

# English 324-001

## English Renaissance Drama

Fall 2012  
Tuesdays 4:30-7:10 PM  
Innovation Hall 131

Professor: Erika Lin  
Email: [elin1 \(at\) gmu \(dot\) edu](mailto:elin1@gmu.edu)  
Mailbox: Department of English, Robinson A 487  
Office: Robinson A 414  
Office Hours (please email in advance): Tuesdays 7:10-8 PM and by appointment  
Course Website: via login at <http://mymason.gmu.edu>  
Course Listserv: [Lin324-L@listserv.gmu.edu](mailto:Lin324-L@listserv.gmu.edu)  
Library Databases: <http://library.gmu.edu> (Problems? See [http://lso.gmu.edu/ezproxy\\_faq.html](http://lso.gmu.edu/ezproxy_faq.html) .)

Note about this syllabus: As the semester progresses, we may need to make adjustments to the syllabus. Any updates will be announced in class and/or over email.

Last updated: 8/27/12

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### Course Description

This course will examine the theatre of Shakespeare's contemporaries. Disguise, revenge, crossdressing, illicit sex, stage violence, plays-within-plays—all feature prominently in the exciting works of playwrights such as Marlowe, Jonson, Middleton, and Dekker. Our course will begin by exploring theoretical issues that arise when we consider the relationship between oral performance and printed text. We will then read a variety of Renaissance plays with an eye to their theatrical and cultural contexts. Detailed literary analysis will be complemented by discussion of issues such as gender and sexuality, medicine, religion, witchcraft, seasonal festivity, and popular culture. In addition to formal writing assignments, students will use the course website to post analytical responses to the readings. Other requirements may include a field trip to see a live production at a local theatre. Active class participation is required. No background in Renaissance literature necessary, though prior experience with Shakespeare is a plus.

By the end of the semester, you should have achieved the following “learning objectives”: (1) familiarity with the literary structures and language typical of early modern plays; (2) familiarity with the cultural and historical contexts that informed early modern plays; (3) familiarity with the impact of theatrical practices on early modern plays in performance; (4) ability to produce original critical analysis of early modern plays; (5) experience locating, reading, and analyzing early modern primary sources; and (6) improvement of close reading and critical thinking skills

# Texts

## Books

Books have been ordered through the GMU Bookstore. If you already own a copy of one or more of the texts for this class, be sure to check with me before you use it. There are many different editions of texts from earlier periods, and it's important that we all use reputable ones.

- Dekker, Thomas. *The Shoemaker's Holiday*. Ed. R. L. Smallwood and Stanley Wells. Revels Plays. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1999. [ISBN: 9780719030994]
- *Everyman and Mankind*. Ed. Douglas Bruster and Eric Rasmussen. Arden Early Modern Drama. London: A&C Black, 2009. [ISBN: 9781904271628]
- Kyd, Thomas. *The Spanish Tragedy*. Ed. David Bevington. Revels Student Editions. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1996. [ISBN: 9780719043444]
- Lyly, John. *Galatea and Midas*. Ed. George K. Hunter and David Bevington. Revels Plays. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2008. [ISBN: 9780719078279]
- Marlowe, Christopher. *Doctor Faustus: A- and B-texts (1604, 1616)*. Ed. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen. Revels Plays. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1993. [ISBN: 9780719016431]
- [Middleton, Thomas, and/or Cyril Tourneur?]. *The Revenger's Tragedy*. Ed. R. A. Foakes. Revels Student Editions. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1996. [ISBN: 9780719043758]
- Shakespeare, William. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Ed. Peter Holland. The Oxford Shakespeare. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008. [ISBN: 9780199535866]
- *Three Jacobean Witchcraft Plays: Sophonsiba, The Witch, The Witch of Edmonton*. Ed. Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge. Revels Plays Companion Library. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1989. [ISBN: 9780719019531]

Written assignments should follow MLA style for bibliographies, footnotes, and in-text citations. If you are unfamiliar with this format, you may want to purchase a copy of the most recent edition of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, available online at <http://www.mlahandbook.org>.

## Supplementary Readings

The following supplementary readings will be available on the course website. Please be sure to bring these readings to class with you on the days that we discuss them.

### Primary Sources

- Handout on Shakespeare and Material Texts (facsimiles and transcriptions of original texts—there is no need to print this out, but it will be available online for your reference)
- Anonymous. "George-a-Greene, The Pinner of Wakefield." *Robert Greene*. Ed. Thomas H. Dickinson. The Mermaids Series. London: T. Fisher Unwin; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909. 399-452.
- Horsman, E. A., ed. *The Pinder of Wakefield*. Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1956. Excerpts. [jest book]

### Secondary Sources

- Barish, Jonas. "Puritans and Proteans." *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1981. 80-106.

- Carroll, William C., ed. "Discourses of Witchcraft" and "News from Scotland." *Macbeth: Texts and Contexts*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001. 300-7 and 313-25.
- Hutton, Ronald. "The Ritual Year in England, c.1490-c.1540." *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year, 1400-1700*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994. 5-48.
- Knutson, Roslyn Lander. *The Repertory of Shakespeare's Company, 1594-1613*. Fayetteville: U of Arkansas P, 1991. 20-54 and 213-16.
- McLeod, Randall [aka. Random Cloud]. "'The very names of the Persons': Editing and the Invention of Dramatick Character." *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*. Ed. David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass. New York: Routledge, 1991. 88-96.
- Orgel, Stephen. "What is a Text?" *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*. Ed. David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass. New York: Routledge, 1991. 83-87.
- Smith, Bruce R., ed. "Sexuality," Crooke's *Microcosmographia*, "Eroticism, Homoeroticism, Paneroticism," and "Clothing and Disguise." *Twelfth Night: Texts and Contexts*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001. 183-85, 195-202, and 237-39.
- Streitberger, W. R. "Personnel and Professionalization." *A New History of Early English Drama*. Ed. John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan. New York: Columbia UP, 1997. 337-55.
- Wiles, David. "The Vice from *Mankind* to *Merchant of Venice*." *Shakespeare's Clown: Actor and Text in the Elizabethan Playhouse*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987. 1-10 and 192-93.

## Schedule

### UNIT I: Background and Theoretical Problems

#### Tu 8/28 First Day of Class

Introduction to the Course

Handout: "Shakespeare and Material Texts"

#### Sa 9/1 Group A, Response Paper 1 due

#### Tu 9/4 Material Texts and Theatre History

Orgel, "What is a Text?"

McLeod, "'The very names of the Persons'"

Knutson, excerpt from *Repertory of Shakespeare's Company*

Streitberger, "Personnel and Professionalization"

#### Sa 9/8 Group B, Response Paper 1 due

### UNIT II: Key Historical Contexts

#### Tu 9/11 Gender, Sexuality, and Crossdressing

Lyly, *Galatea*

Excerpts from back of Smith's edition of *Twelfth Night*

#### Sa 9/15 Group C, Response Paper 1 due

**Tu 9/18 Religion and Antitheatricalism**

Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus* (read B-text; compare with A-text)

Barish, "Puritans and Proteans" from *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*

**Sa 9/22 Group A, Response Paper 2 due**

**UNIT III: Popular Genres and Theatrical Practices**

**Tu 9/25 Morality Plays and the Vice Figure**

*Mankind*

Wiles, "The Vice from *Mankind* to *Merchant of Venice*"

**Th 9/27 ESSAY #1 DUE ONLINE**

**Sa 9/29 Group B, Response Paper 2 due**

**Tu 10/2 Commercial Theatre: Play and Work**

Dekker, *The Shoemaker's Holiday*

Hutton, "The Ritual Year"

**Tu 10/9 No class - Columbus Day**

Monday classes meet today; no Tuesday classes

**Sa 10/13 Group C, Response Paper 2 due**

**Tu 10/16 Ballads, Jest Books, and Folk Heroes**

*George a Greene*

Excerpts from *The Pinder of Wakefield* jest book

**Sa 10/20 Group A, Response Paper 3 due**

**Tu 10/23 Witchcraft Beliefs and Pamphlets**

Dekker, Ford, and Rowley, *The Witch of Edmonton*

Excerpts from the back of Carroll's edition of *Macbeth*

**Th 10/25 ESSAY #2 DUE ONLINE**

**Sa 10/27 Group B, Response Paper 3 due**

**UNIT IV: Revenge Tragedy: Spectacle and Spectatorship**

**Tu 10/30 Plays-Within-Plays and Audience Interpretation**

Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*

**Sa 11/3 Group C, Response Paper 3 due**

**Tu 11/6 Sex, Violence, and Stage Spectacle**

*The Revenger's Tragedy*

**Tu 11/13 Interlude: Special Activities**

Group Scene Rehearsals

Lecture by Prof. Dennis Kennedy (Trinity College Dublin), “The Culture of the Spectator”

**UNIT V: Performance in Practice**

**Tu 11/20 No class (credit for field trip)**

**Tu 11/27 GROUP SCENE PERFORMANCES**

**W 11/28 - Su 12/2 Field Trip**

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Shakespeare Theatre Company

**Tu 12/4 Last Day of Class**

Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (text and performance)

Summary and Review

Course Evaluations

**Th 12/6 FINAL ESSAY DUE ONLINE**

## Requirements

### Readings

All readings are due at the beginning of the first session during which we discuss a given text. For readings from our course website, please print them out in hardcopy form. Studies have shown that, compared to viewing a document on the screen, reading a hardcopy improves what you remember and absorb. In addition, be sure to read with a pen or pencil in your hand, and jot down notes and questions during the process. This technique will allow you to be a more active reader. You should bring all textbooks and/or readings with you to class on the days that we discuss them, and come prepared with your interpretations, comments, and questions about specific passages.

### Reading Assignments and Analytical Response Papers

Each week a group of you will write a short critical analysis of the reading, and you will post it on our course website no later than 11:59 PM on the preceding Saturday. These responses should be 500-600 words long (approximately 1 single-spaced page), and they must contain quotations and other specific references to the texts under consideration. Feel free to include questions on the reading—these responses are relatively informal in style even though they should involve serious critical engagement with the material. You will then print out other people's responses, mark them up with your questions and comments, and come to class prepared to discuss them. (NOTE: I will expect you to bring all relevant materials with you to class each time, including not only textbooks but also all postings and supplementary readings for the week). Papers will be graded on a done/not-done basis, but points will be deducted if your paper is too short, does not include

specific quotations and references from the readings, or fails to demonstrate intellectual engagement with the texts.

## **Essays**

In addition to your weekly response papers, you will also write three longer papers of approximately 7-8 pages each. These exercises will hone your critical thinking, close reading, and analytical writing skills. In addition, they will familiarize you with early modern printing conventions and library resources relevant to the study of texts from this period. The essays in the course will require you to use the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) as well as primary sources from the Literature Online (LION) database and the Early English Books Online (EEBO) database. You may also be asked to use transcribed manuscript sources from the Records of Early English Drama (REED) online. I will be very strict about the kind of methodology I want you to use, but you will have considerable scope in your choice of plays and research topics.

## **In-class Scene Performances**

One of the best ways to learn about early modern drama is to actually perform scenes from the plays. To that end, I will split the class into small groups and ask you to prepare a scene for presentation in class. You will be required to memorize your lines and rehearse with your group outside of regular class times, but acting talent is not required. What is most important is the amount of thought and effort that goes into your theatrical choices. After performing each scene, you will be asked to articulate not only why you made certain choices but also their effect on interpretations of the play.

## **Field Trip**

The Shakespeare Theatre Company, located in Washington, D.C., is performing *A Midsummer Night's Dream* this year. As part of this course, we will organize a field trip to see the play. Tickets are normally up to \$105 per person, but I will attempt to arrange a group discount. Note that the Shakespeare Theatre Company performs at more than one venue. This show will be at the Sidney Harman Hall. For directions and more information, go to <http://www.shakespearetheatre.org>.

## **Contributions to the Class**

Active class participation is essential to this course. The classroom should be a safe space where where we can all try out new ideas and take risks in our thinking. I expect students to be respectful of each other's opinions, to offer comments and questions that are constructive, and to help one another with the labor of scholarship. Think of your participation in this class as a contribution to a group endeavor, where we will work as a team towards our intellectual goals.

## **Policies**

### **Grading**

This course will use "plus and minus" grades (A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, etc.) rather than straight letter grades (A, B, C, etc.) Note: In-class exercises, workshops, etc. cannot be made up. You will

receive a zero for any such work that you miss due to absences. In addition, you must complete all major assignments (e.g. essays, exams, final projects) in order to receive a passing grade for the class. Final grades will be calculated as follows, and any penalty for attendance problems will be deducted from the total:

25% Essay #1  
25% Essay #2  
20% Essay #3  
15% Response Papers  
10% Scene Performances  
5% Contributions to the Class

## **Attendance**

*Attendance is very, very, very, very important!* This is a discussion-based class, so without you there is no class. You may miss two class meetings without penalty for any reason. No documentation will be necessary. However, these absences include medical or family emergencies, so use them wisely, in case you get sick unexpectedly later in the semester. All subsequent absences will be considered unexcused. Students with 1 unexcused absence will be graded a third of a grade lower for the course (for example, a B+ gets lowered to a B); students with 2 unexcused absences will be graded two-thirds of a grade lower for the course (a B+ becomes a B-); students with 3 unexcused absences will be graded a full grade lower for the course (a B+ becomes a C+); students with more than 3 unexcused absences will fail the course.

*Attendance is also required at the field trips, which may be scheduled outside of regular class times. Missing field trips will count toward your quota of allowed absences. Students who cannot attend a particular field trip as part of our discounted group arrangement may be responsible for the price of any tickets previously ordered and may have to pay for alternate tickets on their own at regular prices.*

If you will be absent for religious reasons or because of participation in athletics, student government, or other university-sanctioned events this semester, please inform me about your situation during the first week of class. In addition, I must receive written notice of the specific date of any anticipated absences at least one week prior to the event itself.

Tardiness will also affect your grade: if you arrive late or leave early, your attendance will be recorded as the fraction of the class session that you were actually here. (E.g. Showing up halfway through the class session on four different occasions is equivalent to two absences.) So be here and be on time!

## **Late Assignments**

All assignments must be turned in on time. If you have a medical or other emergency, talk to me as soon as possible about it, and we can discuss alternative arrangements. Otherwise, though, no extensions will be granted! *If you are absent from class for any reason (whether excused or unexcused), you must email me your assignment on the day that it is due unless I have given you permission to do otherwise.* Send all email attachments in Word or RTF format. I reserve the right to refuse to grade assignments that are late because of unexcused absences. In cases where I agree to grade such assignments, I will deduct a full letter grade for each week that an assignment is late.

## **Technology Requirements**

*Laptops, cell phones, and other portable electronic devices may only be used in class for course-related purposes. Inappropriate use of technology may result in a ban on all such devices.* Short assignments submitted electronically should be cut-and-pasted into the appropriate field. Longer assignments should be attached in Rich-Text (RTF) format or Word (.doc or .docx) format. Announcements will be made via email, so you will need to check your GMU account frequently or have it forwarded to another account that you do check. Questions or problems regarding technology should be discussed with me during the first week of classes.

## **Enrollment**

Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes. The last day to add classes this semester is Sept. 4. The last day to drop classes this semester is Sept. 28. After the last day to drop, withdrawing from this class requires the approval of the dean and is only allowed for nonacademic reasons. Undergraduate students may choose to exercise a selective withdrawal. See the Schedule of Classes for selective withdrawal procedures.

## **Honor Code and Plagiarism**

George Mason University has an Honor Code, which requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing are all prohibited. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee. See <http://honorcode.gmu.edu> for more detailed information.

The English Department's Plagiarism Statement: "Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinion, or factual information from another person without giving that person credit. Writers give credit through the use of accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or end notes; a simple listing of books and articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in an academic setting."

In other words, the work you submit for this course is expected to be your own. If you summarize factual information or if you paraphrase or refer to someone else's ideas (even the ideas of someone else in this class), you must properly acknowledge your sources using MLA citation format. Misrepresenting somebody else's work as your own will result in failure of this course and severe discipline by the University. Work that is your own but that has been submitted for credit to more than one class will be considered plagiarism for the purposes of this course, unless you have obtained my permission and that of all other instructors prior to handing in the work.

## **Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities are welcome in this course, and I will do everything in my power to accommodate your needs. Please let me know about your situation as soon as possible, and call the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at (703) 993-2474 so that your academic accommodations will be official. The ODS is located in Student Union Building I, Room 2500. For more information, visit their website at <http://ods.gmu.edu/>.

## Diversity

The diversity of our student body is an asset to learning. I will expect you to be respectful of identities and experiences that differ from your own, whether or not they are officially protected by law. For more on George Mason's diversity statement, go to <http://ctfe.gmu.edu/professional-development/mason-diversity-statement/>.

## Resources

**The Oxford English Dictionary (OED)** (<http://dictionary.oed.com/>): the standard dictionary for literary scholarship; also gives examples about how a word's usage has changed over time. Use this for your papers. Unless you are working on an on-campus computer, you will need to login to the GMU Library website (<http://library.gmu.edu>) in order to access the OED.

**The Schoenberg Center for Electronic Text and Image (SCETI)** (<http://sceti.library.upenn.edu/>): facsimiles of original playtexts and other documents from the Renaissance through the nineteenth century at the University of Pennsylvania, plus tutorials to learn how to use these materials.

**University Writing Center** (<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>): all kinds of free writing help and advice, including one-on-one tutoring sessions in person and online. Be sure to make an appointment well in advance of your deadline since they get pretty busy at certain times of year. For more information, visit their website or call (703) 993-1200.

**Jack Lynch's Grammar and Style Guide** (<http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Writing/>): fast, witty, online advice about style, grammar, and mechanics from an English professor at Rutgers-Newark.

**Counseling and Psychological Services** (<http://counseling.gmu.edu/>): confidential and free individual counseling, support groups, and workshops on such topics as stress management, eating issues, test-taking anxiety, and building better relationships--all to help you develop greater understanding about yourself and others and to enhance your personal well-being and academic performance. Call them at (703) 993-2380, or stop by the office in Student Union Building I, Room 3129.