English 5711: Shakespeare (Epic, War and History)

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Required Texts: (all by William Shakespeare)


Shakespeare wrote his plays for performance and never published them, himself, as books to be read. Relatively cheap print copies (called quartos) of individual plays did circulate during his lifetime, some more reliable than others, but the (arguably) more authoritative folio collection of most of his plays was not published until after his death. Consequently, printed editions of the plays vary, to this day. Not just pagination and lineation but content are editorial choices, when dealing with Shakespeare plays. All of which is to say, if you do not purchase the same editions of the plays that I have ordered, you will have significant difficulty keeping up with the class. It is your responsibility to make any extra effort necessary to keep up with the class and follow along with the readings, should you choose to use other editions of the plays.

If you are interested in purchasing and/or using a book of Shakespeare’s complete works, instead of the individual plays I’ve ordered, you should be aware that the *Pelican Shakespeare* is a good scholarly resource that includes the same versions of the plays as the individual editions that I’ve ordered.

Course Description: In his own lifetime, some of Shakespeare’s most popular plays were his histories of the English royal line. These plays, particularly *Henry V*, resemble the classical epics of Homer and Virgil and their Renaissance imitations. Like epic poems, Shakespeare’s Henry plays recount the wartime exploits of a group or nation’s earlier people; people bloated to heroic, even mythic proportions by the working of legend and the intervening of years. Like epic as Virgil practiced the genre, the Henry plays tell the origin story of the current polity and its leaders. And like epic as the
Renaissance understood it, the Henry plays are an attempt to create a near-comprehensive compendium of historical content and generic style.

But by staging his epic story of King Henry V, Shakespeare faced challenges peculiar to the dramatic medium and the theatrical situation. How can you present massive battles with a handful of props and a limited company of actors? How do you bring a celebrated hero of history to the stage without disappointing the audience’s expectations? And how can you comprehend so much time and space within only a few hours inside the wooden “O” of an amphitheater? By confronting these practical questions of dramaturgy, Shakespeare inflects the Renaissance epic tradition with his own ever recurring obsessions as a playwright about how performance works and what the audience gets out of it.

Before diving into Shakespeare’s “Henriad,” we’ll read *Troilus and Cressida*, Shakespeare’s comic sendup of Homer’s *Iliad*, the granddaddy of all epics. In *Troilus and Cressida*, Shakespeare exposes all the ways that theater and stagecraft can make the stately epic deliberately ridiculous. In this light, the challenge of creating a sincere theatrical epic like the Henriad becomes even more apparent.

**Grading and Assignments:**

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- Paper #1 (epithet exercise, 1 page) – 10% of total course grade
- Paper #2 (casting, 2-3 pages) – 20%
- Paper #3 (voice/idiom, 3-4 pages) – 40%
- reading quizzes and participation – 30%

The papers will prompt you to consider how characters are created in a theatrical setting and sustained in an epic narrative that spans multiple plays. In the first paper, you will create (in?)appropriate Homeric epithets for some of the characters from *Troilus and Cressida* and justify your choices in terms of Shakespeare’s dramatic text. In the second, you will discuss casting choices, in relation to a particular scene from *Richard II* or *Henry IV, Part 1*. In the third, you will compare two speeches from the same character in two different plays from the Henriad. We will discuss the papers in more detail in class as their deadlines approach.

I will give brief reading quizzes from time to time (usually unannounced and open book). I will mark successfully completed quizzes with a ✔, but I will give extra points (✔½) for exceptional work. By contrast, partial completion of a quiz will earn you partial credit (½). I will also consider other forms of positive engagement with the course—such as regular attendance, participation in class discussions and activities, consultations with me outside of class—when I determine your grade for quizzes and participation.
Late Work:
I will give short deadline extensions on the papers if you talk to me about this possibility in advance of the assigned due dates. If you do not arrange an extension with me in advance, I will accept late papers only for three-fourths credit.

I will not allow you to make up quizzes, as their purpose is to insure and track your regular attendance and engagement with the course. However, emergencies do come up, so I will drop every student’s lowest quiz grade.

Course Schedule:
I may make changes to this schedule as the course progresses and our needs as a class evolve. Any changes will be announced in class.

M (5/15) Introduction: epic time and theatrical space

Weeks 1-2: *Troilus and Cressida*, Shakespeare’s Mock-Epic

W (5/17) *Troilus and Cressida* (Act I)
F (5/19) *Troilus and Cressida* (Acts II, III)

M (5/22) *Troilus and Cressida* (Acts IV, V)

Weeks 2-6: The Henriad, Shakespeare’s Epic

   Paper #1 due
F (5/26) *Richard II* (Acts III, IV)

M (5/29) MEMORIAL DAY – NO CLASS
W (5/31) *Richard II* (Act V)

W (6/7) *Henry IV, Part 1* (Act V)
   Paper #2 due

W (6/14) *Henry V* (Act I)

M (6/19) *Henry V* (Act IV)
W (6/21) *Henry V* (Act V)
   Paper #3 due
Course Policies:

Plagiarism:
The University of Utah Student Code classifies plagiarism as “academic misconduct.” Plagiarism is defined in Part I.B.2.c of the Code as “the intentional unacknowledged use or incorporation of any other person's work in, or as a basis for, one's own work offered for academic consideration or credit or for public presentation. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, representing as one's own, without attribution, any other individual’s words, phrasing, ideas, sequence of ideas, information or any other mode or content of expression.” Part V.B of the Code stipulates that students guilty of plagiarism “may be subject to academic sanctions including but not limited to a grade reduction, failing grade, probation, suspension or dismissal from the program or the University, or revocation of the student’s degree or certificate. Sanctions may also include community service, a written reprimand, and/or a written statement of misconduct that can be put into an appropriate record maintained for purposes of the profession or discipline for which the student is preparing.”

(www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.html)

If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, talk to me. Simply put, don’t cheat. It’s not worth it.

ADA Notice:
The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations.

Content Accommodation Policy
“It is the student's obligation to determine, before the last day to drop courses without penalty, when course requirements conflict with the student's sincerely-held core beliefs. If there is such a conflict, the student should consider dropping the class.”

(http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.html)

For more information, please consult the University of Utah Regulations web site.