

Shakespeare's Tragedies

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ENGLISH 4090

AUTUMN 2009

EAST CAROLINA UNIV.

Aug. 26	W	What is tragedy?	
28	F	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , act 1; first paper due	
31	M	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , act 2	
Sept. 2	W	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , act 3	
4	F		Scenes in Performance
7	M	Labor Day	
8	T	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , act 4	
9	W	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , act 5	
11	F		Scenes in Performance
14	M	<i>Hamlet</i> , act 1	
16	W	<i>Hamlet</i> , act 2	
18	F		Scenes in Performance
21	M	<i>Hamlet</i> , act 3	
23	W	<i>Hamlet</i> , act 4	
25	F		Scenes in Performance
28	M	<i>Hamlet</i> , act 5	
30	W	<i>Othello</i> , act 1	
Oct. 2	F		Scenes in Performance
5	M	Second paper due;	Scenes in Film
7	W	<i>Othello</i> , act 2	
9	F		Scenes in Performance
12	M	Fall Break	
14	W	<i>Othello</i> , act 3	
16	F		Scenes in Performance
19	M	<i>Othello</i> , act 4	
21	W	<i>Othello</i> , act 5	
23	F		Scenes in Performance
26	M	<i>King Lear</i> , act 1	
28	W	<i>King Lear</i> , act 2	
30	F		Scenes in Performance
Nov. 2	M	<i>King Lear</i> , act 3	
4	W	<i>King Lear</i> , act 4	
6	F		Scenes in Film
9	M	<i>King Lear</i> , act 5	
11	W	<i>Macbeth</i> , act 1	
13	F		Scenes in Performance
16	M	Third paper due;	Scenes in Film
18	W	<i>Macbeth</i> , act 2	
20	F		Scenes in Performance
23	M	<i>Macbeth</i> , act 3	
25	W	Thanksgiving Holiday	
27	F	Thanksgiving Holiday	
30	M	<i>Macbeth</i> , act 4	
Dec. 2	W	<i>Macbeth</i> , act 5	
4	F		Scenes in Performance
7	M	What is tragedy?	

REQUIREMENTS

Written assignments must be typed and are due at the beginning of the class period. Assignments delivered after that will receive a lower grade. (For instance, an A- essay that is delivered up to 24 hours late will receive a B+, an A- essay that is delivered between 24 and 48 hours late will receive a B, and so on.)

Reading Quizzes (20%). Reading quizzes are scheduled randomly. If you read for comprehension, you will find them laughably easy. Each quiz is worth 1% and there will be 21 quizzes. *There will be no make-ups for missed quizzes.* However, because there is an extra (21st) quiz, you can miss one quiz without harming your grade. Think of it as a free pass: you can use it to go to the beach, or you can use it when you're sick. Because this system is based on numbers, you don't need to explain why you missed class. Just do it: the math will take care of it, automatically. Of course, you'll still be responsible for the material discussed in class. But once you've used that free pass, it's gone! Forever! My advice is, save it for when you're sick or need to attend court. But I leave that to you.

Recitation (10%). Part of becoming intimate with a play or poem is learning it by heart. I will ask you to memorize two speeches (twenty lines or longer) over the course of the semester; at least one of these speeches must be in verse. You choose the speeches. Grades will be assigned on the following basis: you know the speech, but stumble your way through it and don't observe the meter = C range; you know the speech letter-perfect and observe the meter, but haven't done much with pauses, emphasis, tone = B range; you know the speech letter-perfect, observe the meter and dramatize it with your voice = A range. Don't memorize a speech you don't understand: we'll have a conversation afterward about what it means.

Staged Reading (10%). For each of the plays there will be at least two staged readings of one or more scenes. Over the course of the semester you will be asked to participate in two of these readings, either as an actor or director. Some things to consider in preparing your scenes:

- **Blocking.** Where should characters stand? How and where should they move? At what point in the action? Do the words imply gestures that are not specified in the text of the play?
- **Language.** Be prepared to talk about what the words mean. Think about where to put the pauses in your speeches. Which words are you going to emphasize? You don't need to memorize your lines, but you do need to practice them until you can read them smoothly and expressively.
- **Dialogue.** Practice your timing together.
- **Character.** Be prepared to talk about why your character says what he or she says. Think about what your face will look like while you're speaking.
- **Dramatic Structure.** Be prepared to talk about how this scene contributes to the structure of the play as a whole. (One way to think about this is to ask yourself what would happen to the play if this scene were cut.)

In preparation, you will also type up a couple of paragraphs (250 words) about the language your (main) character uses and what you infer from it; these paragraphs will be due at the beginning of your staged reading. Note that I say "language": I am more interested in how your character talks than in what he says or does. Do not summarize the plot, either: we have all read the play and know what happens.

Essays (60%). Over the course of the semester you will submit three essays; due dates are given above. The first essay will have an assigned topic (the Queen Mab speech in act one of *Romeo and Juliet*) and be short (only 750 words). The second essay (1,850–2,000 words) will be on some aspect (you choose) of *Romeo and Juliet* or *Hamlet*. The third essay (1,850–2,000 words) will be on *Othello*, *King Lear*, or *Macbeth* (your choice).

- Essays should be typed, include a list of works cited, and follow the citation format specified in the *MLA Handbook* (available on the web or at the library reference desk, LB2369.G53.1999).
- When you're done, do a word count and write the result on the first page of your paper. Word count should not include such things as long quotations and list of works cited.
- Pages should be (a) stapled and (b) numbered by computer. Ask someone at the computer lab if you don't know how to do this already.
- First impressions count; so do spelling, punctuation, and grammar. If you have trouble with these, I recommend *Grammar in Plain English* by Harriet Diamond and Phyllis Dutwin.
- Double-space. Use 12 point Times Roman (or a similar font of the same size).

Midterm and Final Exams. There will be no midterm or final exams in this course.

Please don't read, send, or monitor **text messages** in class. Please do turn off your **cell phone ringer** before class begins. **Laptops** might be helpful in some classes, but not this one. When we are thinking hard about Shakespeare's language, the glorious, wireless, always-available internet is a distraction to you and the people who sit behind you. If you do bring a laptop to class, please leave it in your bag.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is using someone else's words—or ideas—in such a way that a reader cannot readily distinguish them from your own work. That's cheating. If you have questions about plagiarism, please ask me about it before your paper is due; after a paper is handed in it's too late to claim ignorance. The penalty for plagiarism is an automatic F for the course, in addition to whatever penalty the University sees fit to impose.

IMPORTANT TIMES, PHONE NUMBERS, ADDRESSES

Office: Bate 2137

Office hours: MWF 1:00–2:40. This overlaps two class periods; if you have class during both times, grab me after class or call me on the telephone and we'll set up an appointment. My home number is in the book but, please, no phone calls after 9:00 pm.

Email: Instead of emailing me and exchanging messages, come to office hours and we'll have a conversation.

RESERVE

Bullough, Geoffrey, ed. *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*. 7 vols. London: Routledge, 1957–.
PR2952.B8

Rosenberg, Marvin. *The Masks of Hamlet*. Newark: U of Delaware P, 1992.
PR2807.R656.1992

_____. *The Masks of King Lear*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972.
PR2819.R65

_____. *The Masks of Macbeth*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978.
PR2823.R67

_____. *The Masks of Othello*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961.
PR2829.R6.1961