

# ENGL 0017 - INTRODUCTION TO SHAKESPEARE AND POPULAR CULTURE

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## Catalog Description

Prerequisite: Eligibility for ENGL 1A

Hours: 54 lecture

Description: Presents Shakespeare's plays as works of popular culture that have been and continue to be reinvented in a range of artistic forms. This course will involve reading, viewing, discussing, and writing about selected plays of Shakespeare in correlation with contemporary texts. Includes discussion and analysis of the original historical context, contemporary critical views and interpretations, and adaptations of Shakespeare's original texts. (CSU, UC)

## Course Student Learning Outcomes

- CSLO #1: Analyze characters, themes, and competing interpretations of individual Shakespeare plays.
- CSLO #2: Analyze the historical contexts that influenced Shakespeare's writing and the current historical contexts that influence continued study and performance.
- CSLO #3: Examine the relationships between Shakespeare and popular culture by studying various instances of Shakespearean appropriation and adaptation.

## Effective Term

Fall 2020

## Course Type

Credit - Degree-applicable

## Contact Hours

54

## Outside of Class Hours

108

## Total Student Learning Hours

162

## Course Objectives

1. Identify themes specific to Shakespeare's plays and connect those themes to contemporary adaptations and cultural relevance.
2. Analyze Shakespeare's plays and characters by placing them in conversation with multiple sources and adaptations.
3. Describe some of the historical contexts that influenced Shakespeare's writing as well as the contemporary contexts that help shape current adaptations and interpretations.
4. Distinguish among the genres of Shakespeare plays: History, Tragedy, and Comedy as well as potential overlap among these genres.

## General Education Information

- Approved College Associate Degree GE Applicability
  - AA/AS - Literature & Language
- CSU GE Applicability (Recommended-requires CSU approval)
  - CSUGE - C2 Humanities
- Cal-GETC Applicability (Recommended - Requires External Approval)
- IGETC Applicability (Recommended-requires CSU/UC approval)
  - IGETC - 3B Humanities

## Articulation Information

- CSU Transferable
- UC Transferable

## Methods of Evaluation

- Classroom Discussions
  - Example: "Speed dating" activity. A set of index cards is prepared in advance. Students pair off in rows facing each other. Each pair gets a card with a question on it. They discuss for 2-3 minutes, then switch partners and cards. The process is repeated until the questions are exhausted. We then shift to a large class discussion. Potential questions could include: Turn to 5.2.270-275. Does Gertrude know the wine is poisoned before she drinks it? How would you stage this scene? Discuss. Theme is an insight into life or a generalization about human behavior the author reveals through the text. Through Hamlet, what is Shakespeare trying to tell us about life, and human nature? Is Hamlet primarily a play about obedience, family, revenge, or madness? Something else? Explain, using the text as support. The King appeals to Laertes by asking "What would you undertake / To show yourself in deed your father's son / More than in words?" Later, he tells Laertes that "revenge should have no bounds" (4.7.122-124; 126). Does Claudius really believe these words, or is he merely opportunistic? Does the ghost really exist, or is it in Hamlet's mind? If Act III is the turning point of the play (as indicated by Freytag's Pyramid), what specifically sets the remainder of the play in motion? The Mousetrap? The "To be or not to be" speech? Hamlet's conversation with his mother? The return of the ghost? The death of Polonius? Make your case. Discuss the place of religion within the play's dramatic action. Would the play make sense in an atheistic society? Discuss the role and impact of madness in the play. Is Hamlet culpable for the death of Polonius? In playing madness, does Hamlet, in fact, become mad?
- Essay Examinations
  - Example: Respond to the following question in an in-class, timed-essay: Laurence Olivier's famous 1948 film of Hamlet stated overtly that Hamlet was about a man who could not make up his mind. Is this argument a reasonable or a reductive interpretation of the play? Explain, then connect and compare/contrast at least two post-1950 adaptations of your choosing as they relate to your argument about Hamlet's character.

## Repeatable

No

## Methods of Instruction

- Lecture/Discussion
- Distance Learning

### Lecture:

1. Using a Power Point presentation, the instructor will define Shakespeare's plays in terms of genre. Special focus on "History," "Tragedy," and "Comedy" with specific examples from several plays to accompany the terms. Students should be able to distinguish among the different genres and make arguments about potential overlap as a result of the lecture materials. (Objective #4)
2. For this in-class activity, each group of students will develop a version of Twelfth Night or The Taming of the Shrew that uses a completely different setting than Shakespeare intended. Students will present their overview and choices to the class. We will follow this activity by watching excerpts from She's the Man and 10 Things I Hate About You. At conclusion, students should see that character and theme can remain constant even when setting and time period changes. (Objective #2)
3. Films, Video, Audio Recording: Watch five different versions of the opening scene of Macbeth and compare/contrast them using a New Historicism lens. Through this comparison exercise, students should be able to articulate in class discussion and in written form how time period informs production choices.

## Typical Out of Class Assignments

### Reading Assignments

1. Read the "Enablers" chapter from Stephen Greenblatt's Tyrant: Shakespeare on Politics. Be prepared to connect his arguments to Shakespeare's Richard III and knowledge of current leaders and political parties.
2. Read the excerpts from Carolyn Heilbrun's "The Character of Hamlet's Mother" and G Wilson Knight's "The Embassy of Death." Provide a short definition of the excerpts.

### Writing, Problem Solving or Performance

1. Read Shakespeare's Macbeth, including the introduction in The Arden Shakespeare. Be prepared to discuss and analyze the work in class writing assignments and discussions, and then connect that analysis to selected scenes from the film Scotland, PA in a formal essay.
2. Promptbooks are copies of scripts that contain notes about performance—blocking, delivery of lines, setting, costumes, and so forth. Using a short section of text (Macbeth Act 1, scene 1), create a mini prompt book to determine how to stage the scene. Consider the following questions: How do the witches enter? How do they move? Are they old? Young? Male? Female? (Remember, in Shakespeare's time they were played by males) Do they like or hate each other? How is each witch different from the others? How are they dressed? What are they carrying? Might they be father, mother, and child? What do they do as they speak?

## Other (Term projects, research papers, portfolios, etc.)

### Required Materials

- Single copy plays— Othello, Twelfth Night, The Tempest, The Merchant of Venice, King Lear, Macbeth
  - Author: William Shakespeare
  - Publisher: Arden Publishing Company

- Publication Date: 2016
- Text Edition: 3rd series
- Classic Textbook?:
- OER Link:
- OER:
- Hagseed
  - Author: Margaret Atwood
  - Publisher: Hogarth
  - Publication Date: 2016
  - Text Edition: 1st
  - Classic Textbook?:
  - OER Link:
  - OER:
- Tyrant: Shakespeare on Politics
  - Author: Stephen Greenblatt
  - Publisher: Norton
  - Publication Date: 2018
  - Text Edition: 1st
  - Classic Textbook?:
  - OER Link:
  - OER:
- Shakespeare and Modern Culture
  - Author: Marjorie Garber
  - Publisher: Anchor
  - Publication Date: 2008
  - Text Edition: 1st
  - Classic Textbook?:
  - OER Link:
  - OER:

## Other materials and-or supplies required of students that contribute to the cost of the course.