
SHAKESPEARE (LIT 327)**Autumn 2017****Rob Browning****Tues./Thurs. 3:30-4:50****e-mail: rob.browning@mso.umt.edu****Office hours (LA 217): M, W, F 12:10-1:50 and by appointment**

“In Shakespeare the birds sing, the bushes are clothed with green, hearts love, souls suffer, the cloud wanders, it is hot, it is cold, night falls, time passes, forests and multitudes speak, the vast eternal dream hovers over all. Sap and blood, all forms of the multiple reality, actions and ideas, man and humanity, the living and the life, solitudes, cities, religions, diamonds and pearls, dung-hills and charnelhouses, the ebb and flow of beings, the steps of comers and goers, all, all are on Shakespeare and in Shakespeare.”

--Victor Hugo, *William Shakespeare* (1864)

“Shakespeare sees always both sides of a thing. [...] In his plays he is woman, man, black, white, believer, heretic, Catholic, Protestant, Jew, Muslim. He grew up in an atmosphere of equivocation, but he lived in freedom. And he offers us freedom: to pin him down to a single identity would be an obvious diminishment, both for Shakespeare and for us. [...] He understood what fierce, singular certainty creates and what it destroys. In response, he made himself a diffuse, uncertain thing, a mass of contradictory, irresolvable voices that speak truth plurally.”

--Zadie Smith, “Speaking in Tongues,” in *Changing my Mind* (2009)

“You have not experienced Shakespeare until you have read him in the original Klingon.”

--Chancellor Gorkon in *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country* (1991)

As we read examples of Shakespeare’s comedies, histories, tragedies, and romances, we will attend to both what is strange and what’s familiar as we strive to make sense of these works within the cultural context of the playwright’s own time four centuries ago as well as in our own. We will not attempt to “cover” Shakespeare – an impossible task for a mere semester. The aim of this course, rather, is to provide you with a working knowledge of what makes Shakespeare’s dramatic texts interesting and challenging and, to generations of playgoers and readers, continually inspiring. To this end (which is really a beginning) we will focus our attention on the following:

Genre. The conventions of comedy, dramatic history, tragedy, and romance are the building materials out of which Shakespeare constructed his dramatic texts. What were these conventions and how does Shakespeare use them? In what ways does Shakespeare augment or challenge genre conventions?

Reading comparatively. What can the forest outside Athens in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* teach us about other places removed from urban society, such as the country of Wales in *Henry IV* part one or Prospero’s island in *The Tempest*? What can we learn about Hamlet’s attitudes towards war and honor from Falstaff’s own, iconoclastic views on these matters? An important principle of this course is that each play we read can, in one way or another, illuminate the other plays. Reading Shakespeare should be actively, even playfully, comparative. Because Shakespeare is perpetually changing the contexts and shifting the perspectives he presents to us, for each point of similarity one discovers, it is valuable also to consider how the elements differ.

Liminality. Shakespeare wrote his plays during an unusually contentious and dynamic period of Europe’s history: the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Counter-Reformation had made the day-to-day practices of religious worship deeply controversial and the cause of much anxiety; the capitalist practices of a rapidly developing merchant class were challenging feudal norms of social hierarchy; and the discoveries of scientists such as Copernicus and Galileo were threatening to overturn traditional

doctrines about the very nature of the Universe and the place of humankind in it. How does Shakespeare use elements from these cultural and conceptual conflicts to make compelling dramas?

Bardolatry. Shakespeare's continuing popularity is evident in a variety of spheres: in Hollywood (in, literally, hundreds of film adaptations of the plays), on popular TV shows (in episodes of *Star Trek*, *Seinfeld*, *The Simpsons*, etc.), at annual festivals (including the Oregon Shakespeare festival in Ashland and Montana's own "Shakespeare in the Park"), and in random disposable images of the Bard in commercials and on t-shirts and billboards. Why is Shakespeare – far more so than Edgar Allen Poe, Mark Twain, or Jane Austen – such a popular cultural phenomenon today? Why, moreover, is Shakespeare still commonly the only author many English literature programs require their majors to study?

Required Texts:

- *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Edited by Russ McDonald. Penguin, 2000. ISBN: 0-14-071455-3
- *Henry IV, part one*. Edited by Claire McEachern. Penguin, 2000. ISBN: 0-14-071456-1
- *Henry IV, part two*. Edited by Claire McEachern, Penguin, 2017. ISBN: 978-0143131762
- *Henry V*. Edited by Claire McEachern (Penguin), 1999. ISBN: 978-0-14-071458-6
- *Hamlet*. Edited by Robert S. Miola (Norton Critical Edition), 2011. ISBN: 978-0-393-92958-4
- *Othello*. Edited by Russ McDonald (Penguin), 2001. ISBN: 0-14-071463-4
- *Macbeth*. Edited by Robert S. Miola (Norton Critical Edition), 2014. ISBN: 978-0-393-92326-1
- *The Tempest*. Edited by Peter Hulme and William H. Sherman (Norton Critical Edition), ISBN: 978-0-393-97819-3
- Various readings posted on our course's Moodle site.

An important requirement of this class is that you have with you in class a physical paper copy of each of the plays we're reading. Electronic text technology is developing rapidly and it is, of course, convenient and can be wonderfully useful in lots of ways. Judging by my own experience and my observations of students over the last several years, however, I still believe that paper texts really do enable a higher quality of reading than do e-texts. Paper texts allow one to annotate more easily and with greater nuance; the physical characteristics of a paper book promote spatial and page-number memory, which bolsters comprehension. Also, the simple fact that paper books are unplugged lessens the potential for distraction and can foster the kind of calmness that improves attention. Because reading technology and readers themselves are changing, I frequently revisit the question of e-texts, and I would be grateful to talk with you about your own thoughts on this important matter.

Films: To complement our study of the texts, we will view and discuss scenes from a number of films, each of which amounts to a thought-provoking interpretation. While we will focus our attention on particular clips (you'll find links to many of these on the course's Moodle page), I recommend these films to you in their entirety. They include:

A Midsummer Night's Dream (1935), directed by Max Reinhardt
The Chimes at Midnight (1965), directed by Orson Welles
Henry V (1944), directed by and starring Laurence Olivier
Henry V (1989), directed by and starring Kenneth Branagh
Hamlet (1948), directed by and starring Laurence Olivier
Hamlet (1996), directed by and starring Kenneth Branagh
Hamlet 2000 (2000), directed by Michael Almereyda and starring Ethan Hawke
Throne of Blood (1957), directed by Akira Kurosawa

Macbeth (2010), directed by Rupert Goold
Macbeth (2015), directed by Justin Kurzel
Othello (1952), directed by Orson Welles, starring Welles, Michael MacLiammoir, and Suzanne Cloutier
Othello (1995), directed by Oliver Parker, starring Laurence Fishburne, Kenneth Branagh, and Irene Jacob
Forbidden Planet (1956), directed by Fred Wilcox, starring Walter Pidgeon
Prospero's Books (1991), directed by Stephen Greenaway, starring John Gielgud

Graded Work:

First essay (to be developed in a revised draft) -----	30
Second essay -----	30
Third essay -----	30
Participation -----	10

Attendance is a sign of your commitment to your studies. I become concerned after a student has missed more than two classes. If you miss **three** classes, I expect you to schedule a meeting with me so we can discuss your status in the class. Ordinarily (and certainly if I hear nothing from you), each absence beyond three will reduce the final grade by one-third of a letter grade.

Please arrive to class on time. While I understand that the most conscientious of us sometimes are delayed by circumstances beyond our control (and in those cases, please do come to class rather than not at all), persistent late arrivals are a distraction and unacceptable. You may dismiss yourself during class time, but—please—only if you have an urgent reason to do so.

Participation: My sense of your level of participation is based on your attendance, your contributions to class discussions, your performance on short homework assignments, and any discussions you and I have during office hours.

Essays: Three formal essays are required to complete this course. I’ll distribute a list of potential topics, and you will also have the option of devising your own (subject to approval in advance). Your first essay is to be revised in concert with my feedback and resubmitted.

Electronic devices: You may use a personal computer or other device during class time for purposes directly related to the class: namely, note taking or consulting relevant supplementary texts. Please do not use an electronic device for other purposes: doing so would be a distraction from what we’re trying to accomplish together in this class and a betrayal of the instructor’s trust.

Academic Honesty: Plagiarism is a violation of scholarly trust. According to the Provost, “Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at <http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321>.” Violators of the Student Conduct Code will receive an “F” for the offending paper. Each essay you submit must be signed at the bottom of the last page, assuring that the work is your own, except where indicated by proper documentation. Your signature is your word that the essay is free of plagiarism.

Accessibility and Accommodation: Students with disabilities may request reasonable modifications by contacting me. The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students.

“Reasonable” means the University permits no fundamental alterations of academic standards or retroactive modifications.

Specific goals for students of this course:

1. To become experienced, insightful, and wise interpreters of “Shakespeare”—the plays, the films, and the cultural phenomenon.
2. To become adept at performing meaningful, interesting close-readings of literary texts.
3. To practice revising and developing the draft of a formal analytical essay.
4. To become proficient in writing rhetorically effective essays (well-reasoned and grammatically sound), driven by a thesis and sustained by an ordered, coherent argument.

The following schedule is tentative. At the beginning or end of each class I will confirm the reading for the next class.

- 8/31 Thurs.** Introductions: Who was and what is “Shakespeare”? For this class, please read “The Theatrical World” and “The Texts of Shakespeare” (which you can find near the front of any of the Penguin editions of the plays) and Scott L. Newstok, “How to Think like Shakespeare” (on Moodle).
- 9/5 Tues.** *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*; Harold Goddard, “Cadwal and Polydore” (on Moodle)
9/7 Thurs. *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*
- 9/12 Tues.** *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*
9/14 Thurs. *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*
- 9/19 Tues.** *Henry IV, part one*; Peter Saccio, “Shakespearean History and the Reign of Henry IV” (Moodle)
9/21 Thurs. *Henry IV, part one*
9/22 Friday **First essay due by 1:50 (please slide your essay under my office door, LA 217)**
- 9/26 Tues.** **Presidents Day – no class**
9/28 Thurs. **Festival of the Book session on rare books archives:** our class will meet in the Mansfield Library in the Archives and Special Collection area (one floor up) at our usual class time (3:30).
- 10/3 Tues.** *Henry IV, part one and part two*
10/5 Thurs. *Henry IV, part two*
- 10/10 Tues.** *Henry IV, part two*
10/12 Thurs. *Henry IV, part two*
- 10/17 Tues.** *Henry V*
10/19 Thurs. *Henry V; Henry V*; Sara Munson Deats, “Rabbits and Ducks” (Moodle)
- 10/24 Tues.** *Henry V*; Marjorie Garber, “Henry V: the Quest for Exemplarity” (Moodle)
10/26 Thurs. *Hamlet*
10/27 Friday **Second essay due by 1:50 (please slide your essay under my office door, LA 217)**
- 10/31 Tues.** *Hamlet*
11/2 Thurs. *Hamlet*

11/7 Tues. *Hamlet*
11/9 Thurs. *Macbeth* or *Othello*

11/14 Tues. *Macbeth* or *Othello*
11/16 Thurs. *Macbeth* or *Othello*

11/21 Tues. *Macbeth* or *Othello*
10/23 Thurs. **Thanksgiving break**

11/28 Tues. *The Tempest*
11/30 Thurs. *The Tempest*

12/5 Tues. *The Tempest*
12/7 Thurs. *The Tempest*

12/12 Tues. Additional office hours during class time (no class meeting)

Term paper due: Thursday, December 14 by high noon (please slide yours under my office door)

There is no final exam for this class.