

ENGLISH 345: SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGEDIES
Spring 2012

Course Hours: Wednesdays and Fridays, 10:50 A.M.-12:05 P.M.
Classroom: EC 102
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appointment

Course Description: (3) This course will focus on five of Shakespeare's tragedies, dating from the beginning to the end of his career. It will also include occasional introductory material intended to set Shakespeare's plays in their historical and critical context. Prerequisite: Theatre 203 or English 203 or permission of instructor.

Objectives and Strategies: The course is intended to familiarize you with Shakespeare's works and to enhance your ability to read Shakespeare with ease, understanding, and enjoyment. To achieve these aims, the course will emphasize three aspects of Shakespeare's plays:

1. The **experience** of the plays, featuring actual performances whenever possible: live productions, DVDs or videocassettes, in-class readings, etc;

2. The nature and development of Shakespearean **tragedy**;

3. The **meaning(s)** of Shakespeare's plays: that is, the persistence and development of certain motifs and themes throughout Shakespeare's career, reflecting the evolution of Shakespeare's own deepening vision of life.

By the end of the semester, you should be able to **discuss** these aspects of Shakespeare's work with understanding and clarity.

Another course objective will be the further refinement of your **writing skills** and **critical abilities**.

Requirements and Grading:

A journal on class readings: worth 15%;

A term paper of approximately 2,000 to 2,500 words, applying the methods used in the course to analyze a theme of a single tragedy, preferably *King Lear*: worth 30%;

A midterm exam: worth 15%;

A final exam (comprehensive, but emphasizing material covered since the midterm): worth 30%;

Class participation: worth 10% (including brief reports on an assigned Shakespeare critic and school of Shakespeare criticism: worth 2%).

Also, from time to time, students will be asked to read aloud in class.

Journals will be collected three times per semester; each of these three sections will be worth 5% of your course grade and missing entries cannot be made up.

Extra Credit: *Students may earn up to 2 percentage points of extra credit by attending an out-of-class showing of Laurence Oliver's movie version of King Lear. Specific date(s) and time(s) will be determined in consultation with the class.*

Borrowed material:

All material borrowed for this course, from either the instructor or the library, must be returned before a course grade can be submitted.

Late Assignments: Each of the course papers will lose one letter grade for every class period it is late. All assignments are due at the start of class on the assigned day.

Attendance: Students will be allowed **two (2)** unexcused absences during the semester. Each additional unexcused absence will lower the student's course grade by **one-third of a letter grade**. Excused absences will be granted for school-related activities which have been officially approved, serious illnesses verified by a physician, and verified family emergencies. Verification must be in writing by the appropriate authority. **Three late arrivals at class will be counted as one unexcused absence and will be penalized accordingly.**

Classroom Behavior: The classroom should be a place where learning occurs for **all** students. Occasionally, some students disrupt the learning process with unseemly or immature behavior. Students are referred to the statement in the online *Maggie* on classroom behavior entitled Classroom Decorum. These standards must be adhered to, and students may be penalized and/or dismissed from class for violating them.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty: It is essential that all graded work submitted under your name be your own work. Submitting a paper that contains passages copied or paraphrased from another person's writing without proper acknowledgment (quotation marks, parenthetical references, etc.) is plagiarism. So is submitting a paper that has been written in any part by someone else; this includes providing an outline for or revision of another person's paper, as well as writing all or part of that paper. Students who allow others to use their work are considered as guilty as the person who has done the actual plagiarism. Plagiarized papers automatically receive **zero (0) credit** and are reported to the Academic Standards Committee for possible further disciplinary action. Cheating in any form,

especially on quizzes or exams, is subject to similar penalties. Consult the online *Maggie* for further explanation of the rules governing academic dishonesty.

Disabilities Services Statement: Students with disabilities of any kind are referred to the Coordinator of Disability Support Services, Pamela Harrison, at 217-479-7176 or by e-mail at pamela.harrison@mac.edu. It is the responsibility of the student to make sure that the instructor is informed of any disability he or she may have that will necessitate special classroom consideration. The instructor will make every effort to insure that that disability is appropriately addressed.

Text: Bevington, David, ed. *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*. 6th ed. New York: Pearson Longman, 2009.

Tentative Schedule:

Wed., Jan. 11 (Day 1)

Introduction to the course. Maps and "The Royal Genealogy of England" (A-84-A-87)
Filmstrip: *Shakespeare's London* (30 minutes)

Fri., Jan. 13 (Day 2)

"Life in Shakespeare's England" (xi-xxxii, 20 pages)
Videos: Julie Taymor's *Titus* (excerpt)

Wed., Jan. 18 (Day 3)

"Shakespeare's Life and Work" (liv-lxxxii 18 pages)
The Five-Act Structure (handout)
Video: *William Shakespeare*

Fri., Jan. 20 (Day 4)

Romeo and Juliet, Introduction, Acts 1 and 2
Video: Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* (excerpt)

Wed., Jan. 25 (Day 5)

Romeo and Juliet, Acts 3-5
Video: Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* (excerpts)

Fri., Jan. 27 (Day 6)

Hamlet, Introduction, Act 1
Video: Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet* (excerpt)

Wed., Feb. 1 (Day 7)

Hamlet, Acts 2-3

Video: Branagh's *Hamlet* (excerpt)

Fri., Feb. 3 (Day 8)

Hamlet, Acts 4-5

Video: Branagh's *Hamlet* (excerpt)

Wed., Feb. 8 (Day 9)

Hamlet wrap-up

Journal - first installment due

Fri., Feb. 10 (Day 10)

"Shakespeare's Language" (lxxxii-xc)

Shakespeare Development as an Artist (handout)

Shakespeare's Theater

Journal - first installment due

Wed., Feb. 15 (Day 11)

Review for midterm exam and term paper assignment

Fri., Feb. 17 (Day 12)

Midterm Exam

Wed., Feb. 22 (Day 13)

Othello, Introduction, Act 1

Video: Oliver Parker's *Othello* (excerpt)

Fri., Feb. 24 (Day 14)

Othello, Acts 2 and 3

Video: Parker's *Othello* (excerpt)

Wed., Feb. 29 (Day 15)

Othello, Acts 3-5

Video: Parker's *Othello* (excerpt)

Fri., Mar. 1 (Day 16)

Humors Theory (handout)

Tues., Mar. 6 - Fri., Mar. 9 Spring Break

Wed., Mar. 14 (Day 17)

Macbeth, Introduction, Act 1

Video: Philip Casson's-Trevor Nunn's *Macbeth* (excerpt)

**Out-of-class showing of Laurence Olivier's *King Lear*
preparatory to term paper and worth two points of extra**

credit to be presented sometime during this week.

Fri., Mar. 16 (Day 18)

Macbeth, Acts 2 and 3

Video: Casson's-Nunn's *Macbeth* (excerpt)

Wed., Mar. 21 (Day 19)

Macbeth, Acts 4 and 5

Video: Casson's-Nunn's *Macbeth* (excerpt)

Journal - second installment due

Fri., Mar. 23 (Day 20)

Macbeth wrap-up

Wed., Mar. 28 (Day 21)

King Lear, Introduction, Act 1

Term paper due

Fri., Mar. 30 (Day 22)

King Lear, Acts 2 and 3

Wed., Apr. 4 (Day 23)

King Lear, Acts 4 and 5

Fri., Apr. 6 - Easter break (no class)

Wed., Apr. 11 (Day 24)

King Lear wrap-up

Fri., Apr. 13 (Day 25)

"Shakespeare Criticism" (*ci-cxiv*, 13 pages)

Wed., Apr. 18 (Day 26)

"Shakespeare Criticism" (continued)

Fri., Apr. 20 (Day 27)

Shakespeare wrap-up

Journal - third installment due

Wed., Apr. 25 (Day 28)

Review for final and course evaluation

Fri., Apr. 27 - 3-5 P.M., EC 102: Final Exam

Illinois Educational Requirements: Language Arts Standards

For English majors intending to seek Illinois secondary education certification

Standard 11

The competent English language arts teacher understands, models, and teaches how writers convey meaning through literary elements and techniques in a variety of genres and media.

Standard 12

The competent English language arts teacher reads and interprets a variety of literary works and genres.

Compliance and assessment

Although the focus of this course is on a single author (Shakespeare) and genre (tragedy), we discuss several other genres that are included in Shakespeare's evolving conception of tragedy: comedy, history, satire, and romance. In addition to the traditional plot, character, and dialogue that are a staple of any play, we pay considerable attention to the specialized literary devices through which Shakespeare characteristically develops the themes of his plays: overt philosophizing, debates, imagery, foils, multiple plotting, mirror scenes, and mixture of genre. Each of these devices was specifically designed to contribute to the overall meaning of the play. Class discussion is primarily intended to cultivate in students the ability to unravel the multiple meanings of a number of Shakespeare's most complex and challenging works. Finally, we trace the way in which a single genre (in this case, tragedy) can develop in unpredictable directions, so that nature of the genre itself is significantly changed in the process.

Students are quizzed almost daily on their understanding of the basic elements of character and plot. At the midpoint and end of the course students are tested more broadly and comprehensively with a midterm and final exam. They are also required to keep a journal in which they are encouraged to express their reflections on each of the course readings that they do. The journals are collected, read, and responded to at least three times a semester. And, finally, students are required to write a term paper analyzing a central theme of one Shakespearean tragedy that we have not discussed in class for the purpose of demonstrating their mastery of the critical techniques taught in the course. These papers serve as the basis for class discussion of that particular play, so that students collectively become genuine partners in illuminating the themes of the play instead of merely dependents.