

E 379M Shakespeare Through Performance 35070

Semester Spring 2010 3:30 PM- 5:00 PM PAR 105

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Course Description

This course explores Shakespeare's plays through performance. We will spend every class period looking in detail at Shakespeare's texts, at the interpretive challenges they present, and at the way performance choices contribute to their meaning. We will consider the original circumstances of their performance, their subsequent history on stage, and the critical controversies they have occasioned. Above all we will explore them in action, through our own creative work, both in the classroom and in the theatre barn at Winedale.

The course is designed for students with an interest in Shakespeare and a willingness to perform in front of others. Previous experience with acting is not necessary. The goals of the course are to acquaint students with the conventions, concerns and techniques of the Elizabethan theatre; to gain a mastery of Shakespearean language and rhetoric through close textual work; to explore a series of social, aesthetic and ethical issues through interpretive work on scenes; to compare and evaluate different approaches to the play; and finally to bring together the students' work in public performance.

For the Spring of 2009, the course will focus on *Conflict and Belief in Shakespeare*. We will read seven of the plays, and perform one of them, *The Merchant of Venice*, at Winedale.

This class will require you to spend three weekends at The University of Texas Winedale Historical Complex: Friday-Sunday, February 26-28, Friday-Sunday, March 26 to 28, and Thursday-Sunday, April 29 to May 2. We will also plan a one-day visit on Sunday, April 25. It will be necessary for you to miss all other UT classes on Friday, April 30; make sure this won't be a problem before you register. These sessions at Winedale are required; they are the most important part of the course. During these weekends, you will be working very long hours on the play, from early morning to late at night. You should be prepared for this commitment before you register. The course concludes with public performances of the plays on April 30 and May 1. Seating is limited; tell your family and friends to make reservations early at www.shakespeare-winedale.org.

Texts:

The Norton Shakespeare, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. This is a good, fairly portable edition with good notes, so I want everyone to get it, even if you already have a Complete Works.

The Merchant of Venice, Norton Critical editions.

There will be some additional readings given as handouts in class, including Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*.

Grading Policy

Grades will be based on attendance and participation, written work, and above all your ability to learn and teach through performance (not your acting talent *per se*, though your performances will be considered in your grade). Attendance and active participation are required, and are the most important parts of the course. Throughout the semester there will be a series of short written assignments (2-4 pages) that will respond to the reading of the texts and to the performance work in class. These assignments will be given out one to two class periods before they are due. I will use plus and minus grades in assigning final grades.

Performance—both reading from a text and with lines memorized—will be a daily activity. The course will test every aspect of the student's interaction with Shakespeare, demanding close critical reading, discussion and written analysis, and rigorous, creative exploration of the text in performance.

Attendance/participation 30%

Papers 25%

In-class performance work 25%

Final project 20%

The University of Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259.

Paper 1 Assignment

This paper is due Thursday February 4 at the beginning of class. TOPIC: Discuss Shakespeare's treatment of religion in *1 Henry VI*, focusing on one of the following three issues: 1. the role of the church in political matters; 2. kingship and divine right; 3. Joan of Arc.

Film Screenings:

There will be one or more film screenings associated with the course, beginning with *The Merchant of Venice* on Wednesday February 10. I will try to arrange these so that everyone can attend, but if they end up conflicting with your schedule, you can see the films on your own; they will be considered part of the reading for the course.

Attendance and preparation:

Attendance is mandatory, and vital to the success of the course. Everyone can miss one class without explanation; beyond that your grade will be lowered unless you have a legitimate excuse such as a medical or family emergency. If you expect to miss class, please contact me in advance. Please read any assigned texts thoroughly before class. Always bring your text to class.

Schedule of Work (subject to change):

The reading is intensive in the early part of the semester because we want to look at Shakespeare's several of Shakespeare's plays that deal with religion before focusing on *The Merchant of Venice*.

January

T 19 Introduction
Th 21 Introduction; 1 Henry VI, 1.1-2.2
T 26 1 Henry VI, 2.3-4.2
Th 28 1 Henry VI, 4.3-end

February

T 2 The Merchant of Venice, 1.1-3.2
Th 4 The Merchant of Venice, 3.2-end **Assignment 1 due**
T 9 Measure for Measure, 1.1-3.1
Th 11 Measure for Measure, 3.2-end
T 16 Othello, 1.1-3.3
Th 18 Othello, 3.4-end **Assignment 2 due**
T 23 King John, 1.1-3.1
Th 25 King John, 3.2-end
F 26-Sun 28 **First Winedale Weekend** (arrive at Winedale by 5 p.m.)

March

T 2 Hamlet, 1.1-3.3
Th 4 Hamlet, 3.4-end **Assignment 3 due**
T 9 Henry VIII, 1.1-3.2
Th 11 Henry VIII, 3.2-end

Spring Break

T 23 Marlowe, *The Jew of Malta*
Th 25 Marlowe, *The Jew of Malta*, cont'd. **Assignment 4 due**
F 26-Sun 28 **Second Winedale Weekend** (arrive at Winedale by 5 p.m.)
T 30 *The Merchant of Venice*, scene work

April

Th 1 NO CLASS
T 6 *The Merchant of Venice*, scene work **Assignment 5 due**
Th 8 *The Merchant of Venice*, scene work
T 13 *The Merchant of Venice*, scene work
Th 15 *The Merchant of Venice*, scene work
T 20 *The Merchant of Venice*, scene work **Assignment 6 due**
Th 22 *The Merchant of Venice*, scene work
Sun 25 One-day visit to Winedale
T 27 *The Merchant of Venice*, scene work
Th 29 *The Merchant of Venice*, scene work
Thu 29-Sun May 2 **Final Winedale Weekend**

May

T 4 NO CLASS
Th 6 Final class meeting **Assignment 7 due**