

SHAKESPEARE COURSE DESCRIPTION

The plays of Shakespeare are too often taught in the classroom as difficult and rather obscure sacred texts. The aim of this course is to remind students that Shakespeare was not only a great poet but also a great dramatist, and to show students that his plays are still exciting and dynamic as theatre. Consequently, this course is structured around the Shakespeare plays which are currently in production in London and Stratford-upon-Avon, so that his plays can be seen and heard as well as read.

Method

Each script will be read and discussed before we see a production (scripts are provided by the Programme). We will take an actor's/director's approach with due emphasis on Shakespeare's language and how it should be spoken. In order to appreciate fully Shakespeare's dramatic skills, it is essential to understand his poetic skills. This will involve a study of Shakespeare's use of both prose and verse, including his methods of, and reasons for, using rhymed or blank verse, variations in rhythm, stress, repetition and variation of verbal patterns, and use of rhetoric. His use of imagery to convey themes, background, atmosphere and lighting effects will be examined; and the question of how modern day theatre technology can enhance (or obscure) his poetic devices will be considered, and used to assess the productions we see. We will also look at how an actor can establish character and convey emotional response from using the speech patterns and rhythms of the text.

The course will be conducted by seminar discussion of both scripts and performances.

Grading

1. Class Work: [25%] Attendance, preparation, participation. Attendance in class and at the performances is mandatory. By 'preparation' and 'participation' I mean that you should have read the script before we discuss it in class; have ready questions and comments about plot, characters, key speeches and scenes; have given some consideration to possible ways of producing the script on stage. Having seen a production, you should be ready to comment on all aspects of that production, including acting performances, set design, choice of costume, notable stage effects, and how well each component worked towards the realisation of the script.

2. Two Written Assignments: [20% each]. Discussion and analysis of a speech or part of a scene selected from the scripts we are studying.

3. Mid-term Test: [15%] A short paper, written in class, and may be in extended note format.

4. Final Exam: [20%] I will give you a list of topics. You will select one of those topics to write on, illustrating your discussion from all the scripts and productions studied during the semester. You will be expected to bring with you all your scripts, notes, journals, programmes [playbills], and to use them (i.e. 'open book').

The percentages are a rough guide only. Given that some students may be less familiar with Shakespeare than others, the final grade should be able to reflect effort and improvement.

Required Reading

The scripts of the plays [New Penguin edition]

Attendance

Every class (whether on- or off-site) must be attended. Absence will only be accepted on grounds of sickness. Sickness must be notified in advance in person (by phone, note or email) either to Martin, Leah or me. Any absence not for sickness will affect your grade.

Course Outline

September

9 Intro to *As You Like It*

10 Performance of *As You Like It* (Globe Theatre 7.30.pm)

14/16 Discuss production of *As You Like It*; script of *Troilus & Cressida*

16 Performance of *Troilus & Cressida* (Globe Theatre 7.30)

21/23 Discuss production of *Troilus & Cressida*; script of *All's Well that Ends Well*

28/30 Discuss scripts of *All's Well that Ends Well* and *Love's Labour's Lost*

30 Performance of *All's Well that Ends Well* (National Theatre)

October

5/7 Discuss production of *All's Well that Ends Well*; script of *Love's Labour's Lost*; production of *Love's Labour's Lost*

6 Performance of *Love's Labour's Lost* (Globe Theatre)

12/14 **FIRST PAPER DUE; Mid-term test**

BREAK

26/28 Discuss script of *Twelfth Night*; Globe Workshop?

November

2/4 Discuss script of *Othello*; Globe Workshop?

9/11 Discuss scripts of *Othello* and *Twelfth Night*

16/18 Discuss scripts of *Othello* and *Twelfth Night*; production of *Othello*

16 Performance of *Othello* (Trafalgar Studio)

19 Performance of *Twelfth Night* (Stratford upon Avon)

23/25 Discuss production of *Twelfth Night*; review all plays and productions

30 **SECOND PAPER DUE**

December

2 review

7/9 Review; **FINAL EXAM**