

ENGLISH 212

SPRING SEMESTER, 2011

SHAKESPEARE

J. C. BULMAN

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Office hours: MWF 10-11, TTh 1:30-3:00, and by appointment

Text: *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. David Bevington, 6th edn. (Longman)

Because Shakespeare wrote for the stage, we shall study his plays not only as poetry, but as texts for performance. In doing so, we of course shall pay close attention to their formal elements – structure, imagery, characterization, themes, and the like. But just as important, we shall view them through the lenses of historical and cultural contexts, gender and psychoanalytic theory, and audience response. The kinds of questions we ask of the plays will ultimately determine what they mean; therefore, the course will insist on our being aware of how we, as readers and spectators, share in the creation of meaning. I encourage you to see films of all the plays we read and *require* you to see films of six plays whose performance choices we shall discuss in class. All showings of films, here printed in boldface, will occur in Odd Fellows 106. DVDs of all plays, including those not included on the syllabus, are on library reserve as well, for you to watch in carrels in case you cannot make the group showings. See the attached list.

The course will combine lecture with discussion. A willingness to participate in class discussion will improve your grade; and even on days when I lecture, I shall try to allow ample time for you to ask questions and debate issues. It is imperative, therefore, that you read plays *before* the dates for which they are assigned. At regular intervals I shall give quizzes (called *FQs*), five in all, on material from the General Introduction to the Bevington edition: dates and pages to be covered are listed below. More crucial to your final grade will be three exams (short answers and essays) and a take-home essay: an in-class exam on the comedies; an in-class exam on the histories; a comparative essay on two different film versions of the same play; and a final exam on the tragedies. Please note the due dates (printed in boldface) and adjust your plans accordingly. Late exams and essays will be penalized by a half-letter grade per day.

I allow up to three unexcused absences without penalty. Each additional unexcused absence will incur a 3 1/3 point deduction from your final grade. Absences will be excused only with *written* proof of cause – medical, institutional, or religious. Attendance counts.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
1/19	What was the Renaissance? And who was Shakespeare?
1/21	Traditions and theories of comedy. Read <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> .
1/24-28	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , comic structure, and metamorphosis.
1/28	FQ: Bevington, "Life in Shakespeare's England: The Social and Economic Background," pp. xi-xix.
1/30, 7pm	Showing of Hoffman <i>Midsummer</i>.
1/31	Discussion of <i>Midsummer</i> videos.
2/2-7	<i>As You Like It</i> : the traditions of pastoral, and the cultural force of transvestism.
2/9-14	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i> , capitalism, and anti-semitism: the clash of romantic comedy and modern sensibilities. Also read Bulman, <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> , chapter 1 (on e-reserve).
2/13, 7pm	Showing of Radford <i>Merchant</i>.
2/15, 7pm	Showing of Nunn <i>Merchant</i>.
2/17	Discussion of <i>Merchant</i> videos.
2/18	In-class exam on the comedies and on supplementary reading.
2/21	FQ: Bevington, "Life in Shakespeare's England: The Political and Religious Background," pp. xix-xxvi.
2/21	Theories of kingship, the politics of the Elizabethan court, and the Tudor Myth.
2/23-28	<i>Richard II</i> : the tension between sacramental kingship and Machiavellian rule.
3/2-7	<i>Henry IV, Part One</i> : history as festive comedy. Read Bulman, " <i>Henry IV</i> ," from <i>The Cambridge Companion</i> (on e-reserve).
3/9-14	<i>Henry V</i> : epic heroism, expedient policy, and the art of royal image-making.
3/12	FQ: Bevington, "Shakespeare's Life and Work: The Early Years," pp. liv-lxv.
3/13, 7pm	Showing of Branagh <i>Henry V</i>.

- 3/15, 7pm **Showing of Olivier *Henry V*.**
- 3/16 Discussion of *Henry V* videos.
- 3/18 **In-class exam on the histories and on supplementary reading.**
- 3/19-27 SPRING BREAK
- 3/28 A general overview of tragedy: Aristotle through the Renaissance.
- 3/30-4/4 *Titus Andronicus*: Seneca, Ovid, and the conventions of revenge tragedy.
- 4/5, 7pm **Showing of Taymor *Titus*.**
- 4/6 Discussion of *Titus* video.
- 4/8 No class.
- 4/11-18 *Hamlet* as a test-case for psychoanalytic criticism: exploring the limits of revenge tradition.
- 4/18 **FQ: Bevington, "Shakespeare's Life and Work: Shakespeare in the Theater," pp. lxxv-lxxxvi.**
- 4/17, 7pm **Showing of Zeffirelli *Hamlet*.**
- 4/19, 7pm **Showing of Almereyda *Hamlet*.**
- 4/20 Discussion of *Hamlet* videos.
- 4/22-29 *Othello* and the psychology of tragic heroism: Elizabethan conceptions of race, gender, and social hierarchy.
- 4/27, 5pm **Essay due: comparison of some aspect of two film versions of one play.**
- 4/29 **FQ: Bevington, "Shakespeare's Life and Work: The Late Years," lxxxvi-lxxxii.**
- 5/1, 7pm **Showing of Parker *Othello*.**
- 5/2 Discussion of *Othello* videos.
- 5/10, 9am **Final exam on the tragedies and on supplementary reading.**

Films on reserve for English 212

* Those in bold are required viewing.

A Midsummer Night's Dream: BBC, Noble, **Hoffman**

As You Like It: BBC

Merchant of Venice: BBC, Olivier (Miller), **Radford**, National Theatre (**Nunn**)

Richard II: BBC, English Theatre Company

Henry IV, Part One: BBC, English Theatre Company, Welles (*Chimes at Midnight*)

Henry V: BBC, English Theatre Company, **Olivier**, **Branagh**

Titus Andronicus: BBC, **Taymor**

Hamlet: BBC, Olivier, Kozintsev, **Zeffirelli**, Branagh, **Almereyda**

Othello: BBC, Nunn, Suzman, **Parker**