

“Shakespeare and Composition”

Honors 250/10615: Honors Composition II
 Spring 2010
 California University of Pennsylvania
 3 credits

TTh 9.30 – 10.45 Building A 144

M. G. Aune
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Description

The key idea driving Honors 250 is authority: how to recognize it, use it, and establish it. In writing, authority rests first on clarity and structure -- being able to establish a thesis and support it (skills covered in Honors 150). Second, authority rests on the quality of information that supports the thesis. Quality information requires thorough research and careful appraisal of that research.

In simplest terms, Honors 250 concentrates on locating, evaluating, and using evidence to support thesis statements. In other words, the foci of this course are the process (gathering and evaluating) and production (synthesis and writing) of basic, college-level research. In this course, we will use Shakespeare’s plays as a means of practicing and acquiring these writing and critical thinking skills. Reading Shakespeare has long been seen as a necessary part of a liberal arts education. The questions and problems that his plays and their study pose are still relevant to our lives and provide opportunities to re-examine our cultural values about the place of the individual in society, the role of religion, the importance of gender, and many others.

The course will center on the reading and discussion of three plays and a film that represent the range of Shakespeare’s output. We will also spend time in a computer classroom practicing formal writing skills, on-line and library research, and revision and re-writing.

Texts (available at the campus bookshop)

William Shakespeare, *King John*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Macbeth* (Folger editions)

Diana Hacker, *A Pocket Style Manual* (5th ed., 2009 MLA Update)

A dictionary, bring to every class

A flash drive dedicated to schoolwork

Grading	Scale			University Interpretation
Paper 1	100 points	100–94%	A	Superior Achievement
Paper 2	100 points	90–93%	A-	
Paper 3	150 points	87–89%	B+	Above Average
10 Quizzes	100 points	84-86%	B	
Editing Journal	90 points	80-83%	B-	
Portfolio	50 points	77-79%	C+	Average
Total	590 points	74-76%	C	

All scores will be posted on the Blackboard gradebook.	70-73%	C-	
	60-69%	D	Below Average
	Below 60	F	Failure

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.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities reserve the right to self-identify; must register with the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) to receive services; will provide the appropriate notice from OSD for accommodations which specifically involve faculty.

Requests for approval for reasonable accommodations should be directed to OSD.

Approved accommodations will be recorded on the ODS Accommodation Approval notice and provided to the student. Students are expected to adhere to the ODS procedures for self-identifying, providing documentation and requesting accommodations in a timely manner. The OSD is located in Azorsky 105 and the telephone number is 724.938.5781.

Academic Honesty

According to the University Bulletin, “[t]ruth and honesty are necessary prerequisites for all education, and students who attempt to improve their grades or class standing through any form of academic dishonesty may be penalized by disciplinary action ranging from a verbal reprimand to a failing grade in the course or dismissal from the University. If the situation appears to merit a severe penalty, the professor will refer the matter to the appropriate dean or to the Provost. The student may appeal the penalty as outlined above with the Academic Integrity Committee hearing appeals above the level of Dean.”

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, per University policy, may result in failure of the course or dismissal from the University.

Late Papers

Late papers will not be accepted. All assignments are due, in paper form, at the beginning of class. Anything turned in after will not be accepted.

Attendance and Participation

According to the University Catalogue, “[r]egular class attendance is a prerequisite to successful class performance.” 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 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 are more than fifteen minutes late to a class meeting or if you leave early, you will be marked absent.

Participation includes not only contributing to class discussion, it also covers prompt attendance, listening and responding constructively to your classmates, attending class prepared to discuss the readings, and bringing your books and writing material to every class meeting. If you attend class but are unprepared to discuss the homework, or do not have your books or writing material, you will be marked absent. If you accumulate more than three absences, you may lose one letter grade from your final grade. If you miss more than four classes, you will not pass the class. Missing a scheduled conference is equivalent to missing two class meetings. The syllabus does not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. If you are not present, you are absent. (This also applies to those who add the class after its first meeting.) Please do not bring doctors’ note or other such material. The only exception is if you must miss a class because of a university-related activity. In this case, your coach or supervisor must contact me in writing at least one week before the absence. A sign-in sheet will be distributed at the beginning, and sometimes again at the end, of class for you to record your presence. Absences will be recorded in the Blackboard Gradebook.

Cell Phones

Please turn off cell phones before class begins. If you are expecting a very important phone call, turn your phone to silent mode. If you use your phone during class, you will be asked to leave and marked absent for that day.

Paper Format

Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are to be typewritten, 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 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 (Shakespeare and other readings) and any terms and concepts discussed in previous classes. The quizzes will be handed out at the beginning of class and collected after fifteen minutes. Quizzes may not be made up.

Writing Narrative

This is to be a one page, double spaced account of your writing process. In narrative style, describe how you set about writing a paper for a college course. Imagine the paper is due on a Thursday. Describe when you start the paper, how you start it, and when you finish it. Include where you work (computer lab? in your room? Library?), how you save your work (on you computer? N drive?

flash drive? other?), where do you print? Be sure to include any specific strategies you use such as brainstorming, outlining, asking a peer to review, proofreading, the Writing Center. This is to be an accurate description of what you do, not what you think you should do or what you want me to think that you do.

This paper will count for twenty of the fifty possible points in your portfolio.

Paper 1 Review

For this paper, you will write a four to five page review of the Pittsburgh Public Theater's staging of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This will not be an informative or descriptive review. Based on your knowledge and your interpretation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, you will present a critical analysis of the interpretation the production presents.

The paper will have two parts. The first part should begin with a brief paragraph that communicates basic information about the play: the date you saw it, the location, the company, the director and other crew, the lead actors, and anything else that your reader needs to know to understand your review.

The second, and longest, part of the review will present your analysis of the director's interpretation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. There are several strategies for doing this. One is to begin with the themes of the play and ask how the production treats these themes. Does it prefer one more than another? Does it ignore one completely? (For example, imagine a version of *Macbeth* that emphasizes the role of the Weird Sisters and makes Macbeth seem like a puppet without free will. How would this fit with your own view of the play?) A second strategy is to look at the performance cruces within the play. Compared to your own idea of a particular moment or element, how did the production portray it? (Imagine a *Macbeth* that has the Weird Sisters played by old men. How would you evaluate that decision?) A third strategy is to look at what the production leaves out and/or what it adds. How does this affect the play? Productions will sometimes change the setting (*Macbeth* in Brooklyn in the 1970s) or emphasize certain characters by giving them more lines. It is generally best to think about how the performance cruces and any changes affect the themes of the play, in other words, use a combination of all three strategies.

As a part of this analysis, your paper should acknowledge and identify your audience and show your authority by quoting from the play.

Your thesis statement for this paper will present your evaluation of the director's interpretation. Avoid writing about acting style or quality. These are important, but very difficult to quantify.

This assignment is designed to demonstrate your ability to interpret a performance of a Shakespeare play, to establish and support a thesis, to establish a sense of authority, and to utilize quotations from Shakespeare. It will be scored on these criteria as well as how well it follows directions and format rules.

As with all papers, this paper should follow all the usual rules of format. The day the paper is due, you must bring a paper copy of your completed paper, an electronic copy, and the rubric. If your paper is not complete at this time, ten points will be deducted from the score. The process of this paper will include a first draft, a side shadow, and a peer review (these last two done in-class). Failure to complete one of these elements will result in the loss of ten points from your final score, up to a total of thirty.

Paper 2 Source Analysis

As did his peers, Shakespeare was not concerned with what we might consider factual history when he wrote his history plays. He used the same sources for nearly all his plays. In some cases, he stayed so close to his source that we might consider his plays plagiarized. In other cases, he freely

constructed events and characters, rearranged chronologies, and ignored geography. For this paper, you will locate Shakespeare's sources for *King John*, locate an instance where he deviated from his source, and present an explanation as to why he did so. In simplest terms, your goal in this paper is to help your reader understand why Shakespeare made a particular choice. The paper will be a researched, argumentative paper.

The paper will be four to five pages long, use quotations from the play and its sources to support its thesis. These quotations are to be cited in-text following the rules for quoting Shakespeare. The paper must have an MLA-style bibliography (works cited page) that lists the text or texts that you used. Rules for MLA style are in *A Pocket Style Manual* (sec. 28-33, esp. 32).

As with Paper 1, the process of this paper will include a complete first draft, a side shadow, and a peer review. Failure to complete one of these elements will result in the loss of ten points from your final score, up to a total of thirty. The day the paper is due, you must bring a paper copy of your completed paper, an electronic copy, and the rubric. If your paper is not complete at this time, ten points will be deducted from the score. As with Paper 1, you will sideshadow, peer review, and revise your paper during the class period.

For tips on generating an argumentative thesis statement, see: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/> Or *A Pocket Style Manual* (sec. 28).

Paper 3 Shakespeare's Biography

For this paper, you will research and analyze one aspect of Shakespeare's life that has caused disagreement, if not controversy over the years. Topics might include, Shakespeare's Catholicism, the lost years, the authorship of a particular play, the claims of the anti-stratfordians; autobiographical elements of his sonnets, or why, in his will, Shakespeare left his second best bed to his wife. The research will necessarily be secondary, though much primary material, such as Shakespeare's will, is available on line. Your paper must pose a clear research question, answer the question and support the answer to that question with evidence from your research.

The paper will be five to seven pages. It is designed to demonstrate your ability to establish a thesis, support it with researched evidence, locate and evaluate information in the library and on-line, establish your authority as a writer, quote, paraphrase, and summarize, and use MLA style consistently and clearly. It should use at least five sources, no more than two of which can be on-line.

As with Paper 1, the process of this paper will include a complete first draft, a side shadow, and a peer review. Failure to complete one of these elements will result in the loss of ten points from your final score, up to a total of thirty. The day the paper is due, you must bring a paper copy of your completed paper, an electronic copy, and the rubric. If your paper is not complete at this time, ten points will be deducted from the score. As with Paper 1, you will sideshadow, peer review, and revise your paper during the class period.

Editing Journal

This is to be kept in a blue book. I will make comments on each paper you turn in. After you receive a paper back, make an entry for that paper in the blue book. The entry should be divided into four parts. First it should describe any grammar/spelling/punctuation/usage/format errors and their corrections. I will note these with check marks in the margin of your paper and as a category on the rubric. Second, it should note any problems with MLA citations or the bibliography page. Third, you should write two or three sentences describing what you would do differently if you were to re-write the paper. I expect you to refer to your writing narrative and to the side shadowing you have done on that paper. The more specific these sentences are the better. Do not write that you need to avoid there/their/they're errors. Describe how you will do this. For your

second and third papers, I expect you to refer back to your previous entries. Fourth and last, write two or three sentences about how the peer review process did or did not help you improve your paper.

The goal of the editing journal is to create a critical record of your own writing so that you can better address your strengths and weaknesses. You will have an entry for each of the three papers this term. Your score will be determined by the comprehensiveness and organization of your journal. I will collect and check the journals periodically so be sure to bring it to class every day.

Portfolio

This is due on the last day of class. It should contain each of the three papers that you wrote, with my comments on them and the rubric. It should also contain your writing narrative, completed editing journal, and all of the quizzes. Most importantly, it should have a one to two page personal statement, following the format rules, in which you describe how your writing has progressed from the first paper to the last. You must cite specific examples of improvement or lack of improvement from your papers. Your editing journal and writing narrative will be helpful in composing this. Please assemble this in a paper folder, do not use three ring binders. Except for quizzes, points will be deducted for any missing items.

Calendar

I expect you to have the assigned homework completed on the day that it is assigned on the calendar below. I reserve the right to make changes in the calendar, but will give you advanced notice.

19 January Introductions

21 January *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Act 1

26 January *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Act 2

28 January *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Act 3; Writing Narrative Due

2 February *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Act 3 & 4

4 February *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Act 5

9 February *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (film)

11 February *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (film)

16 February Paper 1 due

18 February *King John* Act 1

23 February Update Editing Journal and conferences

25 February *King John* Act 2

2 March *King John* Act 3; turn in Editing Journals

4 March *King John* Acts 4 & 5

8-12 March Spring Break

16 March Paper 2 Due

18 March *Macbeth* Act 1

23 March *Macbeth* Act 2
25 March *Macbeth* Act 3 & 4

30 March *Macbeth* Act 5
1 April No class, research day

6 April Shakespeare's biography, myths, anti-strafordians
8 April Shakespeare's biography

13 April Shakespeare's biography
15 April Paper 3 due

20 April Update Editing journal, assemble portfolio
22 April Portfolios due

Tips for University Success

1. Always have your homework assignment 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. Do not wait until the last minute to write and print your papers.
4. 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.

Standard Academic Usage

1. Titles of books, films, magazines, websites and newspapers are in italics: *Macbeth*, *Amazon.com*, *New York Times*, *The Godfather*. See *PSM* sec. 23c. Use quotation marks only around titles of short works such as poems, articles and reviews in magazines, or chapters in books. See *PSM* sec. 20b.
2. Write out all numbers, cardinal and ordinal, that are two words or fewer: one hundred, 352. The exceptions are dates, addresses, the time of day, percentages, Roman numerals, and decimals. See *PSM* sec. 23b.
3. Put all foreign words in italics, *mise en scène*. See *PSM* sec. 23c.
4. The first time you refer to a person, use his or her full name; after that use only the last name.
5. Avoid slang, clichés, and sexist language. See *PSM* sec. 9.
6. Always assume that you should use third person (he, she, it, one) rather than the first person (I, we) or second person (you), unless you check with the instructor first.
7. Place punctuation inside quotation marks. E.g. Shakespeare wrote, "To be or not to be." Not, Shakespeare wrote, "To be or not to be". See *PSM* 20d.
8. Use quotation marks only around words that are direct quotation. Do not use them for irony or emphasis.

9. Be sure that pronouns match their antecedent in number and gender. E.g. A critic must defend his or her negative review of the play. Or Critics must defend their negative reviews of the play.
Not: A critic must defend their negative review of the play.

Tips for Reading Shakespeare

Be patient. Shakespeare's English (Early Modern English, we speak Modern English) is different enough to be difficult, but similar enough to get the hang of pretty quickly. Always read the introduction to the play. It will give you general ideas about the play and usually alert you to difficult passages. Give yourself enough time to read everything at least twice. Try to read the first time without looking at the footnotes. Keep a pencil in your hand to mark or underline difficult passages or items of interest.

Much of Shakespeare is written in verse. It was meant to be spoken out loud. Try reading out loud and listening to yourself.

Your edition of the play is well-glossed and annotated. But its primary audience is high school teachers, so often the notes are sanitized so as not to shock teenage readers. Therefore it is often useful to double-check definitions. The best dictionary for Shakespeare is the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED). It is a huge, fifteen volume set in the reference section of the library. It is also available on-line via the library's homepage.

Rasmussen's Rule: If you cannot understand a particular passage, it is probably about sex.

McGuire's Dictum: Always remember you are reading playscripts intended to be spoken, not read silently.

Tips for Writing about Shakespeare

There are standard practices that nearly everyone follows when writing about Shakespeare and literature in general. I have briefly outlined them below and I expect you to learn and follow them.

When briefly summarizing or describing the action in a particular scene, always write in the present tense. "In the closet scene, Hamlet is speaking to his mother, unaware that Polonius is hiding behind an arras."

When you use a quote from a play, cite the quote's location in parentheses after the quote. Give the act, the scene and the line numbers in Arabic numerals, all separated by periods.

"To be or not to be" (3.1.55). Do not use page numbers.

If the quote is longer than four lines, set it off an extra five spaces on the left and do not use quotation marks.

To be or not to be, that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take up arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing, end them. (3.1.55-59)

Do not write about Shakespeare as if he were a person we can know and judge. We know he wrote the plays, but not much else. *Merchant of Venice* may have strong anti-Semitic elements in it, but we can't say Shakespeare the person was anti-Semitic. We do not know what his motives were in writing the plays so choose your words carefully. Analyze the plays, not the author.

APSCUF is the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties. We uphold the highest standards of teaching, scholarly inquiry, and service. We are an organization that is committed to promoting excellence in all that we do to ensure that our students receive the highest quality education.