

Lennox, Power and Love in Shakespeare, Spring 2009

Gallatin School of Individualized Study, New York University

K20: 1540 **Power and Love in Shakespeare**

Meeting Times and Place: Wed. 6:20-9:00, Room 527

Instructor: Patricia Lennox, Ph.D.

Office Hours: , Room 616, Wed. 4:00-5:00 and by appointment

(Please make an appointment in advance)

Email: pl35@nyu.edu

Course Description: Power in all its forms and Love in its many guises are two of Shakespeare's most enduring themes. One or the other, though usually both, are found in each of the thirty-seven plays he wrote between the early 1590s and his death in 1616. In his plays people's experiences of power and love are as contemporary to our us as they were to Shakespeare's audiences. However, just as each of his plays is unique, so, too, are the many variations he rings on these themes. In this Gallatin course we will read and discuss six major Shakespeare plays: two tragic and two comic tales of lovers, one history play and one romance (with a shipwreck, banished duke, magic spirits and, yes, young lovers).

Course Goals:

- To gain sufficient experience with Shakespeare's voice, his use of language, his vocabulary and syntax become familiar
- To read the plays in relation to each other, comparing and contrasting issues, characters, plots, and adaptations of source materials
- To read Shakespeare as "our contemporary," but also to develop awareness of the social/historical context of his own Elizabethan and Jacobean (King James) world.
- To identify and discuss major critical issues in the plays
- To understand the range of interpretations made possible through different readings and, especially, through staging.
- To have the plays come alive through reading, discussing, and viewing (live productions and films).

Required Texts: *Shakespeare a Life in Drama* by Stanley Wells, and Shakespeare's plays: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Henry V*, *Othello*, *As You Like It*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Tempest*. For the plays we are using the carefully edited, but inexpensive Folger edition. Additional articles will be made available in handouts, on-line and on reserve at Bobst Library.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance: Students are expected to attend all classes, but may have one unexcused absence (no explanation is required). A second absence may be excused if necessary, but the instructor must be notified at least three hours before class, either by phone, e-email or in person. More than three unexcused absences will result in being dropped from the course.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Writing: Paper assignments are spaced throughout the semester. Since each paper relates directly to the play just studied and completes a unit of study, they must be handed in on schedule. You may also be asked to respond to discussion topics or to report on your research on Blackboard Discussion Board. You will be asked to post a review of *Henry V* on Blackboard.

There will be two formal papers of approximately 10-12 pages in length (double spaced), with appropriate academic apparatus and format. Specific topics will be assigned later, but they will ask you to discuss a theme or topic presented in a specific sequence in two different plays (this could be a single speech, a dialogue among characters, a situation, or a scene). As an example, you might be asked to write about the wooing scenes in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Henry V*. It is expected that the paper will present your own analysis, but that your analytical process involves academic research that make this a well-informed discussion.

Participation: Part of your grade will be based on participation in class discussions, which means doing the assigned reading before the class meets. Each student will be asked to provide one discussion topic for a class. These must be posted on Blackboard no later than the night before class.

Memorization: You will also be required to memorize a speech from each of the six plays. This should have a minimum of 10 lines; longer is fine. Time will be set aside in the final class on each play so that you may write out your memorized speech. Line breaks matter, punctuation not necessarily.

A NOTE ABOUT SHAKESPEARE FILMS

Many people prefer to see the play performed before reading it. That is fine, but remember that a film, no matter how brilliant, can never substitute for reading the play. You need that communication with the words on the page. Besides, most films use only about one-third of the written play text.

Films are readily available to buy through Amazon, for rental, and for viewing at NYU's library (the Avery Fisher collection, 2nd floor). Recommended Shakespeare films include:

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Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet*

Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet*

The MGM, 1935 *Romeo and Juliet* directed by George Cukor.

Kenneth Branagh's *Henry V* and *As You Like It*

Laurence Olivier's *Henry V*

Paul Czinner's *As You Like It* with Laurence Olivier

All film versions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (including directors Reinhardt, Hoffman, Noble, Hall)

All film versions of *Othello* including the ones starring Laurence Fishburn/Kenneth Branagh; Laurence Olivier; Orson Welles; and Ian McKellan/Willard White.

There is still no great film of *The Tempest*, but the BBC version is useful. Julie Taymor is currently directing a new film version.

The BBC / Time-Life Shakespeare Series includes every play and offer the only full text versions on film.

Also, just for fun, don't forget the spin-offs, films inspired by the play, parodies, etc.

ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

The steps are the same for each play, with the exception of *Romeo and Juliet*. Each time we start a new play, please read the entire play, the Folger introductory notes and the Wells assignment before the first class discussion. For the second/final class discussion of the play re-read the play and read the Folger “modern perspective” article. The acts listed below are meant as guidelines for the focus of our discussions, but we will not necessarily be limited to them.

Jan. 21 Introduction: The Life and Times of Shakespeare

Jan 28 – Feb 11: *Romeo and Juliet*

“In fair Verona, where we lay our scene / ...Is now the two hours traffic of our stage.”

Jan 28	Act 1 & Wells pp: 1-38,
Feb. 4	Acts 1-3 & Wells 72-83
Feb. 11	Acts 1-5 Folger modern perspective article & memorization quiz

Feb. 18 – 28 *Henry V*

“For tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings...”

Feb 18	Acts 1-3 & Wells pp: 132-157
Feb. 25	Acts 1-5 (memorization quiz)
Feb 28 –	The Acting Company production of <i>Henry V</i> , the New Victory Theater, 42 nd Street. Gallatin is providing tickets.

Post your review of *Henry V* performance on Blackboard

March 4 –25 *Othello*

“O beware, my lord, of jealousy! / It is the green-eyed monster.”

March 4	Acts 1 -3 & Wells 245-259
March 11	Acts 1-5 (memorization quiz)
March 18	Spring Break

First Paper is Due by Friday, March 27

March 25 - April 1 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

“I am a spirit of no uncommon rate.

Serious comedy is tragedy just averted

March 25	Acts 1-3 & Wells 39-40; 64-71
April 1	Acts 1-5 (memorization quiz)

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April 18 & 15 *As You Like It*

“Men have died from time to time and worms have eaten them, but not for love”

April 8 Acts 1 – 2 & Wells 170-77

April 15 Acts 1-5 (memorization quiz)

April 22 – 29 *The Tempest*

“You taught me language, and my profit on ‘t / Is I know how to curse.”

April 22 Acts 1-3 & Wells 328-330, 360-71

April 29 Acts 1-5 (memorization quiz)

Second Paper is Due at the end of Exam Week

“Our revels now are ended.”

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	Discussion Topic #1.....	Discussion Topic #2.....		
Feb. 4				
R & J				
Feb. 11				
R & J				
Feb. 18				
Henry				
Feb. 25				
Henry				
March 4				
Othello				
March 11				
Othello				
March 18				
SPRING BREAK				
March 25				
MSD				
April 1				
MSD				
April 8				
AYL				
April 15				
AYL				
April 22				
Tempest				
April 29				
Tempest				

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