

Shakespeare: Comedies, Problem Plays, and Romances

1.	M	July	12	Introduction: Shakespeare and the Traditions of Comedy
2.				<i>Much Ado about Nothing</i>
3.	M		12	5:00 <i>Much Ado about Nothing</i> screening
4.	Th		15	5:00 <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> screening
5.	F		16	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>
6.				
7.	M		19	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>
8.				
9.	M		19	5:00 <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> Screening
10.	Th		22	<i>As You Like It</i> screening
11.	F		23	<i>As You Like It</i>
12.				
13.	M		26	<i>All's Well That Ends Well</i>
14.				
15.	M		26	<i>All's Well That Ends Well</i> screening
*	W		28	First Essay Due (unless, with special permission, on <i>Twelfth Night</i>)
16.	Th		29	<i>Twelfth Night</i> screening
17.	F		30	<i>Twelfth Night</i>
18.				
19.	M	Aug	2	<i>Measure for Measure</i>
20.				
21.	F		6	<i>Troilus and Cressida</i>
22.				
23.	M		9	<i>The Winter's Tale</i>
24.				
25.	F	Aug	13	<i>The Tempest</i>
26.				
*	F		13	Second Essay Due (unless, with special permission, on <i>The Tempest</i>)

PACE OF THE SUMMER SEMESTER: We 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 would carry just one summer semester course at a time; for pre-college students, this ideal is made impossible by the Summer School requirement of enrollment in two courses. The student enrolled in S200 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 planning to carry two courses *and* have a summer job or the equivalent requiring seven or more hours a week, 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 superhuman commitment. We will modify assignments somewhat to suit the five-week space (ten plays instead of thirteen, two longer essays instead of three, short essays in place of examinations); but the commitment of instructor and student should be to accomplishing the work of a regular term. 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 the six evening screenings. Do not enroll in this course if you are not free to attend all class sessions and at least three screenings. It may help to conceive of our Tuesday/Wednesdays as a second “week-end,” but in any case keep in mind that the whole play must be read for the first discussion session devoted to it on Monday or Thursday. 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 always screen less than the whole play—usually just one scene in several versions; 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. Like the imagined form of the dead Hero, the film may come “more moving, delicate, and full of life, / Into the eye and prospect of [the viewer's] soul (*Much Ado*, IV.i.225-26). So come armed: 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 whether you are a pre-college student, a college student, or a post-college student taking the course for graduate credit. The first is a series of **six** mini-essays (let us specify a minimum of two pages in double spaced twelve point Times or similarly sized 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. These are always due at the start of our discussion of the play, Monday afternoon or Thursday evening. These are not, and should not be referred to, as “response papers.” That is, they should not be devoted to random or disorganized 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 IV or V in light of a major theme of the play.* The specification of **six** comes from the assumption that you write one essay on eight of the ten plays we study. If you determine early that you wish to write one of the two longer essays on a given play, you do not have to write the shorter

essay also. On the other hand, you may wish to anyway, for in practice many of the best longer essays result from preliminary encounters in the short essay, and submitting that in timely fashion also lets me respond and perhaps help you think about the longer essay. In addition, skipping one of the short essays commits you to writing a longer essay on that play, and you may prefer to keep your longer essay options open.

You have the option of writing mini-essays on six plays, longer essays on the remaining two, or writing mini-essays on eight, nine, or ten plays and using your mini-essay on one of the plays as a first draft which then gets expanded. Keep in mind that I am here to help, both in your understanding of the plays and in your facility in posing a problem and thinking deeply about it. So some of you may want to write more than the minimum number of brief essays to take advantage of the opportunity to grow more. Note that either way, you must have written at least once by the beginning of the second week of classes.

I will do my best to read the shorter essays in a timely fashion and return them to you, perhaps with just a check (or, if you have truly distinguished yourself, check plus), a check minus if I want to call your attention to the need to reconceive the way you are interpreting the assignment. 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 wasting the space in paraphrase or defending an obvious point. 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."

It is imperative that the shorter 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, then consider 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, had a doctor's appointment, or confronted a crisis or 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, make it up right away as directed above.

The second form of writing will be two essays on one play each—the first based on one of the first six of our plays, the second on one of the last five. Plan two essays of 6-8 pages each, but keep in mind a minimum of fifteen pages total: If your first essay turns out to be just five 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 still owe a second essay, but a brief one (minimum: five pages) would do just fine. Each of these two essays should be an opportunity for you to broaden your immersion in Shakespeare by stepping outside an ongoing dialogue with your instructor and taking issue with (or building on the insight of) some other interpreter of Shakespeare. Choose an article written about your play or a chapter in a book about Shakespeare that deals specifically with your play—or a chapter from one of the great surveys of Shakespeare—such as Harold Goddard or Harold Bloom or Tony Tanner. These books will be on reserve in the summer temporary location of the Bass Library Collection in Sterling Library Periodical Reading Room): If you enter the main doors of the library and walk all the way down the nave, turn right and find the summer Bass Library office, and these reserve books, in the Periodicals Room, just past the elevators. For pre-college and college students, the requirement is simply that you show you have read one such piece for each of the two gradable essays. For someone taking the course

for graduate credit, there is no time to do a thorough search of the secondary literature on your topic, but you should show that you have read a minimum of two or three pieces on the play you are discussing. For all students, it is fine to put discussion of the secondary literature in an appendix if what you read does not bear on the topic of your essay.

Please keep the same two desiderata in mind for the longer essay that I specified for the mini-essays: set yourself a problem in the interpretation of a specific passage from Act IV or V, and use your knowledge of the play as a whole to help solve the local problem. Try to pick quarrels worth the keeping: you will not wish to seem, like Parolles, a person of many words about a drum.

The first essay is due by 3:00 PM on Wednesday, July 28. The second essay is due by 5:00 Friday, August 13, or no later than Monday morning August 16 if you are writing about *The Tempest*. This summer, while we are working remotely, essays should be submitted as MS Word documents attached to an email. (Do not send it as a pdf.) If you do so, please be sure that you have numbered your pages (in MS Word, use “insert page numbers” from the “insert” menu, and specify “top of the page, right,” and no page number on the first page.)

SOME MATTERS OF FORM: Please regard both the brief essays and the longer, gradable essays *as essays*, requiring a short title (never underline your own title; italicize Shakespeare’s); parenthetical references (old style Roman numerals for act and scene, please: e.g., V.iv.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 Keats (a monosyllabic name) to form Keats’s; but please, “Jaques’ melancholy,” since his name is disyllabic, and “Polixines’ integrity,” not “Polixines’s.”

I will post in Files a lengthier Essay Guide with instructions about planning the essay and with guidance on matters of English usage that require your special attention.

BOOKS: I have ordered copies of the Signet Classic Shakespeare editions through The Yale Bookstore. See the list at this URL: <http://tinyurl.com/YALE-B19-ENGL-200-1>

Because of the wonderful source material and the accessibility of some critical essays, 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 (Penguin Harbage or Riverside—or the separate comedies and romances volumes of Norton or the handsome but expensive separate Arden edition volumes) that will do. What will not do is planning to read the plays on line and bring a laptop to class: you must have paper copy to work with and to use in class. (I will happily help if anyone is in difficulty over the expense.) If you are coming to Yale from out of town, you may wish to purchase the Signet *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* 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 brief essays and the two longer 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.

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 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, please provide me with an addressed envelope 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). But if you must carry a cell phone with you, be sure, *be absolutely sure, that it is turned off during class*. And please arrive *before* the class is due to begin at 1:00.

OFFICE MEETINGS: I should like to meet everyone outside of class at least once. You are most welcome to make more use of my availability if I can help you with your essays or with other questions about Shakespeare. My regular hours will be Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, but you can ask me about other afternoons after class hours, or e-mail me at leslie.brisman@yale.edu. My office phone is (43) 2-0488, and my office is in Saybrook P12. The Saybrook gate on Elm Street (near the corner of High Street) will generally be locked, and your i.d. will only open the gate for some of you; but if you have an appointment with me, just phone from the gate (2-0488 from the blue phone or 203 432 0488 from a cell phone) and I'll come open the gate for you. If you want to read me a draft or discuss ideas you have in advance of writing a draft, remember that you need to do so in sufficient advance of the due date as to be able to make use of our visit as to be able to make use of our visit.

If you are writing on one of the plays that Mr. Spargo is teaching, some of you may wish to consult with him. To make an appointment with him, email r.spargo@yale.edu.