

English S201
Summer, 2017
Mr. Brisman

M, F 1:00-4:20
screenings M,Th 7:30

Shakespeare: Tragedies and Histories

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|-----|----|--------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. | M | May 29 | Introduction: Action, Acting, Agency |
| 2. | | 4 | Julius Caesar |
| 3. | | 4 | screening at 7:30 |
| 4. | Th | June 1 | Richard II screening at 7:30 |
| 5. | F | 2 | Richard II |
| 6. | | 2 | |
| 7. | M | 5 | I Henry IV |
| 8. | | 5 | |
| 9. | F | 9 | II Henry IV |
| 10. | | 9 | |
| 11. | M | 12 | Hamlet |
| 12. | | 12 | |
| 13. | | 12 | Hamlet screening at 7:30 |
| * | W | 14 | <i>first essay due</i> |
| 14. | Th | 15 | Othello screening |
| 15. | F | 16 | Othello |
| 16. | | 16 | |
| 17. | M | 19 | Macbeth |
| 18. | | 19 | |
| 19. | M | 19 | Macbeth screening at 7:30 |
| 20. | Th | 22 | King Lear screening at 7:30 |
| 21. | F | 23 | King Lear |
| 22. | | 23 | |
| 23. | M | 26 | Antony and Cleopatra |
| 24. | | 26 | |
| 25. | F | 30 | Coriolanus |
| 26. | | 30 | |
| * | F | 30 | <i>second essay due</i> |

PACE OF THE SUMMER SEMESTER: The summer term is in many ways an ideal time to study Shakespeare: By abbreviating the reading list so that we have a comfortable pace of two plays a week, by eliminating examinations, and by taking advantage of our ability to schedule the plays a few days apart, we give ourselves a luxurious venue for immersion in our greatest writer.

We do, however, need to conceive of these five weeks as moving at *three* times the pace of a regular, fifteen-week semester. In five weeks, we should be accomplishing an immersion in Shakespeare equivalent not just to thirteen weeks of classes, but to what that plus a vacation's reading, a reading period, and an examination period—together with the leisure these blocks of time allow for brooding over essay ideas—can give the student who uses time to good advantage. Ideally, all students, unless you are pre-college students required to be enrolled in two courses simultaneously, would carry just one summer semester course at a time. The student enrolled in S201 and one other course during these five weeks is carrying the equivalent of a six-course load in a regular semester—impossible for some, possible for others who have good concentration, good study habits, *and no conflicting commitments*. If you are thinking of carrying two courses *and* have a summer job or extracurricular commitments, that is too much. It will take a great deal of concentration, organization and will-power to succeed with *one* other course *or* some summer job; but trying to juggle three such commitments is asking for trouble. It has, occasionally, been successfully accomplished; but I would not advise it.

We will modify assignments somewhat to suit the five-week space (ten plays instead of thirteen, two longer essays instead of three, no scheduled examinations); but the commitment of instructor and student should be to accomplishing the work of a regular term. Note that if we consider each M and F session to be a double session, and add the six evening hours, there are twenty-six meetings scheduled, the same number of classes as we would have together in a regular fall or spring semester.

ATTENDANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY: Students are expected to attend all of the regular class sessions and at least three (preferably all) of the six evening screenings. Do not enroll in this course if you are not free to attend both class sessions and three screenings. It may help to conceive of our Tu-Th breaks as mid-week week-ends, but in any case, keep in mind that the whole play must be read for the discussion sessions devoted to it beginning on Monday at 1:00 or Thursday at 7:30. The film versions should prove to be interesting, though partial, second "readings": *partial* in three senses: the films make cuts, while it is the full text we are studying; and we will screen only a segment of each play; more important, any version so audibly and visually realized imposes a particular interpretation that you will want to be able to enjoy but also to be able to resist. Always be sure you have made a thorough study of the text first before encountering the film; and bring your book with you to the screening sessions.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: There will be two forms of writing associated with this course. The first is a series of **six** mini-essays (as long as you like, but let us specify a minimum of 2 pages in double spaced, Times New Roman 11 or its equivalent type) in which you think out a problem for yourself and show your instructor evidence that you have indeed read and ruminated over the play. Beginning with our second play, these are always due at the start of our discussion of the play, Monday or Friday afternoons. These are not, and should not be thought of, as "response papers." That is, they should not be devoted to

random or tangential observations. The assignment for the entire semester is a constant: *Each of these mini-essays should involve a close reading of some small passage from act 4 or 5, in the context of a theme that the play has been developing.* That much is a constant and a must. In general, you will do best to begin immediately with the brief, rich, problematic passage you have chosen from act 4 or act 5, and look into an intriguing difficulty or piece of figurative language you have encountered there—or look back from there, discussing the way a theme or piece of imagery returns to something presented earlier. *I urge you to print the citation at the beginning of your mini-essay to help keep you focused on it.* Wherever you start, try to focus these mini-essays as narrowly as you can; if you are writing about a word, an image, or a theme, choose a particular prior occurrence rather than a swift run-through of every appearance throughout the play.

We will do our best to read these in a timely fashion and return them to you with just a check or, if you have truly distinguished yourself, check plus, or, if you haven't really focused, check minus—and with some comment, perhaps a thought about something else to consider. I hope that the brevity, regularity, and ungraded nature of these assignments will free everyone to regard them as opportunities to think something out rather than show something off. Though I will certainly gain, from the accumulated lot, an overall impression of how carefully and thoughtfully you are preparing for class, it would be better to regard these as "checkpoints" and the two essays proper as the performance pieces.

I have specified as the minimum requirement for the course **six** such pieces. You may prefer to think of the requirement as a series of eight, for *you must write something on eight of our ten plays.* If you decide in advance on the two plays, one from the first five, one from the second, on which you will write your longer essays, then it is OK to skip the shorter piece on those plays. In practical terms, it is probably best to write the first three of these short essays and then decide if the first longer essay will be on *Hamlet*. If it is, then you do not need to submit the short piece on *Hamlet*; but if you want to return to one of the first four plays, be sure to write first and submit on time the short essay on *Hamlet*.

It is imperative that these short essays be submitted in a timely fashion. If for any reason you are late with one, whether you are ill and are missing the class that day or whether something unexpected came up and you just could not get the written assignment done in time, please understand three pages as the minimum amount of writing. But before electing to be absent or late with an assignment, remember that each omission is equivalent to **a week's absence** or tardiness in a regular semester! Given the brevity of the summer term, there should be no difference between one kind of excuse and another; whether you just overslept, were ill, or had a death in the family, the mechanism for make-up work is the same, and the limit of how much of it is possible before it becomes necessary to drop the course is a limit you can set in "the eye and prospect" of your own soul. The two rules you should keep in mind are (1) Don't be absent! and (2) If you must be absent, whatever the reason, you must write at least a mini-essay on that play.

The second form of writing will be two essays on one play each—the first based on one of the first five of our plays, the second on one of the second five. Think of two essays of, say, eight pages each, or let us set a minimum of sixteen pages total for these two essays: If your first essay turns out to be only six pages, set yourself the goal of writing a ten page essay the second time. But if you couldn't stop yourself short of twenty pages the first time, you need not repeat the feat; you do owe a second essay, but a brief one (minimum: five pages) would do just fine. Each essay should be an opportunity for you to broaden your immersion in Shakespeare by stepping outside an ongoing conversation with your instructor and

classmates and taking issue with some other interpreter of Shakespeare. You may deal directly with an article written about your play or with a chapter in a book about Shakespeare that deals specifically with your play. An interesting variant is to read some of the source material excerpted in the Signet edition and to treat the source as another ‘voice.’ Try to pick quarrels worth the keeping: you will not wish to seem, like Fortinbras, a person of great valor fighting about an insignificant piece of territory. One further specification about the longer essays in this summer term: keep in mind the same starting place as you had for the shorter pieces: a problematic speech or encounter from act 4 or act 5, in relation to which you develop the theme of your essay.

The first essay is due by 4:00 Wednesday, June 14 or by Saturday, June 17 if you are writing about *Hamlet*. The second essay is due Friday, June 30, or no later than Monday July 3 if you are writing about *Coriolanus*.

ESSAY SUBMISSION: Please bring paper copy of your brief essays to class. If you have trouble with a printer or need to be late then you can email the brief essay as an MS Word attachment (not a pdf file, please) and I will print it out for you. Also, if you wish to submit early in the hope that I might be able to read your piece and return it by class time, then you may email it to me. If you are a foreign student concerned about English usage or have other reason to want more immediate feedback, then I suggest that you email me your brief essay *the day before* our class on that play and I will do my best, where possible, to read your work and return it in class. If you don’t do that, you may not receive back an essay submitted on Friday till the following Monday, when the next mini-essay is due. (We could, however, also arrange to have a pick-up location [such as my mailbox in 109 LC, 63 High Street] if anyone wants to receive back one Monday submission before writing the next for Friday.) Because our class is small, and you may not be submitting your longer essays on days when we have class, I will not mind if you submit such essays electronically as MS Word documents attached to emails to leslie.brisman@yale.edu. Please do not email pdf files.

SOME MATTERS OF FORM: Please regard the seven to nine brief essays *as essays*, requiring a short title (never underline your own title; but italicize Shakespeare’s play titles); parenthetical references (old style Roman numerals for act and scene, please: e.g., V.iv.108-09 rather than 5.4.108-09); and a Work Cited entry at the end specifying the edition you have used. To form the possessive of a proper noun ending in s, please follow the Chicago rather than the barbaric MLA convention: add the s to Ross (a monosyllabic name) to form Ross’s; but please, “Enobarbus’ integrity,” not “Enobarbus’s,” “Cassius’ duplicity,” not “Cassius’s.” More matters of form in a separate hand-out.

BOOKS: I have ordered copies of the Signet Classic Shakespeare editions through The Yale Bookstore. I do prefer you use this edition, and it would be a courtesy to the store through whom the order was placed if you would purchase it there; but if you have a well-annotated single volume text (Norton or Penguin Harbage or Riverside) or the individual genre volumes in Norton, that will do. If you are coming to Yale from out of town, you may wish to purchase the Signet *Julius Caesar* in advance and the remainder of the books when you arrive. Be sure to indicate what edition you are using (as well as whatever else you have read) in a "Works Cited" list at the end of each of the two essays. Check the textual note at the conclusion of the Signet text (or its equivalent in another edition) in regard to the passage on which you are concentrating. There is no single rule about whether a quarto or folio reading is to be preferred (or a printed reading vs. a conjectural emendation); but there is a

rule that it is the writer's responsibility to pay attention to just what the text says, or what is in dispute about what the text says, before doing any other interpreting.

It is good for all students to have an edition that helps with individual words that may have changed their meaning since Shakespeare's day. In addition, you may wish to consult the Oxford English Dictionary (to which, as a registered Yale student, you have access on line) to be sure that you are understanding a word in its possible meaning. Since the summer school is increasingly of interest to students from foreign lands whose native language is not English, it is important for me to specify that you should be able (with the help of the footnotes in the Signet or Norton) to read the text in English; if you cannot, and would be relying on a translation, this course is too advanced for you and you would be better off in one of our introductory offerings.

EVALUATION: In the concentrated summer term, it is especially important that you always be prepared and that you do your work on time. Though the mini-essays are ungraded, I will keep notes about their content, their timeliness, and their quality. Grades will not appear on the first set of regular essays either; but if you are uncertain of my response, you are cordially invited to e-mail me for a preliminary grade evaluation once the first essay has been returned to you and you have had a chance to think about the comments on it. With the second essay, I will give you a manila envelope to address so I can return your work and an evaluation to you.

ETIQUETTE: Please observe these few simple rules; you are welcome to bring to class a beverage, even food (if it's not something rustling or crackling). If you must carry a cell phone with you, be sure, *be absolutely sure*, that it is turned off during class. And please arrive not AT 1:00 but *before* the class is due to begin at 1:00.

OFFICE MEETINGS: I would each like to meet everyone outside of class at least once. Email me leslie.brisman@yale.edu. My office phone is (43) 2-0488, and office is in Saybrook College, P12. If we are not meeting right after class in our classroom, I suggest that you ring me when you get to the Saybrook gate if you want me to come let you in. You may use appointment time to discuss a paper you are thinking of writing, one you have written, or anything else about Shakespeare. If you want to a draft or a piece of a draft to get preliminary response, you must do so in advance of the due date.