

English 311: Shakespeare

Fall 2008

Cedar Crest College

Dr. LuAnn M. Fletcher

Hartzel 112

Phone: x3396

E-mail: lmfletch@cedarcrest.edu

Office hours: M 1-2, W 5:30-6:30, Th 2:30-3:30, and by appointment

Text

Bevington, David. *The Necessary Shakespeare* (2nd edition)

You are responsible for reading each play assigned in its entirety by the first class we will be discussing it. Also, I expect you to read the introductions to the plays. Many students find Shakespeare's plays difficult to follow at first; thus, in order to give you an overview to the plots of the plays and their issues, you will find it helpful to read these introductions before you read the plays themselves. I also recommend that you read each play twice--once simply to understand the plot, a second time to pay attention to language, characterization, themes, and structure.

You should also familiarize yourself with your text's general introduction, as well as with its supplemental materials, including bibliographies of significant critical studies. This information will aid you in the preparation of your research project for the class.

Course Description

ENG 311: Shakespeare is a three-credit course; it is taught in a combination of lecture and discussion formats. WRI 100: College Writing is a prerequisite for this course.

In ENG 311, we will consider the characteristics of Shakespeare's work that made him respected among his contemporaries and influential to audiences and other writers in succeeding centuries, including our own time. As part of our study of Shakespeare's dramatic productions, we will talk about the culture and ideologies of Renaissance England, as well as Shakespeare's philosophies about human nature and the human condition. We will discuss various critical interpretations of Shakespeare's work and ideas, and their implications for twenty-first century audiences. We will take advantage of the ongoing cinematic interest in the Bard and consider how the plays are "re-produced" for us moderns. And we will participate in the process of making sense of Shakespeare's texts and his vision of the world by developing readings of our own.

This fall, we will use a semester-long consideration of *1 Henry IV* as an opportunity to consider, in this presidential election year, Shakespeare's imaginative creation of a political leader and his exploration of the qualities that make leaders effective. While this history play addresses the question of leadership directly, we'll find that Shakespeare attends to the interplay between social and political power and individual lives in other plays as well—to note this subject is to understand Shakespeare better as writer in his own time as well as for our time.

Course Objectives

As with all English courses offered by the department, ENG 311 seeks to help students acquire the ability to read and analyze critically works of literature, to acquire a general knowledge of the history of literature in English, and to expand their knowledge and appreciation of their own and other cultures and historical moments. As with other English courses, ENG 311 also seeks to develop students' oral and written communication skills.

ENG 311 achieves these programmatic goals through its provision of the opportunity for close study of Shakespeare's work, as well as the opportunity to consider why Shakespeare has been considered great; its introduction of important critical insights into Shakespeare's methods and concerns as a playwright; its invitation to the student to participate in the practice of literary interpretation of his work; and its consideration of the close relationship between the interpretation of Shakespeare's plays and their performance.

Course Outcomes

Upon successful completion of ENG 311, students will be able to demonstrate their knowledge of a range of Shakespeare's plays, including the content of these works, their historical and social contexts, and some possibilities for interpretation and performance of these works. In addition, students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of basic literary terms, competence in reading and analyzing works by Shakespeare, and competence in discussing and writing about works by Shakespeare.

Assessment of Course Outcomes

The successfulness of ENG 311 in achieving its outcomes will be assessed, in part, by the ability of students to complete course assignments successfully. Students will demonstrate their knowledge of the content and interpretive contexts of Shakespeare's works through class discussion of assigned reading, weekly quizzes, a midterm, a film production comparison assignment, a written response to the class-generated website, and an in-class final exam or take-home explication. Students will demonstrate their knowledge of basic literary terms, their competence in critical literary analysis, and their writing ability through participation in class discussion and their completion of the film production comparison assignment, a research assignment, and the take-home explication or in-class final exam.

Course Requirements

The requirements for this course are as follows:

--reading quizzes each week we begin a new play, 8 total, worth 10% of your final grade. I will drop the lowest quiz grade.

--a midterm exam, which will consist of identifications and short answer responses. This assignment will be worth 15% of your grade.

--a film production comparison assignment (5-6 pages), worth 25% of your final grade. (See description of this assignment below.)

--a short (roughly 5 pages) research assignment, worth 25% of your final grade, intended to provide content for the *1 Henry IV* website, to be developed by and for this class. (More details about this assignment to be provided when we discuss it in class on September 15th.)

--informal paper (1-2 pages) that responds to the *1 Henry IV* class website, worth 5% of your final grade and due in class on December 3rd. (I will provide more details about this assignment as we get closer to the date it's due.)

--a final examination, consisting of a cumulative essay question, OR a take-home explication of a scene, worth 20% of your final grade.

**If you are a master's level student enrolled in this course, in addition to the requirements that appear above, I will expect you to read the optional plays listed on the course schedule and to choose one of the optional play/assigned play pairings as the subject of a 3-4 page comparison paper, topic to be chosen in consultation with me.

Comparison of Two Film Productions

For this assignment, you will view two different film versions of ONE play and write a paper in which you compare a single scene from the play represented in both films and discuss each director's treatment of this scene. Your discussion should ultimately answer the following: how does each director's treatment of your chosen scene reflect in little the director's vision of the play as a whole?

In order to help you consider what each director might be trying to achieve by his/her production of the scene, you should consider the effects of the following: casting, staging, scenery, characterization, historical allusions, cuts or additions, and/or production values--lighting, camera movement and angles, sound, point of view (who "sees"?), special camera effects. As you think about how the director's choices reveal his objectives in creating his version of Shakespeare's play, you will also find it helpful to consider the following: how effective do you think the director's choices are in rendering this scene from Shakespeare's play? Why? I will provide you with additional resources on viewing a Shakespeare film that you may use to guide your analysis as you prepare this paper.

The scene you choose to analyze must be included, at least in part, in both film versions. It should represent a significant moment in the play. Use any of our class discussion of the play and the film versions of it that you find helpful to guide your analysis of the films, but go beyond the generalizations we will inevitably make in class. Make sure that your paper has a thesis, or general argument, that guides your discussion and provides you with a means of organizing your observations. Please DO NOT do any "research" for this paper by consulting internet sources in which these films are discussed. I am interested in YOUR consideration of each film and the vision of the play it represents; I do not want to read interpretations of the films, however valid, advanced by others.

Below are the options from which you may choose the subject of your comparison. Please note that we will be viewing excerpts from the film versions of each play in class; you will be responsible for viewing both films in their entirety on your own. Copies of the films will be placed on reserve in the library after we have viewed them; all are available for purchase from Amazon, and the Nunn, Parker, and Welles films should be available at most video stores. Note that each of the possible film pairings has a separate due-date, indicated on the course schedule.

Trevor Nunn's 1996 version of *Twelfth Night* and John Sichel's 1969 BBC version

Oliver Parker's 2000 version of *Othello* and Orson Welles's 1952 version

Course Policies

Please see attached document for specific information regarding attendance and my policies regarding absences, classroom protocol and the Cedar Crest Honor Code, late work, make-up work, plagiarism, disability accommodations, and class cancellations.

Use of Study Aids

I am aware that many students turn to various study aids (e.g., *Cliffs Notes*, *SparkNotes*, Wikipedia) for help when they take literature courses. I do not recommend the use of these guides/websites, because they tend to provide overly simplistic—and occasionally inaccurate—summaries of plots and themes. Furthermore, they prevent students from engaging with a literary work on its own terms, noting interesting details, making connections to other works on the syllabus, placing a work in its historical or cultural context. I acknowledge, however, that my warning will not prevent students from utilizing these resources. Therefore, I urge the following: DO NOT use these aids in lieu of reading a literary work. If you refer to these aids at all, refer to them ONLY after having read the assigned text and consider them to provide supplemental information to the results of your own reading of the text and our class discussion of it. In no circumstances should you incorporate information from a study aid or Wikipedia into a paper or exam, as these resources do not meet the definition of an academic source.

Opportunity to Attend a Live Shakespeare Production

This semester, I will be taking students to see a production of *Romeo and Juliet* by the Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey at Drew University, located in Madison, NJ. We will be attending the 2:00 performance on Saturday, October 18th. I'll give you more information on this trip in class and will ask for sign-ups during the first week of classes (ENG 311 students have the first chance to sign up for this trip before I extend the offer more widely to English

majors and the rest of the campus).

I post on the Events board down the hall from my office all information I receive about regional Shakespeare performances; please ask me or consult this board if you would like to see what else might be playing this year.

Course Schedule

PLEASE NOTE: You should complete your reading of each play by the FIRST class we are scheduled to discuss it.

Students occasionally ask me for more reading than I assign to the class. To accommodate the ambitious among you, I have listed a few optional reading assignments that, should you choose to do them, will broaden your acquaintance with a range of Shakespeare plays. I will not be using class time specifically to discuss these additional plays, but I may refer to them from time to time in class, and you're more than welcome to talk to me about them outside of class.

Aug 25 M	Introduction to the course: Shakespeare's world and work.
Aug 27 W	Film: "Using the Verse," from John Barton's <i>Playing Shakespeare</i> . Discussion of sonnets: read sonnets 55, 106, 135, and 136 in your anthology. Also, read the handout "The Mirror of Life: How Shakespeare Conquered the World," by Jonathan Bate (<i>Harper's Magazine</i> , April 2007)
Sep 1 M	Labor Day holiday
Sep 3 W	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>
Sep 8 M	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>
Sep 10 W	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> —discussion of excerpts from film versions directed by Michael Hoffman (1999) and Adrian Noble (1996) Optional reading: <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>
Sep 15 M	Discussion of research project and sign-ups. Initial presentation on <i>I Henry IV</i>
Sep 17 W	<i>As You Like It</i>
Sep 22 M	<i>As You Like It</i>
Sep 24 W	<i>Twelfth Night</i>
Sep 29 M	<i>Twelfth Night</i>
Oct 1 W	<i>Twelfth Night</i> —discussion of excerpts from film versions directed by Trevor Nunn (1996) and John Sichel (1969) Optional reading: <i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>
Oct 6 M	<u>Midterm exam</u>
Oct 8 W	<i>I Henry IV</i> , question and answer session
Oct 13 M	Fall break
Oct 15 W	<i>Richard III</i> <u>Film production comparison assignment on <i>Twelfth Night</i> due</u>

- Oct 18 S Optional trip to see production of *Romeo and Juliet*
- Oct 22 M *Richard III*
- Oct 22 W *Richard III*—discussion of excerpts from Richard Loncraine’s 1995 film version
Optional reading: *Henry V*. (You may also find it interesting to compare Kenneth Branagh’s 1989 film version of this play to Loncraine’s *Richard III*)
- Oct 27 M *Othello*
- Oct 29 W *Othello*
- Nov 3 M *Othello*, discussion of excerpts from film versions directed by Oliver Parker (2000) and Orson Welles (1952)
Optional reading: *The Merchant of Venice*
- Nov 5 W *Hamlet*
- Nov 10 M *Hamlet*
- Nov 12 W *Hamlet*—discussion of film versions directed by Kenneth Branagh (1996) and Franco Zeffirelli (1990)
Research project due
- Nov 17 M *Macbeth*
- Nov 19 W *Macbeth*
Production analysis comparison assignment on *Othello* due
- Nov 24 M *The Winter’s Tale*
- Nov 26 W Thanksgiving break
- Dec 3 W *The Winter’s Tale* and discussion of website
Response to the *1 Henry IV* website due
- Dec 8 M Film: *A Midwinter’s Tale*, directed by Kenneth Branagh. This film runs 98 minutes; I will screen it in its entirety—please plan to stay longer than our usual class time, if possible.

The final exam time for this class will be as scheduled by the Registrar. If you choose the explication option, your explication is due to me by the start time of the final exam.