

**“Shakespeare and Film: Thick Description”
English 482/682 Renaissance Literature
Section 7712/7713 Summer 2007 3 credits
Special Summer Session: 11 – 29 June 2007**

M. G. Aune
320D Minard Hall
231-7176

MTWThF 9.00-12.00
107 Morrill & 111 Morrill
Office Hours: 1.00-2.00 PM T &

Th and

m.aune@ndsu.edu

by appointment

website: <https://bb.ndsu.nodak.edu> & <http://www.ndsu.edu/ndsu/maune>

Objectives

The initial objective in this class is to understand Shakespeare’s plays as they are interpreted, transformed, adapted and otherwise altered by the medium of film. The plays were written to be performed, that is as texts to be seen and heard rather than read. Further, the medium of drama was accessible to a great range of the early modern population, literate and not. In these regards, film is not an alien form for Shakespeare. It is a highly visual and auditory medium that is generally available to a large and diverse audience.

This class is called thick description because of the comparatively short span of time we have, we will be examining four plays in-depth rather than a greater number in less detail. Our first task in this class is to gain an understanding of Shakespeare’s plays as visual/auditory texts. We will do this by reading the plays with a specific set of criteria in mind. We will read paying attention to visual cues such as explicit and implicit stage directions, settings, costumes, and props.

Our second objective in this class is to understand the medium of film and acquire a literacy in that medium that allows us to be critical about it. We will work to develop a vocabulary of critical terms for talking about film. We will do this through reading of critical material, classroom discussion and several homework assignments.

These two goals lead to a final: thinking about how we can be critical about Shakespeare on film as more than just a text to be discussed formally. We will strive to examine, discuss, and write about these films as films rather than simply new versions of the plays. Ideally, we will employ several basic critical approaches including feminist, psychoanalytic, and reception studies.

Requirements

The class will be conducted as a seminar with members taking turns leading discussions of films and the critical material we will read. On a typical day, one of you will show a clip from the film under consideration to begin the discussion.

Later in the class another student will lead the discussion of the critical essay assigned for the day. Details of specific assignments are noted below.

Grading Scale

Undergraduate

Reception Project 100 points A
20 Journal Entries 200 points B
Multi-media Essay 50 points C
Term Paper 200 points D

F

Total 550 points

Graduate

100-92 %
91-82 %
81-70 %
69-60 %
59-0%

Reception Project 100 points
20 Journal Entries 200 points
Multi-media Essay 50 points
Term Paper 300 points

Total 650 points

Texts

Shakespeare: Script, Stage, Screen, Bevington, et. al.

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. This includes work done for other courses used without informing that instructor or me. 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 not be accepted and receive a score of zero. Papers must be physically turned in at the beginning of the class in which they are due. No emailed or faxed papers will be accepted.

Attendance

Because this class is an advanced course and will be conducted as a seminar, prompt and regular attendance is crucial even on screening days. Each member of the class is responsible for being prepared and contributing to class discussion every day. Being prepared for class includes bringing the course texts, having read and annotated the assigned homework, and having prepared topics or questions for discussion. Failure to be prepared will result in your being marked absent. Leaving class early will also constitute an absence. If you are unable to attend class because of an unforeseen circumstance, 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.

Because this course is so brief, two absences will result in the loss of a full grade from your final grade. Three absences will result in a loss of two grades. Four will result in failure. In order to be considered present, you must be in class for the entire course meeting time, this includes screenings.

Paper Format

Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are to be typed, 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. Do not forget a title. Any papers longer than one page must have page numbers.

Journals

You will write twenty journal entries this semester, one entry for each of the nine films we will see and one entry each of the eight essays we will read. The other three journals may be on any course-related topic. The film journals are due the day after we screen the film. The essay journals are due the day we are to discuss the essay. (You may end up turning in more than one journal on a particular day.) Journals are to follow the paper format above and identify the text(s) being addressed. They should be no more than one page in length. In your journal, you are to respond thoughtfully to the essay assigned for that day or to the film screened the previous day. You are encouraged to express your opinion, but be sure to support it with quotations from the text(s) and discussion. These journals may contain your responses to class discussion or comments made on previous journals. You may also use the journal to explore potential term paper topics or test new critical approaches. You are welcome to use the first person. The journals are not as formal as term papers, but neither are they to be unedited thoughts off the top of your head. The journal should have a particular point or idea that it explores. Be sure to number your journals to keep track of how many you have written.

Reception Project

Barbara Hodgdon uses the term “expectational text” to describe her “private notions about the play and about performed Shakespeare, notions that I may not even recognize until I find them denied” (“Two *King Lear*s: Uncovering the Filmtext.” *Literature/Film Quarterly* 11.3: 143). For this paper, you will use reviews of a single film of a Shakespeare play to attempt to recover a sense of the “expectational text” associated with a given Shakespeare play. For your analysis of the reviews look for patterns across the reviews. For example you might focus on how the film gets compared to the play (or not compared); the reviewers’ attitude toward Shakespeare as a cultural formation, or the reviewers’ attitudes

toward film. The goal is to use the reviews to generate a description of what the reviewers assume a film of a Shakespeare text to do and to be.

You do not have to restrict yourself to one of the films we will be watching. Using the research databases available through the library, ProQuest, JSTOR, ProjectMuse, FirstSearch, etc., you must locate and read at least ten reviews of your film, at least two of which must be non-newspaper. These reviews may come from newspapers, magazines, academic journals, and/or reputable on-line journals such as *EMLS*. Most useful for this project and for your term paper will be the World Shakespeare Bibliography Online <<http://www.worldshakesbib.org/index.html>> You may log in with the username: MGAune and password: prospero. The advanced search feature will be the most useful. You may not use personal websites. The reviews of the film must be from its American or international theatrical release. You may not use reviews of the film on VHS or DVD. Basic information on the film's cast, crew, release dates, earnings, etc. can be found at the Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com). Your paper should be four to six pages long and include a bibliography of all the reviews you found in MLA or Chicago style. The project is due 18 June, in class.

Multi-Media Essay

This project will require you to use the XMAS (Cross Media Annotation System) to create an essay that analyzes a scene from one of the films we will watch. XMAS is installed in the computer cluster 111 Morrill. You may also download it and install it on your own computer from: <http://web.mit.edu/shakspere/xmas/moreinfo.html> I will enroll you and get you a password so that you can use the system. We will run through a tutorial on the system during the first week of class. The essay is to be three to five pages of text (not including the clip). The paper should provide a close filmic reading of a scene or part of a scene. It is a descriptive rather than an analytical project. The paper will be evaluated based on its attention to basic film analysis matters such as editing, sound, and mise en scene. You will not be able to cover everything in the scene so be sure to have a focus. It is better to cover one aspect in depth than several aspects briefly. The essay is due 25 June, in class.

Term Paper

Your term paper should be 2,500 to 3,000 words (undergraduate) or 3,000 to 4,000 words (graduate) in length. Double-spaced, typed, with one-inch margins and formatted and cited consistently using the style of your preference (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.). The paper should demonstrate your ability to both interact with the primary text(s) and with secondary sources. You may well have to resort to interlibrary loan to acquire the secondary sources needed for this paper. With that in mind, start early.

You have several options for this paper. You may take up the argument from one of the essays we have read, either extending it or challenging it. You may conduct a close, formalist reading of one or two films we have seen this term. This would involve careful attention to one or more filmic elements. Potential topics for close, formalist readings include focusing on gender, race, class, postcolonialism, or queer theory. A genre study would consider a particular film as representative or not representative of a particular film genre such as the western or film noir. You are welcome to explore the potential of XMAS more closely. Please see me if you choose to do so. You may contrast/compare two films of the same play, again following a careful filmic close reading. You may develop an idea that you have introduced in your journals. You may conduct a reception project that considers how a particular film was received in terms of its reviews, its persistence, and its profitability. The paper is due Tuesday 3 July in my office before noon.

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. In terms of grammar, spelling, and typography there are few, if any errors and none impair understanding. The work shows evidence of critical and original thinking. Ideas are clearly supported and explained.

B work is above average. It shows understanding of the given task and an understanding of the rules for writing as set out in the syllabus. In terms of grammar, spelling, and typography there are errors but none impair understanding. 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. In terms of grammar, spelling, and typography there are errors that impair understanding. 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. There are more than single grammar, spelling, and typographical errors that impair understanding. 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. There are numerous grammar, spelling and typographic errors that impair understanding. Thought and writing are disorganized and do not communicate an understanding of audience or genre.

Calendar (subject to change)

11 June Introductions, How to Watch Shakespeare on Film, How to Read Shakespeare for Film,

Read: Rothwell. "How the 20th Century..."

12 June Read: Chapters 4 & 5 in Bevington et al. and *Twelfth Night*

Screening: *Twelfth Night* (1996)

Discuss: *Twelfth Night*

13 June Read: Osborne. "Cutting Up..."

Discuss: *Twelfth Night*, Osborne essay

Evening Screening: *She's the Man* (2006) 6.00 PM

14 June Read: Richard Burt. "T(e)en Things I Hate About Girlene..."

Discuss: *She's the Man*, Burt essay

XMAS tutorial

15 June Read: *Romeo & Juliet*

Screening: *Romeo & Juliet* (1968)

18 June Read: Deborah Cartmell. "Franco Zeffirelli and Shakespeare"

Discuss: *R&J* (1968), Cartmell essay

Reception project due

Evening Screening: *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* (1996) 6.00 PM

19 June Read: Barbara Hodgdon. "*William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet:..*"; Close-Up: Baz Luhrmann in Bevington

Discuss: *R+J* (1996), Hodgdon essay

20 June Read: *Macbeth*

Screening: *Macbeth* (1971)

21 June Read: Robert F. Willson. "Fated Macbeths: The Film Director as God"

Discuss: *Macbeth* and Wilson essay

Evening Screening: *Throne of Blood* 6.00 PM

22 June Read: Jorgens "*Kurosawa's Throne of Blood...*"

Discuss: *Throne of Blood*, Jorgens essay

25 June Read: *Hamlet* & Close-Up: Laurence Olivier in Bevington et al.

Screening: *Hamlet* (1948)

Multi-media essay due

26 June Read: Neil Taylor. "The Films of *Hamlet*."

Discuss: *Hamlet* (1948) and Taylor essay

27 June Screening: *Hamlet* (1990)

28 June Discuss *Hamlet* (1990)

Evening Screening: *Hamlet* (2000) 6.00 PM

29 June Read: Peter Donaldson. "Hamlet Among the Pixelvisionaries ..."

Discuss *Hamlet* (2000) and Donaldson essay

Final Essay due in my office on or before 3 July noon.

Bibliography

These essays are available for download from the Assignments part of the Blackboard site.

Richard Burt. "T(e)en Things I Hate About Girlene Shakesploitation Flicks in the Late 1990s, or, Not So Fast Times at Shakespeare High." *Screening the Bard: Shakespearean Spectacle, Critical Theory, Film Practice*, Eds. Lisa Starks and Courtney Lehmann. American University Presses, 2001. 205–32.

Deborah Cartmell, "Franco Zeffirelli and Shakespeare," in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film*, ed. Russell Jackson, New York: Cambridge UP, 2000. 212-221.

Peter Donaldson. "Hamlet Among the Pixelvisionaries: Video, Art, Authenticity, and 'Wisdom' in Almercyda's *Hamlet*." In *A Concise Companion to Shakespeare on Screen*. Ed. Diane E. Henderson. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006. 216-37.

Barbara Hodgdon. "William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet: Everything's Nice in America?" *Shakespeare Survey* 52 (1999): 88-98.

Jack J. Jorgens. "Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*: Washizu and Miki Meet the Forest Spirit." *Literature/Film Quarterly* 11.3 (1983): 167-73.

Laurie Osborne. "Cutting Up Characters: The Erotic Politics of Trevor Nunn's *Twelfth Night*." In *Spectacular Shakespeare*, ed. Lehmann & Starks. 89-109.

Neil Taylor. "The Films of Hamlet." In Anthony Davies & Stanley Wells, eds. *Shakespeare and the Moving Image: The Plays on Film and Television*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994. 180-95.

Robert F. Willson. "Fated Macbeths: The Film Director as God" *Shakespeare-Jahrbuch* (1984): 164-67.

Books on Reserve at the Library

Pascale Aebischer, Edward J. Esche, & Nigel Wheale, eds. *Remaking Shakespeare: Performance Across Media, Genres, and Cultures*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Michael Anderegg. *Cinematic Shakespeare: (Genre and Beyond)*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003.

Stephen Buhler. *Shakespeare in the Cinema: Ocular Proof*. Albany State U of New York P, 2002.

Richard Burt, ed. *Shakespeare After Mass Media*. New York: Palgrave, 2002.

Richard Burt & Linda Boose, eds. *Shakespeare the Movie II: Popularizing the Plays on Film, TV, Video, and DVD*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Samuel Crowl. *Shakespeare at the Cineplex: The Kenneth Branagh Era*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio U P, 2003.

Sarah Hatchuel. *Shakespeare from Stage to Screen*. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2004.

Russell Jackson. *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000.

Jack J. Jorgens. *Shakespeare on Film*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1977.

Courtney Lehman & Lisa S. Starks, eds. *Spectacular Shakespeare: Critical Theory and Popular Cinema*. Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2002.

Courtney Lehman & Lisa S. Starks, eds. *The Reel Shakespeare: Alternative Cinema and Theory*. Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2002.

Courtney Lehman. *Shakespeare Remains: Theater to Film, Early Modern to Postmodern*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2002.

Roger Manvell. *Shakespeare and the Film*. New York: Praeger, 1971.

Kenneth S. Rothwell. *A History of Shakespeare on Screen*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004.

Remaking Shakespeare

Filmography

Hamlet (2000) FPL DVD;

Hamlet (1948) FPL DVD; TriCollege VHS

Hamlet (1990)

Kumonosu jô (Throne of Blood) (1957) FPL DVD

Macbeth (1971) FPL DVD; FPL VHS;

Romeo & Juliet (1968) FPL DVD; FPL VHS;

She's the Man (2006)

Twelfth Night (1996)

William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet (1996) FPL DVD; FPL VHS;

FPL: Fargo Public Library, TriCollege: TriCollege Film Library The Tri College Film Library catalogue may be found here: <<http://www.mnstate.edu/tcufilm/>>. Only faculty may borrow films, so if you'd like to borrow one or more let me know and I'll order it. It typically takes 24 hours to be delivered to NDSU. Some of these films are likely also available at local video rental establishments.