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Office Hours: Mon./Wed. 1:30-3:30 & by appointment

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LIT 352: Shakespeare's Comedies

Tuesdays 1:30-3:50pm

Moodle2 password: **mechanicalS16**

This Junior Seminar will take up Shakespeare's diverse comedies as avenues for exploring different critical and theoretical approaches, so that we might plan and execute individual research projects. We'll discover how Shakespeare's plays and the varied approaches of criticism can together help us think about formal concerns like the contours of genre, interpreting theater, and the nature of a literary character, as well as topics like individual agency, racial and gender biases, class and hierarchy, and political power.

Required Texts:

-*The Norton Shakespeare: Comedies*, 3rd Edition
Edited by Stephen Greenblatt et. al.
ISBN: 978-0393938616



Course Plan

This course is a Junior Seminar in the Literature program, and will use the entire corpus of Shakespeare's comedies—13!—as grounds for developing individual research projects rooted in literary analysis and conceptual, historical and/or theoretical frameworks. Students will produce a rigorously developed 25-page paper focused on a topic of their choosing, and steeped in several weeks' worth of preparation and scaffolding. As the central concern of the class will be to examine the discipline and practice of *doing and writing research*, students are expected to be self-motivated and claim ownership over not only their own projects but also over the nature of the class. Each week, we will read a different play alongside generative additional materials: other literature, scholarly criticism, films, and theory. Alongside these readings, students will try their hands at different modes of criticism and research as they prepare their final papers.

In this course, you will...

- **acquire** a textured sense of the literary, cultural, and political contexts of Shakespeare's comedies
- **practice** thinking about Shakespeare's plays in relation to historical context, theater history, adaptation and reception, bibliographic practices, philosophy, and contemporary cultural theory
- **design and execute** a full-fledged research paper that aims to demonstrate both close literary analysis and teach the reader about a particular way of approaching Shakespeare's work

Course Requirements

This course is designed to help you write a research paper that demonstrates not only your skills as a reader of texts but also your ability to develop and execute a research agenda. As such, there are aspects of this course that I will leave in your hands, including (after the first two weeks) the schedule of our readings. The large portion of your grade in this class will be the final research paper, which you begin work on *today*. You may do a research project on any aspect of Shakespeare's Comedies that excites you (thematic issues, historical context, theater history & practices, political theory, adaptations/reception, sources and analogues, feminist/queer readings, the history of science... really, anything), but I'll need to see week by week progress that develops your project and adds nuance to your critique. There are a few ways in which you will check-in with me about your progress in this class, and these check-ins will constitute the other portion of your grade.

1. Final Research Paper (25 pages)— 30%
2. Presence and participation in class discussions — 20%
 - 5% of your participation grade is contingent on you submitting a weekly response question for class discussion (more details below)
 - 5% of your participation grade will be based on a 10 minute presentation on your ongoing research to be done in the second half of term
3. Short assignments—20%
 - Week 2: Reflection assignment (1-2 pages)
 - Weeks 7-9; 11-14: Discovery/Research responses (1-2 page responses)
4. Short papers-- 30%
 - Week 3 (2/19): Close Reading (2-3 pages; 5%)
 - Week 6 (3/22): Short essay (7 pages; 15 %)
 - Week 10 (4/15): Historical Context / Reception / Theory Report (4-5 pages; 10%)

Weekly Responses

One of the most challenging parts of learning how to design research projects is developing the ability to ask productive questions. You never know how productive a question will be until try to answer it, however (such is the nature of not knowing), but there are certain types of questions (detailed, focused, specific, sufficiently considered) with unobvious answers that are certainly more conducive to discussion, demand more research, and frankly, more exciting to pursue. To strengthen this muscle, you will be responsible for generating at least 1 question about each week's texts/readings for class and emailing it to me by midnight the night before class (Monday night). On Tuesday morning, I'll compile these questions and post them on the course Moodle2 site so that you can have a chance to peruse all of them before class. I'll consult these questions in my preparation for discussion, and we'll talk about strategies for addressing them (or whether they are good questions or not!). These questions might well be the prompt for your big research project, and you are encouraged to try and build upon your question in each subsequent week—feel free develop a fixation or set of problems that you are invested in, and track them throughout each week!

Paper submission policy

Late papers are accepted, but reduced 1/3 of a letter grade for each day late, beginning immediately after the session at which the paper is due. Extensions for assignments are generally available, but must be requested at least 48 hours before the paper is due. All papers must be formatted according to the guidelines on the style-sheet on Moodle. For more details on grading, revisions, extensions, and lateness, see the exhaustive "Revision, Extension, and Lateness" document.

Course Etiquette:

- You may refer to me in class and in emails as Adhaar (he/him pronouns)
- You must have the assigned reading for each day in class with you, in hard copy. This is a research-driven upper-level class, and you are welcome to use laptops/tablets (not phones, though) in class if you wish, though only for consulting non-primary materials and for notetaking. I reserve the right to ask you to put away your laptop for any reason (generally, if I think you're not inattentive to class discussion or distracting others). Don't make it awkward!
- All emails for the class must contain the term "LIT352" (one word, no spaces) in the subject line, so that I can filter them into one folder. If you continually repeatedly fail to use this term, your responses might not be counted (in large part because it's super likely that I'll stop noticing them).
- You may bring not bring food to class, but drinks are fine.

Attendance

Each student may miss one class over the course of the semester without a negative impact on their grade, no questions asked. Each missed session beyond the second will reduce your total final grade by one level (A to A-; A- to B+, etc.). If lateness becomes a chronic problem, they will begin to count toward absences. For special circumstances, please see me.

Academic Integrity

I observe and uphold Bard's policies on academic honesty and take them very seriously. Please read the Student Handbook (<http://inside.bard.edu/doso/handbook/>) under "Learning at Bard" for Bard's policies regarding academic integrity. Cases of plagiarism in this class can result in an automatic failure on the assignment.

Course Schedule

Note: The first three weeks of this course are organized to lay the groundwork for later weeks. After week 3, students will vote on which text or methodology they want to examine next. I've designed each week to feature a play and additional readings that are aimed at a variety of different methodological approaches. Note that many of the additional readings will be on Moodle2 (M2), and that the Moodle2 site has more some more information on potential topics we might discuss.

PLAY	TOPIC	ADDITIONAL READINGS	METHODS DISCUSSED
Week 2: The Comedy of Errors	Comic Form	-Greenblatt, General Introduction, Norton pp 1-10 -Maus, "Shakespearean Comedy," Norton 121-124. - Frye, on Comedy (M2)	-Genre Theory -Close-reading What makes something a comedy? Why is genre important?
Week 3: A Midsummer Night's Dream	Theatricality & Representation	-Syme, "The Theater of Shakespeare's Time", Norton pp. 93-97; 111-118 -Excerpts on theater (M2)	-Theater -Theater history How does theatricality impact literary form? What are the points of contact and divergence between "story" and "spectacle"?

** Read over the options below; votes will be cast in class!**

READINGS	TOPIC	ADDITIONAL READINGS	METHODS DISCUSSED
Love's Labour's Lost	The Language of Love	-Barthes - <i>A Lover's Discourse</i> (excerpts) -Shakespeare's Sonnets (excerpts; M2)	-Intertextuality: Drama, Poetry & Discourse How does literature produce and transform discourse? How do we productively read different literary texts side by side?
The Merry Wives of Windsor	The Shakespearean Character	-Orgel - What Is a Character? (M2) -Forster, Aspects of the Novel (M2) -Excerpts from <i>1H4</i> and <i>2H4</i> (M2)	-Character studies -What is a literary character? How does Shakespeare build characters?
The Two Gentlemen of Verona	Shakespeare's Sources	-Elyot, "The Book of the Governor" (M2)	-Intertextuality: Source texts -Historicization What can we do with the sources or inspirations of a literary text?
The Taming of the Shrew	Adapting/ Modernizing Shakespeare	- <i>10 Things I Hate About You</i>	-Film Analysis -Adaptation and Influence How do film adaptations help us understand a text (and vice versa)?
As You Like It	Gender Trouble	-Butler, <i>Gender Trouble</i> (M2)	-Critical Theory: Feminist/Gender Studies -What kinds of thinking do feminist critiques demand, and does Shakespeare's work count as feminist?
Much Ado About Nothing	Wit & Laughter	-Bergson- <i>Laughter</i> - 1-21; 29-38; 49-66	-Philosophy; Thinking with Literature What makes something funny, and why are humor and comic form linked?
The Merchant of Venice	Otherness & Belonging	-Greenblatt, Norton Intro, pp. 23-26 -Ahmed, "The Organization of Hate" (M2)	Critical Theory: Affect Theory, Critical Race Studies -How can literature help us think through contemporary cultural issues?
Measure for Measure	Political Power	-King James, <i>Basilikon Doron</i> (M2) -Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i> (M2)	-Political Theory & Literature -How do we situate literary texts within political or legal contexts?
Twelfth Night	Clowning and Carnival	-Bakhtin – On the Carnavalesque (M2) -Thomson, "Clowns, Fools, and Knaves" (M2)	-Theater history: Clowning -What constitutes a clown, what function does it serve, and what is its legacy?
Troilus and Cressida	Shakespearean Inscrutability	-Derrida, "The Law of Genre" (M2)	-Genre Theory -Critical Theory: Deconstruction -How can we address and think about ambiguity or undecidability in productive ways?
All's Well that Ends Well	Textual Cruxes	-First Folio (M2) -Orgel, "What is a Text?" (M2) -Cloud, "The very names of the Persons" (M2) -Gossett, "Textual Introduction," Norton 968-970.	-Textual Criticism -How does the complicated textual and editorial history of Shakespeare's plays impact the way we understand them?

Revision, Extensions, and Lateness

What (I assume) you care about most, academically and intellectually:

1. Improving your ability to think carefully about and analyze texts.
2. Sharing your ideas in clear, focused, persuasive ways.

What course assignments are designed to help you accomplish:

1. Develop and evaluate your ability to think carefully about and analyze texts.
2. Assess whether your ideas are being shared in clear, focused, persuasive ways.
3. Understand that thinking and writing take time, demand patience and are hard work. As a result, managing your time wisely and producing writing in a responsible manner are also integral to what you must learn in this class and in college in general.

So, in case it isn't clear: if you manage your time well, we can talk entirely about what I think matters most to you. My commitment to helping you do #1 & #2 depends on #3, and has led me to institute a course-wide revision policy:

REVISION POLICY

You are allowed to revise and resubmit every written assignment if you so choose, in order to receive a better grade or improve your writing.

Some caveats:

- The deadline for these revisions will be 2 weeks from the day I give you your grades on the initial iteration.
- In order to write a revision, you *must meet with me personally* to talk about what you plan to do as you revise. It doesn't have to take long; we can just make sure you understand my comments.
- The timeline for doing revisions expires on the day the final paper is due at the end of term.
- You are not guaranteed a better grade on the revision. It will be graded as a standalone piece of writing. You are, however, guaranteed not to receive a *lower* grade if your revision is a disaster. So, be ambitious and take risks in your revision; good writing, unfortunately, is not always reflective of the effort that went into it.

If you submit your essays on time, you'll get a maximum amount of time to do revisions, and you'll get to focus exactly on what you're in this class to focus on. I understand, however, that your schedules are hectic and sometimes these deadlines are a burden. So, I have what I believe is a fairly generous extension policy:

EXTENSION POLICY

For all assignments that will not be subject to in-class peer-review (and I'll let you know beforehand which those are), you are entitled to an extension if you request one.

Caveats:

- You must request your extension **at minimum 48 hours before the assignment is due**. To clarify: if the assignment is due at 10:10am on a Wednesday, you must ask me for an extension at the latest by 10:10am on Monday, and we can then have a conversation about when it would make sense for the new deadline to be set (usually, I give up to 5 days).
- You are still allowed to revise an essay you submit after receiving an extension, but the deadline for your revision will be the same as it is for everyone else. You might get comments on your essay back after everyone else, so you'll have less of a window for that revision (and to meet with me to discuss it beforehand).

So now let's talk about what it means to submit an assignment late, and what happens if you make the unwise decision to submit an assignment late...

☠ LATENESS POLICY ☠

The assignment will be docked 1/3 of a letter grade (an A becomes A-; a B+/B becomes B/B-) for each day the assignment is late.

What "late" means: if an assignment is due "in class," it is due at precisely the moment that I say "hey gimme your papers" in class. If you are late to class and don't hand it in at that moment, it is already 1 day late. It is 2 days late at 12:01 after midnight that night, and so on. If your printer is unreliable or you don't have time to print it, EMAIL ME THE ESSAY to safeguard yourself and avoid lateness. Assignments requested in hard copy will be accepted via email, but won't be formally graded until I also receive a hard copy.

More details:

- If an assignment is at all late, you will not be allowed to revise it. Oh snap.
- After 10 days of lateness, the assignment will automatically receive an F ($100 - [10 * 3.3333] = 66.6666$). Though of course it can also get an F if it is less than 10 days late and also, um, not an A+ paper. An F goes into my grade calculations as a 65; you won't get lower than a 65 on an assignment you complete and submit (whenever it is handed in).
- If you never submit the assignment at all, it goes into the gradebook as a 0. If the assignment is worth 20% of your grade, an F will still get you 13% ($.65 * 20$). A 0 will get you 0%, and the highest possible grade you can get in the class (all else being perfect) will be B- (80%).

Don't try to game this system.

- If you submit a file that I cannot open or a corrupted file, I will send you an email asking you to submit it again in a format I can work with. If you don't respond to this email within 3 hours, the assignment will be marked late. I prefer .docx/.doc/.pdf, or a Google-docs link. If you can avoid it, please don't submit .pages documents.
- One obvious hole in this system is that you can submit an unfinished draft "on time" and know that you'll have an opportunity to revise. Since you can't revise something submitted late, you might choose to send me something unfinished rather than risk losing the opportunity to revise. This, actually, is okay—the goal here, after all, is for you to understand the revision process and the stages that writing must go through. So, if you cobble together an outline and just send me that, yeah, you'll get a really bad grade on it, but you can revise it *and* you'll get helpful comments from me. Submit *something*. Start early and give me *something we can work with together*. That's what this is all about.
- HOWEVER: if you submit, like, a single sentence or a paragraph, or some random musings that I determine are not actually a plan for an essay but a panicked last-second spewing (and this is basically up to my judgment), it'll still count as late. And I'll be pretty salty about it.

NOTE: I reserve the right to adjust this system as I see fit, but all adjustments will be made in students' favor (I will never change the rules to punish you more than is stated here, but I might decide not to be as strict as it says here if I so choose).

Rationale

Please realize that grading essays is work and takes time, and that my ability to grade your papers effectively requires careful planning. Getting a late essay means getting something I have to set aside time for later in my week, and I have other classes to teach and other work to grade. I want you to get your work back quickly, so you can plan the next step along with me. To ensure I do that effectively, I need to get your assignments on time. Moreover, the better you meet deadlines, the easier it will be to revise and learn from the writing process. Also, it's frankly just important to meet deadlines!