

10/12: Act 1

Week 4: *Merchant*

10/17: Acts 2-3, Harry Berger, Jr., "Mercifixion"

10/19: Acts 4-5, James Shapiro, from *Shakespeare and the Jews*

Week 5: *Sonnets*

10/24: tbd

10/26: tbd, Bruce Smith, *Phenomenal Shakespeare*, 38-68

Short Paper Due

Week 6: *Sonnets / Lear*

10/31: tbd, Barbara Johnson, "Speech Therapy"

11/2: Acts 1-2

Week 7: *Lear*

11/7: Acts 3-4

11/9: Act 5

Week 8: *Time's Pencil*

11/14: **In-Class Exam**

11/16: Exhibits 1-3

Week 9 (Thanksgiving): *Time's Pencil*

11/21: *Porky's 2*

Week 10: *Time's Pencil*

11/28: Exhibits 4-6

11/30: Rare Books Day

12/6, 5 p.m.: **Final Paper due**

Assignments

Reading and Class Preparation: Reading an act of Shakespeare for this class should take you at least an hour, more likely two. Read carefully, and give yourself time for note-taking, studying the editor's comments, and looking up unfamiliar words and references.

Participation (5%): Discussion will be an important component of class. 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 Quizzes (15%): Quizzes are to make sure you are keeping up with the reading and class. Quizzes will be given at the start of class on Mondays and last 10-15 minutes. Quizzes may consist of multiple choice questions, passage identification, or a short essay. The types of questions that appear on the quizzes will also be the types that make up the exam. Missed quizzes cannot normally be made up, but if there are exceptional circumstances, contact me. I recommend an hour of going back over your notes and the reading to prepare for quizzes.

Short Paper (15%): 3-4 pages. Students will write about one of a few scenes from a play we've read alongside one of the critical articles. (Options will given in class.) First, they will give a one paragraph summary of the critical article. Then, they will write several paragraphs analyzing how the critic might read the selected scene. The conclusion should make an argument for how the scene either adds to or challenges aspects of the critic's argument.

In-class Presentation (15%): Students will research one adaptation (in any media form) of the work we're reading that week. Their presentation will analyze and lead discussion on how the adaptation interprets a particular scene. In the case of *The Sonnets*, the presentation will cover the adaptation of a single poem. Further details will be explained in a handout. Students must notify me at least one class in advance which scene and adaptation they have selected. Presentations will be 5-10 minutes in class, and must include a handout or slideshow. Students will submit on the day of their presentation an electronic or printed copy of the handout or slideshow.

Exam (25%): The exam will consist of multiple choice questions, passage identifications, and a short essay question. It will cover all texts for the course as well as information from class lectures. The exam will be 80 minutes and take place during one of our course sessions. Preparation time will vary, but I recommend at least 5 hours of study spread over 3 days.

Long Paper (25%): 6-8 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 it was 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 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.

Policies

Accessibility: Please let me know 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 uoac@uoregon.edu.

Formatting Papers: Your assignments must be in twelve-point font, double-spaced, and have one-inch margins. Submitting assignments electronically is acceptable, but you need to use .pdf format (not .doc, .docx, .pages, or .odt). If you're not sure how to do that, ask 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 penalty to your grade.

Late Assignments: I give out extensions readily, but you need to ask in advance. The farther in advance, the more likely I am to grant the extension. Late assignments are generally graded down one letter grade per day late. Exceptions may be given for emergencies and other exceptional situations. Assignments are due at the beginning of class unless stated otherwise; assignments turned in after that will be considered a day late.

Plagiarism: All work must be your own and 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. If 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 on 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 the penalties for plagiarizing.

English Language Learners: You can succeed in this class whether or not English is your primary language. Working in another language actually trains you to read in the slower, more analytic fashion that literature courses reward. You will likely have some additional challenges: readings and papers will take longer to complete, participating in class discussion may be more intimidating. If you're having difficulty with participation, you can earn your points by sharing your ideas in email or office hours. If you're struggling with readings or papers, come to office hours and we can go over strategies to improve. You should know that grammar, syntax, and spelling are a relatively minor part of paper grades. As with all students, I expect you to show care with your use of language, but your ideas and argument are most important.

Advisory: Be aware that the material we read for this course can be disturbing in its treatment of sexuality and violence, and our discussions will cover these topics. If you feel you can't participate in discussion around a particular issue, let me know and we may be able to design alternative work.