

# ENGLISH 212: INTRODUCTION TO SHAKESPEARE

## Violence, Power, and Villainy

Fall 2016

Wed 6-8:50

Lake Ontario Hall 178

Section 01

Instructor: Dr. Ilse Schweitzer VanDonkelaar

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Office and Hours: Lake Huron Hall 237; Tu 3-5 and by appointment

### **Course Description and Theme**

This course will examine the dramatic and poetic work of one author, William Shakespeare, in the context of the society of Early Modern England. In this section of the course we will explore the concepts of violence, power, and villainy in Shakespeare's plays, and the ways in which these ideas intersect with and build upon each other. From the shocking cruelty and gore of his early revenge tragedy, *Titus Andronicus*, to the subversive explorations of magic, power, and enslavement in the late "romance," *The Tempest*, we can see Shakespeare replicating and sometimes challenging conventional portrayals of power, violence, and villainy. As we experience these plays, we will ask and explore a number of questions... for example, how do Shakespeare's characters express violence physically and through language? To what purposes do they use violence? How is power expressed or performed on the early modern stage? How does violence lead to (or detract from) power? And how does Shakespeare create villainous characters? Is Prospero a hero or villain? Richard? Macbeth? Titus?

Many of Shakespeare's plays survive due to their preservation in a 1623 folio collection of his work, but we must remember that a play is above all meant to be *played*. While the text will be our primary source for discussion, we will also watch some film interpretations of the plays so that we can see more memorable interpretations and adaptations, and discuss how his themes, characters, and language are still very much a part of our society today.

### **Learning Goals**

By the end of the semester, you should:

- Have an understanding of Shakespeare's major works, and be able to analyze his plots and language effectively;
- Have an increased knowledge of the history of Early Modern England, and how it influenced Shakespeare's writing and the performances of his plays;
- Be able to discuss the contemporary relevance of Shakespeare, and how his plays are currently transmitted to audiences via stage performance and film.

### **Required Texts:**

I have ordered the Folger Shakespeare editions of: *Twelfth Night*, *Richard III*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and *The Tempest*. You are welcome to use other versions of these plays if you already own them, or if you prefer to purchase digital versions. Please make sure that whatever edition you used is not abridged or adapted, and that it provides line numbers. The Folger, Arden, and Norton editions tend to be useful in the classroom, as they are well-glossed and provide ample notes and additional scholarly material.

Other readings and handouts will be available via Blackboard.

## **Supplemental Writing Skills**

This course has been designated as carrying SWS credit. Keep in mind that to receive SWS credit for ENG 313 you must have completed and earned a grade of C or better in ENG/WRT 150 (or the transfer equivalent). Please see the GVSU catalogue for more details about SWS courses.

## **Coursework:**

**Reading, participation, and class activities:** While our class will be discussion-based, at times I will also provide historical and cultural context via lecture and presentation. We will also complete writing activities in class, and will dedicate some class time to acting out selections from the plays. You will be expected to complete the reading assignments prior to each class meeting, to attend class regularly, and to contribute to class discussion often. Your comments and questions to some extent determine the shape and direction of the course -- your active engagement will help me to make this class a productive, positive experience for all of us! I will keep track of the quantity and quality of your contributions to discussion, so be sure to *think and speak up* often. In-class writing assignments and your contributions to group-work assignments will also count toward the “participation” portion of your grade.

**Daily classwork points:** For each class meeting, you can earn a possible 10 points for participation. I will award points thus:

0 points -- absence OR student is disengaged with class, unprepared (no text book), or using phone or laptop for activities unrelated to class.

5 points -- student is present, brings book or reading, generally attentive in class.

8 points -- student is present, with text book, attentive, taking notes, perhaps volunteers once in discussion; if working in groups, student contributes to group efforts.

10 points -- student is fully prepared, actively engaged in the class, taking notes and actively participating in discussion; if working in groups, student is actively engaged in group.

*\*\*arriving more than 15 minutes late or leaving more than 15 minutes early will automatically earn you a score of 1 point for that day\*\**

### **Writing prompts:**

From time to time I will assign writing prompts to lead us into discussion. I will not always collect these for grading. Those that I collect will be scored thusly:

— (minus): Unsatisfactory. Student has put little effort into the response or obviously has not completed the reading or answered the question. Earns 1 point.

✓ (check mark): Satisfactory. Student has made a good effort to answer the question, has shown that s/he has completed the reading. Earns 4 points.

+ (plus): Exemplary. Student has answered the question thoroughly, has referred to specific moments or details in the text to support her / his answer, and prompt is well-written. Earns 5 points.

**Reading quizzes:** You will complete 5 reading quizzes this semester; each will be completed at the start of class. Each quiz will consist of five questions that can be answered in 1-2 sentences and will test your reading comprehension and preparedness for class discussion.

**Analysis Papers:** You will write two papers (3-4 pages each) in which you will articulate a thesis and support your argument using textual evidence from at least one of our plays. I will provide a list of suggested topics. You should use MLA format to cite your sources.

**Midterm Exam:** Held on Wednesday, October 12, during class. Expect exam to include identification, short answer, and essay questions.

**Final Exam:** Held on Wednesday, December 14, 6 pm - 8 pm. Exam will include some identifications, short answer questions, and essay questions.

**Grading Breakdown by Assignment:**

Participation / daily writing assignments: 30%

Reading quizzes: 15% (3% each)

Short response papers: 20% (10% each)

Midterm exam: 15%

Final exam: 20%

A = 94-100	A- = 90-93	B+ = 87-89	B = 84-86	B- = 80-83	C+ = 77-79	
C = 74-76	C- = 70-73	D+ = 67-69	D = 64-66	F = 0-63		

**Communication and Blackboard:**

Any updates and notices (change of venue, change in assignment, instructor absence, etc.) will go out over email and will be posted on the Blackboard site. PLEASE CHECK EMAIL AND BLACKBOARD REGULARLY! I promise to make my best attempt to get this information to you as soon as possible.

**Other Policies...**

**Respect:** The classroom (this includes our online class space!) is a place of respect, civilized discussion, and open-mindedness. We will likely disagree with each other from time to time about literary interpretations (among other things), but we will learn to do so respectfully and sensitively. Please be aware your tone online and in person.

**Attendance:** is expected. I will take attendance at the start of each class. Arriving more than 10 minutes late (or leaving more than 10 minutes early) will result in a penalty of your classwork points for the day. Arriving more than 20 minutes late will be counted as an absence. \*\*EVERY component of your grade draws upon the material we explore in class discussion and in lecture, so be here!\*\* If you miss class, it is YOUR responsibility to find out what content you missed, preferably by first asking your classmates. Any absences beyond three will result in a deduction of 3% from your final grade, *per day*. I do not distinguish between "excused" and "unexcused" absences... if you run into a situation where you must miss multiple classes, talk to me.

**Computers and cell phones:** You may use a laptop to take notes, read the handouts posted on Blackboard, and find information relevant to our discussion. Please do NOT use your laptop for Facebooking, watching cat videos, or otherwise wasting time or distracting yourself during class. **No cell phones out during class.** Lectures and class discussions **may not be** recorded in any fashion by students.

**Late work:** Assignments are due at the start of class on the due date OR when indicated on Blackboard (i.e. for quizzes). One letter grade will be lost for every calendar day that an assignment is late. Class activities and quizzes cannot be made up at a later date.

**FERPA:** Because of FERPA regulations, I cannot discuss your grade via phone or email. If you would like to discuss your academic standing and progress in this class, I am happy to meet with you during my office hours.

**Plagiarism:** I am happy to discuss what constitutes plagiarism and how to ensure that your work is your own creation. If you have any questions or uncertainty about the issue, PLEASE ASK ME. If you plagiarize in

this class, you will face academic sanctions including possible failure of this course and a letter sent to the appropriate campus offices.

**Students with Disabilities:**

If you need academic accommodations because of a learning, physical, or other disability, please contact Disability Support Resources at 331-2490. Furthermore, if you have a physical disability and think you will need assistance evacuating this classroom and/or building in an emergency situation, please make me aware so I can develop a plan to assist you.

## Course Schedule

\*\*PLEASE REGARD THIS SCHEDULE AS SOMEWHAT FLUID. I may move some readings and assignments around if we fall behind, or due to weather\*\*

- W, Aug 31      Introduction to course and expectations; introduction to early modern England
- W, Sept 7      sonnets (on Blackboard); *Twelfth Night* I-II
- W, Sept 14      *Twelfth Night* III-V (**reading quiz**)
- W, Sept 21      *Richard III* I-III
- W, Sept 28      *Richard III* IV-V (**reading quiz**)
- W, Oct 5      catch up and review; watch selections from *The Hollow Crown*, **short paper #1 due**
- W, Oct 12      MIDTERM
- W, Oct 19      *Titus Andronicus* (selections)
- W, Oct 26      *Macbeth* I-III    \*\*Fri, Oct 28 is last day to drop\*\* (**reading quiz**)
  - F, Oct 28      Last day to drop class with "W" -- 5pm*
- W, Nov 2      *Macbeth* IV-V
- W, Nov 9      *Othello* I-III (**reading quiz**)
- W, Nov 16      *Othello* IV-V, **short paper #2 due**
- W, Nov 23      THANKSGIVING BREAK
- W, Nov 30      *The Tempest* I-III (**reading quiz**)
- W, Dec 7      *The Tempest* IV-V; catch-up and review
- W, Dec 14      FINAL EXAM -- 6pm - 8pm