**Shakespeare**

“The most high and palmy state of Rome”

Spring 2011

TTh 10:50-12:05, Irby 304

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**Course Description or “What is Shakespeare II?”**

The *Undergraduate Bulletin* course description for ENGL 4331 tells us to “see 4330 Shakespeare I.” How illuminating. The *Graduate Bulletin* description isn’t much better. It states that the course is “similar to Shakespeare I, using other plays in each of the several genres, and the narrative poems.” I especially like how “and the narrative poems” is sort of tacked on at the end, like an afterthought. If we actually bother to “see Shakespeare I,” we find that the course “includes historical, linguistic, and critical study of representative comedies, tragedies, and history plays…[and] examines a wide variety of approaches to Shakespeare’s texts including performative analysis, historical interpretations, psychological and cultural readings of the plays.”

After my little scavenger hunt, I am able to deduce that the course has something to do with “Shakespeare,” his “representative” works, and “critical” approaches to those works. My conclusion is that as long as the class has something to do with the Bard, we can pretty much do whatever the hell we want. So I thought we might consider some quotes about Shakespeare to see if we can determine our goals and objectives.

He was not of an age, but for all time!

— Ben Jonson (1573 - 1637)

Shakespear is a drunken savage with some imagination whose plays please only in London and Canada.

— Voltaire (1694 - 1778)

The remarkable thing about Shakespeare is that he is really very good – in spite of all the people who say he is very good.

— Robert Graves (1895 - 1985)

Shakespeare – the nearest thing in incarnation to the eye of God.

— Laurence Olivier (1907 - 1989)

Now we sit through Shakespeare in order to recognize the quotations.

— Orson Welles (1915-1985)

Shakespeare will go on explaining us, in part because he invented us.

— Harold Bloom (1930- )
I especially like the quote from Mr. Welles because, well, it’s true. Many of us “sit through” Shakespeare. The very phrasing implies something to be endured, like an invasive medical procedure or a boring college lecture. But why sit through something so unpleasant? Ah yes, to “recognize the quotations.” To prove we are educated, or cultured, or whatever. But is that “the be-all and the end-all”? Isn’t there something more to Shakespeare? After all, Mr. Welles’s quote begins “Now...” as if there were a time when we did more than just “sit through” Shakespeare.

Consider the other quotes. What is it about this “drunken savage” that made him “not of an age, but for all time”? Mr. Graves implies that no matter how hard high school English teachers, college professors, and academic critics try, they simply cannot kill Shakespeare. He’s that good. He’s, if you believe Olivier, the nearest thing to God we can know. Hell, Bloom says Shakespeare “invented us.”

This course hopes to rekindle this kind of appreciation in Shakespeare, a near god-like awe. It will attempt to do so through two means:

First, reading plays with which the class may not be familiar. That’s right, no Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, Romeo and Juliet, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, or Taming of the Shrew. We’re going to follow the Graduate Bulletin course description and use “other plays.” The reason for this approach is so that you can truly read Shakespeare for the first time with new eyes.

Second, looking at Shakespeare over the course of his career. Rather than isolate his “greatest hits,” we will follow his creative arc from his early days as a Tarantino-style crowd pleaser, through his peak as Spielbergian box office giant, to his later years as contemplative poet-philosopher ala Eastwood.

We will also tie the course together thematically by focusing on one of Shakespeare’s favorite subjects: Ancient Rome. Shakespeare visited “the most high and palmy state” five times (one narrative poem and four plays) in fifteen years, making it his preferred setting outside of his native England.

Objectives:
By the end of the course, students will

- increase their confidence and enjoyment in reading, discussing, and writing about the works of Shakespeare.
- detect cultural assumptions underlying the writings of Shakespeare, and in the process become aware of their own cultural assumptions.
- explore the connections and contradictions between these texts and their contexts.
- engage ideas and critical approaches to Shakespeare that may or may not reflect their personal beliefs.
- understand the process of adapting Shakespeare for film.
- develop their skills as scholars and writers through research and sustained analysis.

Course Texts or “What do I have to buy?”

The required text for this class is:


I recognize that this book is both expensive and heavy. Knowledge is free, but wisdom comes with a price. In this course, wisdom has a suggested retail value of $75.00 and weighs about four pounds.

The text is available in the UCA bookstore, local textbook supply stores, all major bookshops (i.e. Barnes and Noble), and online (amazon.com, studentmarket.com, etc.). Shop smart...shop S-Mart. Though not required, I also recommend that you get yourself a good dictionary and the latest edition of the MLA Handbook, which, as English majors, should already occupy a space on your shelf next to your Shakespeare, the Bible, and the OED.
Course Requirements or “What do I have to do?”

Reading Journals: For each play, I’ll post a discussion question on BlackBoard for which you will need to write a solid, one-page response. The hope is that the questions will give you something to consider or “look for” when going into the reading. Though you need to address the question raised, you are not limited to only addressing the question in your response. You may also discuss what inspires, intrigues, confuses, or upsets you in the reading for the week. These responses should be posted to BlackBoard before class time each week. In fact, the earlier you get them in, the greater the chance that I can actually read, grade, and return them to you by class time. The closer to class time I get them, the greater the chance you’ll have to wait a week to get them back. (20%)

Exams: There will be two exams during the semester. These exams will be objective in nature and will ask you to synthesize and relate the various texts covered in the course. The midterm exam will cover the material from the first half of the course; the final will primarily cover the material from the second half of the course, but is comprehensive to a degree in that it will ask you to make connections to earlier material. I’ll discuss these exams and their make-up in greater detail the week before their dates. (20% each)

Essay: You will write a conference-length paper (8-10 pages) on one or two of the plays we read this semester. The paper is your chance to enter into the critical dialogue of Shakespeare studies; therefore, your paper should make significant use of secondary sources. A 250-word abstract for your paper is due by mid-term (March 3). I’ll discuss specific grading criteria in class, but note from the outset that although your essay’s content is the most important factor in determining your grade, how well you write (i.e., thesis, organization, style, coherence, grammar, etc.) will affect this grade as well, since even the best ideas in the world aren’t really useful if you can’t communicate them intelligibly to a reader. All essays are due at the beginning of class on the date assigned. I’ll accept a paper late, but it will lose one letter grade for every class meeting it’s late. Specific guidelines are available on BlackBoard. You are encouraged to submit your abstract to the annual spring conference here at UCA. (20%)

Film Project: In groups of 2-4 students, choose a continuous 5- to 10-minute portion of a play in which performance and staging significantly affect how we understand (1) character motives, (2) relationships among the characters, (3) audience sympathies, and/or (4) key issues or themes in the play as a whole. Be sure the scene contains enough significant speaking parts for every member of your group. Very minor parts (messengers, guards, citizens, etc.) may be cut or combined together into a single role in order to balance the speaking load. Please distribute speaking roles as evenly as possible so no one student-actor dominates, or disappears from, the scene. Decide how this scene should be staged and performed to convey the interpretation you have agreed upon. Be creative! Don’t feel obligated to follow Shakespeare’s stage directions. Form your own “directorial vision” and bring that vision to life! A detailed handout for this assignment will be provided via BlackBoard, but note from the beginning you will be given an entire week off of class to complete your projects, so make them good. (20%)

NOTE: The English Department will again be hosting its annual student conference in April. This year’s topic is Shakespeare. You are encouraged to attend as many sessions as possible and will be required to be there during class time on Thursday the 14th. Failure to attend will result in your final grade being lowered by one letter grade.

Graduates Students Only

Discussion Facilitation: One time during the semester you will teach and lead the discussion for one of the assigned texts. On the day of your presentation, you will turn in an outline of the presentation along with an annotated bibliography of 6-8 resources you consulted in your preparation. You will not be required to submit a reading journal for this play. You must tell me which play you wish to present on by February 1.
Dire warnings, final thoughts, and other non-negotiables, or How do I stay on your good side?

1. **You are in college. Act like it.** Be considerate of your classmates and the instructor.

2. **Come to class.** According to the UCA Handbook, “students are expected to attend all class meetings,” therefore regular attendance is essential. “Attendance” in this class is defined as being present, engaged, and alert the entire class period unless previous arrangements have been made.

3. **If you must be absent,** it is your responsibility to find out what you missed preferably from a classmate but from me if necessary. Missing four classes will result in having your final grade lowered by one letter grade. Missing five classes will result in a drop for non-attendance or a failing grade.

4. **Turn off cell phones** before entering the classroom. “Off” means off, not on vibrate. Your phones must be switched off and out of site in your book bag, purse, etc. This is your only warning or strike one. The first time you are caught texting, placing a call, or receiving a call or text—even if you simply forgot to turn off your phone—will be strike two. You will be asked to leave the class and will be counted absent for the day. The second time any of the previous offenses occur will be strike three. You will be dropped from the course with a WF.

5. **You will be treated as students not customers.** Simply because you paid tuition does not mean you dictate the terms of service.

6. **READ!** The single most effective strategy to success in a college course is to read the assigned material. The Student Handbook “suggests a minimum of two hours preparation on the part of the student” for each credit hour taken. This means a class worth three hours of credit requires six hours of preparation per week.

7. **Grades are earned not given.** You are responsible for your grade, not me. This means you must work to earn the grade you want, not attempt to negotiate it after the fact.

8. **Do not ask for extra credit.** The assignments outlined above are adequate to assess your performance in the class.

University Policies or The Fine Print

The university’s two academic bulletins – the University of Central Arkansas Undergraduate Bulletin and Graduate Bulletin – are the official publications for all academic programs and policies. Students are urged to study these bulletins. In addition, students should familiarize themselves with the various policies in the Student Handbook, some of which are outlined below. The Handbook may be accessed online at [http://www.uca.edu/student/dean/documents/Student_Handbook_2010-2011_FINAL.pdf](http://www.uca.edu/student/dean/documents/Student_Handbook_2010-2011_FINAL.pdf)

**Academic Misconduct/Plagiarism.** (Student Handbook 36-41) According to the Handbook, “The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university’s Academic Integrity Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the Student Handbook. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student’s acceptance of this university policy” (37). One offense, an F on the assignment. Two offenses, automatic F in the course.

**Sexual Harassment.** (Student Handbook 102-105) Sexual harassment by any faculty member, staff member, or student is a violation of both law and university policy and will not be tolerated at the University of Central Arkansas. Sexual harassment of employees is prohibited under Section 703 of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and sexual harassment of students may constitute discrimination under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

**Americans with Disabilities Act.** The University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need an accommodation under this Act due to a disability, please contact the UCA Office of Disability Services, 450-3613.
Semester Breakdown
Following is a tentative outline for the course. We will adjust as necessary to cover as much of the material as possible. For each assigned text, you should read the introduction and the entire play by the first date listed.

January 13—Intro to Course: Scope, Syllabus, and Schedule

Shakespeare: An Introduction
Jan  18—Shakespeare: His Times and Language
     20—Critical History of Shakespeare Studies

Shakespeare, Poet
     25—The Rape of Lucrece
     27—The Rape of Lucrece, cont’d

Shakespeare, “razors to a wounded heart”
Feb  1—Titus Andronicus,
     3—Titus Andronicus, cont’d
     8—Titus Andronicus, cont’d
     10—Titus Andronicus in performance

Shakespeare, “Colossus bestriding the world”
     15—Julius Caesar
     17—Julius Caesar, cont’d
     22—Julius Caesar, cont’d
     24—Julius Caesar in performance

March  1—MID-TERM EXAM

Shakespeare, “the salad days”
     3—Antony and Cleopatra

April  5—Coriolanus, cont’d
     7—Coriolanus in performance

February  8—Antony and Cleopatra, cont’d
          10—Antony and Cleopatra, cont’d

March 15—Coriolanus / Paper Due
          31—Coriolanus, cont’d

April 12—Adapting Shakespeare for Film
          14—Conference / Attendance Required

May  5—FINAL EXAM (11:00-1:00)

March 26—Film Presentations Round One
          28—Film Presentations Round Two