

**“Bardology”**  
**English 380 Shakespeare Section 9194**  
**Spring Term 2007 (3 credits)**

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Thursday 3.30-6.00  
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<http://www.ndsu.edu/ndsu/maune> and <https://bb.ndsu.nodak.edu>

### **Objectives**

Unlike any other figure in western culture, Shakespeare has come to represent not only a body of plays and poetry, but an institution that carries great cultural capital and economic potential. While we will focus primarily on the texts associated with Shakespeare in this course, we will also explore the culture that produced him and how our culture receives him. We will be engaging with the plays and poetry using three primary strategies, textual studies, performance and cultural history. In this way the course will ideally address the needs of the various students who typically take it, English, English Education, Theatre majors and those curious and generally interested.

The course will begin with refining our reading and thinking skills by addressing more familiar and frequently taught plays. We will turn to lesser-known plays and expand our reading and thinking strategies to include elements of the visual as well as the textual. This section of the class will culminate in a performance project.

### **Requirements**

We will pursue our study of Shakespeare through a mixture of lecture, discussion, and student presentations. I will be giving brief lectures on a variety of cultural and historical topics. You will write two reviews of performances of Shakespeare, prepare an annotation of a sonnet, and in small groups, perform a short scene. There will also be ten unannounced quizzes.

| <b>Grading</b>      |            | <b>Scale (gradebook at blackboard site)</b> |          |
|---------------------|------------|---|----------|
| Performance Project | 100 points | A   | 100-92 % |
| 2 Reviews           | 150 points | B   | 91-82 %  |
| 10 Quizzes          | 100 points | C   | 81-72 %  |
| Sonnet Annotation   | 50 points  | D   | 71-60 %  |
| Total               | 400 points | F   | 59-0%    |

### **Texts**

*The Norton Shakespeare*

A dictionary (bring to every class)

### **Students with Special Needs**

Any students with disabilities or other special needs who need special accommodations in this course are asked to share these concerns with me as soon as possible.

### **Academic Honesty**

I assume that all work you turn in for this course is yours, and any material that you have acquired from an outside source is documented properly. Failure to do so is considered plagiarism and will result in possible failure of the course. See NDSU University Senate Policy, Section 335: Code of Academic Responsibility and Conduct <http://www.ndsu.nodak.edu/policy/335.htm>.

### **Late Papers**

Late papers will lose ten points per day until they are turned in. You are responsible for turning in all work assigned in this class. Failure to do so will result in failing this class.

### **Attendance and Participation**

University policy recognizes the importance of class attendance (<http://www.ndsu.nodak.edu/policy/333.htm>). Important parts of the work for this course will be done in small and large groups. This means that your consistent presence is important to the success of the class as a whole. If you are unable to attend class, you must contact me via phone or email within twenty-four hours. You are still responsible for any work done or due in class that day. Similarly, you are responsible for contacting your group members if you miss a class. If you miss three classes your grade will drop one. If you miss four classes, you will fail the class.

Participation includes not only contributing to class discussion, it also covers prompt attendance, being prepared, having your book, and listening and responding constructively to your classmates. Simply reading the material before class is insufficient at this level. You must have thoroughly read the material and be ready to discuss it actively.

### **Paper Format**

Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are to be type-written, double-spaced, with one-inch margins, in twelve-point Times font. Your name, the date, the class, my name and the assignment are to be at the top of the first page. Don't forget to title your work. Any papers longer than one page must have page numbers and be stapled.

### **Quizzes**

There will be ten, brief, ten-item unannounced quizzes. They will consist of short answer and identification questions. They will cover the reading for that day and any terms and concepts discussed in class or presented during lectures. The quizzes will be handed out at the beginning of class and collected after fifteen minutes. Quizzes may not be made up.

### **Sonnet Annotation**

This assignment is designed for you to practice your skills in reading and interpreting

poetry. Choose one of the sonnets we have discussed in class and transcribe it. Begin by defining all the words with which you believe a general reader will not be familiar. This includes puns and words whose meanings have changed since Shakespeare's time. You will have to consult the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Then identify any allusions or references the sonnet makes. These may be to classical mythology, Biblical events and characters, or other elements of Shakespeare's culture. The footnotes in your text will be helpful, but as we will discover, many references are often neglected. Third, identify key metaphors and similes. The format here is entirely up to you. You may, for example, use color coding, lines and arrows, or different type faces. Last, provide a two hundred word interpretation of the sonnet that draws on the annotations you have made. If you use outside sources, including the internet, you must cite them in a works cited page. Be sure to provide line numbers and pay attention to punctuation.

Your annotation will be evaluated based on the clarity of format, its accessibility/useability by another, the comprehensiveness of the annotations, and the use of the annotations in your interpretation.

### **Shakespeare Review Project**

We have talked at various points about how particular parts of the plays we have read might appear on stage. We've looked in particular at moments of ambiguity, when the text does not provide a clear guide as to what happens on stage. Directors and their acting companies must address these moments and decide what does or does not happen. These decisions reflect the director's interpretation of the play. Thus, an important element of reviewing a dramatic performance is familiarity with the play being performed and recognizing a director's interpretive choices and how these choices affect the play as a whole.

The specific directions for the reviews are below. I have also attached a sheet with some guidelines for watching Shakespeare and for preparing to write a review of a performance of Shakespeare.

This is a three to four page formal review of a performance or a film of a Shakespeare play. The film must be a commercial production, not a filmed stage performance. This is to be a formal review, not like a brief newspaper or popular magazine review. The review should have three parts:

1. An introduction, which gives the basic information about the play/film, date, director, lead actors, length, etc.
2. The second part is a summary of the play/film. Note this is not a summary of the playscript, but of the performance or film that you saw. This is usually fairly conventional, but you must address issues of any changes made in the basic playscript.
3. The third part is your analysis of the play/film. As an interpretation of a Shakespeare play, what do you feel are its strengths and weaknesses? The handouts on watching Shakespeare will be helpful in writing this section.

The introduction should be no more than a paragraph and should only introduce characters who are mentioned later in the review. The summary should be no longer than two paragraphs. The analysis should take up about two-thirds of the review.

We will watch several clips and see an entire film in class. The ideas that come up in the discussion of these videos will be helpful for you in writing your review. In general, what you are doing is comparing a director's vision of what a play is like with your own vision. The director has taken the same text you have read and altered it. Think about the alterations and how they affect the final experience.

A good resource for Shakespeare on film research is the Internet Movie Database: <http://www.imdb.com>

Your first review will be of the film of *Macbeth*, which we will watch outside of class. Your second review may be of another Shakespeare film or of a live performance. Be sure to check with me before watching a film or seeing a performance for the second review.

### **Grade Guidelines**

These descriptions apply to the final grade in the class and the score on particular assignments.

A work is outstanding. It goes beyond the basic requirements of the assignment and the class. The work shows evidence of critical and original thinking. Ideas are clearly supported and explained.

B work is more than satisfactory. It shows understanding of the given task and an understanding of the rules for writing as set out in the syllabus. Thinking is clear, though not necessarily highly critical or highly original. Ideas are supported and explained, although not always clearly or consistently.

C work is satisfactory. It shows familiarity with though not a complete understanding of the given task and rules for writing as set out in the syllabus. Thought shows inconsistent critical engagement or originality. Ideas are too broad and not clearly supported with evidence. Writing tends to summarize or describe rather than analyze.

D work is below average. It shows an inconsistent understanding of the given task, text, and rules. Thought and writing are often disorganized and do not communicate an understanding of audience or genre. Paper seems to be written quickly with little attention to revision or proofreading.

F work is unsatisfactory. It shows little if any understanding of the given task, text, or rules. Thought and writing are disorganized and do not communicate an understanding of audience or genre.

**Calendar (subject to change)**

- 11 January Introductions  
*Macbeth*  
Read General Introduction: 1-9, 21-29
- 18 January *Macbeth*  
Lecture: Plays and Playing  
Read General Introduction: 30-41
- 23 January *Macbeth* (film) NB: This is a Tuesday.
- 25 January *Comedy of Errors*  
Lecture: Shakespeare's Life  
Read General Introduction: 41-54
- 1 February *Comedy of Errors*  
Review Project 1 due
- 8 February Sonnets 116, 125-138  
Lecture: Shakespeare's Poetry
- 15 February *As You Like It*
- 22 February *As You Like It*  
Lecture: Shakespeare and Gender  
Read General Introduction: 9-20, 57-60
- 1 March *Merchant of Venice*  
Sonnet annotation due
- 8 March *Merchant of Venice*  
Lecture: Shakespeare and the Book  
Read General Introduction: 65-76
- 15 March Spring Break, no class
- 22 March *Henry V*
- 29 March *Henry V*  
Lecture: Shakespeare's Theater  
Read The Shakespearean Stage: 3281-301
- 5 April *Henry V* (film)

- 12 April      *Measure for Measure*
- 19 April      *Measure for Measure*  
Lecture: Shakespeare's Genre
- 26 April      *Cymbeline*  
Review Project 2 due
- 3 May         *Cymbeline*  
Performance Project Preparation
- 6 May (Sunday) Opportunity to see *Merchant of Venice* at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis
- 10 May        Final Examination: Performance Projects  
Written portion of performance project and group evaluation forms due

### **Group rules**

In order for evaluation and grading to be consistent and reflect work done by individuals in your performance project, a number of procedures must be followed. Ethical group participation means that each member is responsible for the group's performance. Each member must contribute as well as encourage others to contribute.

During the first group meeting, the group must generate an agreement that describes the group's goal. The goal will be to earn a high score on the project, but in a way that values the opinions of all members. Group members must be committed to the group's goals, complete their individual tasks, avoid interpersonal conflict, encourage group participation, and keep the discussion focused. The group must compose a "Code of Ethics" that describes the goals and responsibilities of the group. This is to be no more than one page, it must list the group number, each member's name and contact information (whatever means is most reliable), the group's goal, and the responsibilities of members. Each group member and the instructor must receive a typed copy of this.

Each group must meet at least twice outside of class for each project. Time will also be provided in class for group work.

On the day the performance project each group member must turn in a *Group Member Evaluation Form* for each member. Each member must also fill out and turn in a *Peer Rating of Group Members*. If these forms are not turned in on time, ten points will be deducted from the final score. These forms are available for download from the course website.

### **Shakespeare Performance Project**

We have talked about the ambiguities inherent in many scenes this term. We've also watched various directors' interpretations of those scenes. Now is your opportunity to present your own interpretation. Choose a short scene or part of a longer one (ca. 200-500 lines) from any play we've read this semester. You must cast, costume, prepare a script, and direct that scene. The performances will take place in the classroom, so observe the potentials and the limits of the space. The script must contain the actual lines, speech prefixes, stage directions, and any other information used for your scene. It is due the day of the performance.

Part of one class before the final examination, will be given over to preparation. The performances will take place during the final examination period.

You will be evaluated in two ways. Forty of the one hundred possible points will be based on your interpretation of the scene and how effectively you communicate that interpretation to the class. (That is, you will not be judged on your acting ability.) As with the group presentation, this score will be modified by the peer response forms in order to determine each student's score. The remaining sixty points will be based on a one to two page written (following all the rules) explanation of your interpretation of the scene. Each group member is to work independently on the written portion. This part of the project is due on the day of the performances.

Here are some places to begin in preparing your scene.

1. What happens in this scene?
2. What is the mood of the scene?
3. What motivates the characters, what do they want from one another?
4. What are the key lines or speeches? How would they be said? (Think about several possibilities)
5. How does this scene develop the themes of the play, as you understand them?

For the written portion, answer one of the following questions:

- What did you learn about the character you played, and about his/her place in the scene and the play?
- What did you learn about how your scene is (or is not) integral to the play?
- What did you learn about the Elizabethan stage?
- What performative obligations did the text impose on our group? On your own role?
- What significant performative options were available to you and/or your group? What choices were made and why?
- What was the interpretive result? What readings of character, action, and so on were enabled or disabled, rejected or omitted by your choices?

NB: Do not summarize the scene. Your paper should describe what you have done and analyze your performance.

The written portion and the group forms (described below) are due on the day of the performance.

### **Watching Shakespeare**

Read over these questions before watching a play.

1. Who is the audience?

What is their knowledge of Shakespeare?

What is their knowledge of history?

What about the play being produced will appeal to them?

What about the play being produced might confuse/offend them?

2. With the above ideas in mind, how might the play be modified?

Should it be shortened?

Should it be lengthened?

Should material be added to it to clarify the plot, setting  
or characters?

Will characters be cast according to gender or not?

What special effects are used?

3. How might the non-textual elements be handled?

When and where might it be set?

What might the sets and costumes be?

Who is on stage and when?

What do the non-speaking characters do?

What is to be done during the "open silences" of the plays?

With these questions in mind, when you watch a performance of Shakespeare you are trying to determine what the director is trying to do with the play text. Begin with some questions:

When and where is the production set? (Sets, costumes and music)

What was omitted from the production?

What was added to the production?

How do these factors influence the play?

**If you are able to see the performance with an audience:**

What did the audience laugh at?

Did the audience appear to get confused or bored at any points?

Ideally, the production will provide a coherent interpretation of the play. When you review a production it is up to you to first know the play well enough to have your own ideas of it. Second, determine how the play has been adapted. And third, figure out the director's interpretation of the play.



### Shakespeare Performance Questionnaire

These questions are prepared for watching and evaluating a live performance, but are useful for watching films as well. Read the questions before attending the performance and bring some paper and something with which to write. Even notes scribbled in the dark are helpful.

1. Describe the stage space and the audience space.
2. What was immediately striking about the “look” of the production?
3. Was there a set? Describe it. If it changed during the performance, how was this done?
4. What kinds of sound were you aware of (including music, silences, nonvocal noise)?
5. What did you notice about the lighting?
6. Which costumes stood out as especially significant? Could you identify the setting?
7. Describe the pace of the production. If there was an intermission, describe any differences between the parts (e.g. did the pace move more quickly after the intermission?).
8. What moments gave particular pleasure or unease?
9. In what ways, if any, did the director’s interpretation differ from what you had expected? Which elements of the production did s/he most emphatically employ to convey that interpretation? Did you notice whether the text of the play was cut or altered in any way?
10. Did the audience reaction ever surprise you? How so?
11. How would you describe the use of space, including blocking and movement?
12. Comment on the casting, including gender, race, age, body types, and agility.
13. If you were to use a photograph or recording to sum up the production, what would it be?

Be sure to get a copy of the program. Read the director’s notes and any other material (like a summary of the play). These will help indicate the director’s interpretation of the play.

Remember to evaluate the performance on its own terms. Rather than what it did not do, examine what the performance attempted to do and how well it achieved its goals.

#### Tips

1. Always have your homework read, annotated, and be ready to ask and answer questions about it.
2. When emailing your instructor, always use a salutation (Dear...), identify yourself by your full name, and use a closing (Sincerely...).
- 3 Attend class punctually.
5. Get to know at least three other people in each of your classes.
6. Be familiar with Blackboard and all its features.
7. Visit the office hours of each of your instructor at least once per term.
8. Have a system for saving copies of all the papers you write for every class, either on your own computer or on a flash drive.
9. Use a calendar to keep track of all your deadlines and assignments.