

This is a Hass-D distribution course, Category 1. It also counts for CI credit

Instructor:

Prof. Shankar Raman

Around 1576 the first commercial theatre was built in England: in James Burbage's Theatre, for the first time, audiences paid money to see plays performed in the closed confines of a permanent playhouse. Within a few years an entire institution had sprung up, comprising rival companies and playwrights, theatre owners and managers, actors and hired hands. At the same time, the theatre was an object of suspicion: were the actors usurping the parts of their betters by dressing up as kings and courtiers? Was the theatre responsible for spreading sedition and encouraging immoral behaviour? Such questions testify both to the popularity of the young theatres and the dangers posed by that popularity. A central figure in this tumultuous period of theatre history was William Shakespeare, now seen as the central author of the English-speaking world. Why is that and who "is" he? What meanings did his plays have in his own time, and what relevance do his works have for us today? This course will introduce you to the range of Shakespeare's drama, and, through close reading of plays, address these and other questions.

Required Texts

Single volumes of Shakespeare's plays available at the Coop. Please bring each text to class on the day it is being discussed. Please stick to editions ordered, since the play-texts vary substantially from edition to edition.

September

4 (Th): Introduction and Course Overview

9 (Tu): Hamlet

11 (Th): Hamlet

16 (Tu): Hamlet

18 (Th): Hamlet

23 (Tu): Henry IV pt. 1

Paper 1 due in class

25 (Th): Henry IV pt. 1

30 (Tu): Henry IV pt. 1

October

1 (W): *Film Screening of Comedy of Errors (7pm. Room 1-135)*

2 (Th): The Comedy of Errors

7 (Tu): The Comedy of Errors

8 (W): ***Paper 1 Rewrite Due***

9 (Th): The Comedy of Errors

13 (M): *Film Screening of Much Ado about Nothing (7pm. Room 1-135)*

14 (Tu): Much Ado about Nothing

16 (Th): Much Ado about Nothing
21 (Tu): Much Ado about Nothing

22 (W): *Film Screening of Othello (7pm. Room 1-135)*
23 (Th): Othello
27 (Mo) ***Paper 2 Due***
28 (Tu): Othello
30 (Th): Othello

November

4 (Tu): Othello
6 (Th): King Lear
11 (Tu): Veteran's Day Vacation: NO CLASSES
13 (Th): King Lear
18 (Tu): King Lear
19 (W): ***Paper 2 Re-write due (optional)***
20 (Th): King Lear
25 (Tu): A Winter's Tale
27 (Th): Thanksgiving Vacation: NO CLASSES

December

2 (Tu): A Winter's Tale
4 (Th): A Winter's Tale
5 (Fri): ***Paper 3 Due***
9 (Tu): A Winter's Tale

Course Requirements

- I require careful reading and re-reading of the plays as we discuss them. Unless explicitly told otherwise, you will be expected to have read the entire play before the first time we discuss it, and to re-read it as the discussion progresses.

- You will be also required to write 3 short essays, totalling 22-25 pages.

Essay 1 (5 pages): A brief paper on Hamlet. This paper involves close analysis of a scene (or part thereof): choose a short passage from the play and developing a focused argument that relates the details of that passage to the play as a whole. A fuller description will be forthcoming. A rewrite will be required; your final grade will be the grade on the rewrite.

Essay 2 (7-8 pages): An analytical essay on either *Comedy of Errors*, *Much Ado about Nothing* or *Othello* that compares the play to the film (fuller description forthcoming). Rewrite optional. If re-written, grade will be the average of the two versions.

Essay 3 (10-12 pages): A longer essay that either compares two plays or develops a focused reading of a single play. Detailed description of assignment forthcoming. You will choose from among *King Lear*, *A Winter's Tale*, and *Othello* (assuming you didn't choose *Othello* for Essay 2).

- You will be given short unannounced quizzes through the term to test your reading and memory of the plays.
- A three hour final exam
- You are expected to attend class regularly and participate energetically in our discussion throughout the semester.
- I will expect you either to attend the screenings of the films or, if you cannot make a particular screening, to watch it on video yourself before the next class.
- If you cannot make a class or meet a deadline, please inform me in advance. Otherwise, absences and late papers will affect your grade adversely.

Paper Requirements and Grade distribution

Written work should be typed or word-processed (double-spaced, Times Roman font or equivalent, with standard one-inch margins). I will provide more detailed descriptions for each written assignment. I will also provide a style sheet including information about proper citation of sources. Don't hesitate to come to office hours if you wish to discuss further any dimension of the class.

The weighting of requirements for the final grade will be approximately as follows:

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| Participation and Attendance | 10% |
| Quizzes | 5% |
| Essay 1 | 15% |
| Essay 2 | 20% |
| Essay 3 | 30% |
| Final | 20% |

This is not written in stone. I may adjust weighting depending upon individual performance and development.

An addendum reluctantly added: Given the rising number of cases involving plagiarism in recent terms, I am forced to spell out what should go without saying. Plagiarism is **out**, and the penalty for anyone caught “lifting” material from other sources without adequate acknowledgement will be an automatic F in the class and a trip to appropriate disciplinary committee at MIT. In short, while this class will encourage the use of external critical and historical material in writing your essays, it will expect you to clearly and specifically acknowledge all such use (in the body of the text, or in foot/endnotes, or in the accompanying bibliography). If you have any doubts about use of material beyond the text itself or about the definition of plagiarism, please speak to me before submitting your work.