

## Study of an Author: Shakespeare

ENGL 0010.920

Instructor: Estevan Alemán

T/R 12-3:50pm

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Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 10:45-11:45am, and by appointment.

Office: TBD

**Course Description:** This course offers an introduction for students who want to become familiar with Shakespeare's works. This class does not require any prior knowledge about Shakespeare, nor assumes any. We will be reading a variety of plays Shakespeare composed for the English Renaissance theater as well as some selections from his sonnets. Special attention will be paid to the language of the plays, dramatic genres, and the history of the English Renaissance theater and its technical conventions. The worlds that Shakespeare brings to the stage are populated by clashing armies, ill-fated lovers, ambitious schemers, unruly servants, and many more who question or undermine their perceived roles in society. Together we will explore these worlds and broach the social and political questions these plays and poems ask of us. We will consider how Shakespeare related to his own historical moment as well as meditate on how we read him through the lenses of our own present-day perspectives and subjective expectations. Requirements for the course include participation in class discussion, short weekly canvas discussion posts, staging your own short version of a scene from one of the plays we have read, a short write-up assignment, and a final exam.

**Required Texts:** It is best to buy print copies of the **Folger Shakespeare editions** of the plays and of the sonnets. This is so that everyone has access to the introductory materials included in every Folger edition of Shakespeare's plays. We will refer to this short intro throughout the semester to get familiar with the history of the theater for which Shakespeare wrote.

*\*A Midsummer Night's Dream*

*\*The Merchant of Venice*

*\*Richard III*

*\*Henry V*

*\*Othello*

*\*Antony and Cleopatra*

*\*The Tempest*

*\*Shakespeare's Sonnets*

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance & Participation	15%
Canvas Posts (4 total)	15%
Short Paper	20%

Creative Project	25%
Final Exam	25%
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Total	100%

**Attendance and Participation 15%:** Attendance is required in this course. You will be expected to attend every class meeting as well as participate in class discussion. You are expected to attend every class ready to participate, having completed the assigned reading for that day. I may specify over email over the semester if there is any specific topic or aspect of the reading that I want you to prepare to discuss for the following class meeting.

**Canvas Discussion Posts 15%:** Starting on Week Two, you will be required to post a short informal 150-word reflection to Canvas on one of the readings for that week. Think of these posts as a chance to brainstorm ideas or point out something that caught your attention during your reading. This write-up gives you a chance to prepare some thoughts for our in-class discussion. You are also encouraged to treat this online space as an opportunity for fostering discussion threads with the rest of the class as we progress through the semester. You must post your reflection to Canvas by **9:00am** on the day we are discussing the text for which you decided to write about that week.

**Short Paper 20% [Due 7/26]:** Choose a moment, a speech, or a scene from one of the plays we have read so far. Write an analytical essay on a particular theme in deep focus. This is your chance to highlight and expand upon an aspect of the text that struck you and which you would like to further unpack. Your paper should have a clear thesis. Explain why this theme or element of the play is important and how your interpretation adds meaningful insight to the play you have selected and to the larger discussions we have had in class.

Formatting Instructions: 3-5 pages, double-spaced, 1 inch-margins, 12pt. font, MLA format. Include a bibliography (not part of page count)

**[Creative Project] Stage Performance 25%:** This is a group project. You and your partners will recreate a moment from one scene from a play we have read in the course and perform it for the class. Your performance should be no longer than 15 minutes. You are encouraged to abridge the moment you will be performing, cutting lines and speeding up scene transitions. While you may cut lines or words, you may not alter any of the language from the original play text. Think of this scene as your chance to imagine how you would stage a famous moment and make it digestible and intelligible without much context. Performance choices will play a large part in filling in many of these gaps in meaning and delivering the sense of the moment. You may select your group partners. We will select groups in Week Three. **Performances will be held on 8/2.**

**Final Exam 25%**

## **COURSE POLICIES**

**Attendance:** Attendance is required and will be taken at every class meeting. If you know in advance that you will be absent for any classes, it is better that you notify me beforehand so that we can discuss makeup work. I am more likely to work with you when you communicate these circumstances. You are allowed two unexcused absences throughout the semester; any more unexcused absences will result in a lowering of your grade for the course.

**Late Work:** If you know that you will need extra time to complete an assignment, notify me well in advance of the due date (no less than a week before it is due) so that we may work out an extension. In case of an emergency or other unexpected impediment, we can work out extensions on a case-to-case basis. Otherwise, late work will be docked one third of a letter grade.

**Electronic Devices:** Electronic devices (tablets, laptops, and phones) are not allowed in class. These devices should be put away during the duration of class. Make sure to have the hardcopy of the text we are discussing at each class meeting so that we may work closely with the plays without any distractions. If you need any special accommodation, let me know.

### **Student Accessibility**

I am committed to creating a classroom environment in which we can all work collaboratively and safely. We all learn in different ways and we all need different accommodations. If there are any adverse factors affecting your learning process, please let me know and we can work together to best accommodate your learning style.

If you have a physical, psychological, or learning disability that may affect your work in the course, you may contact Penn's Office of Student Disability Services at (215) 573-9235. This office is located at Stouffer Commons, 3702 Spruce Street, Suite 300. All services are confidential.

**Note on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:** Part of our work in this class will explain responsible citational practices and academic integrity. As we progress through the semester, you will develop the skills to distinguish reputable sources and respectfully integrate them into your writing. That said, you should not get to the point in this class (or any class, I hope!) where you feel the need to plagiarize. If you are feeling the pressure to do so, please talk to me so we can avoid the negative consequences that result from plagiarism.

**COURSE PROGRAM** (Subject to change) we will read and watch materials marked with an \*asterisk in class together.

Week One – Introduction

**6/30:** Introduction to course and overview of course requirements and syllabus

Week Two – Comedy

**7/5:** *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

\*Performance history and adaptations

**7/7:** *The Merchant of Venice*

\*Performance clips

Week Three – History

**7/12:** *Richard III*

**7/14:** *Henry V*

**Select Creative Project Groups**

Week Four – Tragedy

**7/19:** *Othello*

\*Performance history and clips from film adaptations

**7/21:** *Antony and Cleopatra*

Week Five - Romance and Sonnets

**7/26:** *The Tempest*

\*Performance history and adaptations

**Short Paper Due**

**7/28:** *The Two Noble Kinsmen*

\*Selections from the Sonnets

Week Six – Review and Final

**8/2: Performances** + Exam Review

**8/4: Final Exam**