English S201 M, F 1:00-4:20

Summer, 2022 six screenings M, Th, 5:00

Mr. Brisman

**Shakespeare: Tragedies and Histories**

1. M July 4 Introduction: Action, Acting, Agency

2. Julius Caesar

3. screening hour at 5:00

4. Th July 7 Richard II screening at 5:00

5. F 8 Richard II

6.

7. M July 11 I Henry IV

8.

9. F 15 II Henry IV

10.

11. M 18 Macbeth

12.

13. Macbeth screening hour at 5:00

\* W 20 *first essay due (unless it is on* Hamlet*)*

14. Th 21 Hamlet screening at 5:00 or 10:00

15. F 22 Hamlet

16.

\* Sat 23 *first essay due (if it is on* Hamlet*)*

17. M 25 Othello

18.

19. M Othello screening at 5:00

20. Th 28 King Lear screening (our last) at 5:00

21 F 29 King Lear

22.

23. M Aug 1 Antony and Cleopatra

24.

25. F 5 Coriolanus

26.

\* F 5 *second essay due*

**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 Yale 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 probably 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.

At the time of this writing, we are looking forward to being "in person" (in the classroom rather than on Zoom). Students need to be "present" for all sessions, and present means seeing your classmates and letting yourself be seen. I hope everyone will be able to attend all sessions. But if anyone is quarantined or otherwise has to miss a class, I hope it will be possible to set up a Zoom session that would allow the absentee to participate fully.

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. If we consider each M and F session to be a double session (with a little break in between), and add the six "screening" or discussion 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 the six late afternoon 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 5:00. 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 small segments 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 since we will read some and discuss what we see.

**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 Thursday 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 IV or V, 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 IV or Act V, 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 a swift run-through of every appearance throughout the play.

Please submit all work either in class or by email as MS Word attachments. I will comment marginally and at the end and either return paper copy or email your work back to you. I 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 six, one from the last five (you may write about *Hamlet* for either the first or second essay), 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 *Macbeth..* If it is, then you do not need to submit the short piece on *Macbeth;* and he same for *Hamle*t. 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 *Macbeth,* and likewise for *Hamlet.* Students for whom this is the first course in which you are expected to write college-level ruminative essays are urged to take advantage of the opportunity to write the mini-essay, receive my comments, and expand it into the longer piece.

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 somewhat fuller mini-essay on that play. A third rule that seems appropriate in a time of plague is that if you must be physically absent because of quarantine (or some other reason) but are alert and available to participate, ask a classmate to come with a laptop and set up a Zoom session so you can participate virtually.

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 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 IV or Act V, in relation to which you develop the theme of your essay.

The first essay is due by 4:00 Wednesday, July 20 or by Saturday, July 23 if you are writing about *Hamlet.* The second essay is due Friday,August, 5, or no later than Monday August 8 if you are writing about *Coriolanus.*

**ESSAY SUBMISSION:** Please submit all work on single sided 8 1/2 x paper or 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. More matters of form are given in the Essay Guide that I have posted under "files" on our Canvas site and also sent you in an email.

**BOOKS:** Though some students may prefer to order the Signet texts on line or elsewhere, others will enjoy the Yale Bookstore because the Bookstore has long been experienced in collecting used copies at reduced prices.

It would be wonderful if everyone obtained copies of the Signet Classic Shakespeare editions and had that edition open as we conduct our class meetings. I prefer you to use this edition for three reasons: it has good notes at the bottom of the page helping with words that have changed their meaning or have become archaic; the Signet editions also print excerpts from essential source materials--such as Plutarch or Hall's chronicles; and since I am asking everyone to show evidence of having read at least one essay on the play you are writing about for the longer essays, the Signet may shorten your search for such material if you use one of the essays printed in the back of the book. But if you have a well-annotated single volume text (Norton or Penguin Harbage or Riverside) or the individual plays in Penguin or individual genre volumes in Norton, that will do. The best single play volumes are the Arden, but these are expensive, and I’d recommend them only to advanced undergraduate or graduate students, though you may wish to consult an Arden edition in the library on the passage you are writing about in the longer essay. Once you have decided for sure on taking the course, you should hasten to purchase the Signet *Julius Caesar* (or whatever other text of Shakespeare you will be using) well in advance: You need to have read this play carefully before the first day of classes--the only day we have on the play. When you write essays for me (both the min-essays and the regular essays) 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. 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 return comments on that piece and on the semester's work as a whole.

**ETIQUETTE:** Please observe these few simple rules for in-person classes; you are welcome to have with you a beverage, if you can slip a straw to it under your mask. If you are inseparable from your cell phone, be sure it is turned off during class. And please come to class 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 before classes start and once during our five weeks together. Email me leslie.brisman@yale.edu. to set up a time and I will initiate a Zoom session then—or if convenient and weather-permitted, a meeting in person outside. During our five weeks together, 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. If you would like to take advantage of help. from the Writing Center, remember to submit a draft or an outline well in advance of the due date for each piece.—and to bring with you a copy of our Essay Guide.

No one is limited to a certain number of contacts with me, so if you have any questions about the course or about Shakespeare, email away! I am expecting that we will be meeting for our class sessions masked, in a classroom. Individual appointments can be by Zoom or in person outside.