**Sample description & syllabus for a writing-intensive course**

**Engl. 472 (WI): Studies in Shakespeare**

**Course Objectives, Procedures, Policies and Required Texts:**

Paying homage to the power of Shakespeare's art, Virginia Woolf once wrote: "If ever a human being got his work expressed completely, it was Shakespeare. If ever a mind was incandescent, unimpeded, [...] it was Shakespeare's mind." This course sets out to study the dramatic art of that gifted and incandescent writer. But, unlike Woolf, we will not examine Shakespeare simply as some unique genius, who transcended the social and political concerns of his own day, arriving at a serene vision of truth to last throughout the ages. Rather, we will look at Shakespeare as an artist keenly interested in the momentous social, economic, and political changes that characterized his own world as it moved into the early modern period. We will consider how the timelessness of Shakespeare's art--its continuing ability to speak to new generations of readers--may, paradoxically, result from its very imbeddedness in its own historical moment, its own culture, and the issues that emerged during the early modern period. Our contemporary world still grapples with the issues that catapulted Shakespeare's world toward the threshold of the modern period--issues concerning gender and sexuality, social class and economic change, authority and rebellion, tyranny and justice, geopolitical power and the domination of racialized "others." This course draws upon the latest developments in Shakespearen scholarship and criticism to illustrate the wide range of ways that Shakespeare's texts may be read, enjoyed, and taught today.

Writing-Intensive Requirement

Because this course fulfills one of your writing-intensive requirements, it will use writing extensively to help you explore the readings for the course, engage them actively, and improve your skills as a sophisticated writer, who is experienced in addressing a specific audience for a particular purpose using prose that is concise, clear and graceful. Hence, I will ask you to do some informal writing about all the plays, criticism, and historical scholarship we read; I will also ask you to revise each of your major writing assignments after I have offered you suggestions for revision.

Procedures

Through lecture, discussion, and group collaboration we will read and respond to Shakespeare's plays, compare filmed adaptations, and explore some recent criticism and theory in Shakespearean studies. We will use writing, research, and discussion throughout the course to deepen our enjoyment of Shakespeare's dramatic art and to develop our skills as readers of literary criticism and as producers of our own critical responses to the plays. The success of the course depends upon how fully each of us invests ourselves in the role of teacher/learner. I extend my appreciation to you in advance for accepting your role as teacher/learner in this course.

I will ask each of you to participate in a Scholars' Group to explore some recent criticism of one of the plays we will study this semester. This group will share its research on the criticism of one play as you prepare to write a scholarly essay on the play your group has selected to study. Later in the course, the group will serve as sounding board--as you begin to discover your own approach to the play--and as writing group as you draft and revise your piece.

Course Policies:

Class Attendance And Participation:

Regular attendance and thoughtful participation in class discussion are essential not only to your individual performance, but also to the success of this course. Our work together relies on collaboration in every phase of the course so that we might form an intellectual community whose insights and power surpass those of any one of us working on our own. We are all subjects who share the responsibilities of teaching and learning in this class. Each of us has a responsibility to the group and to the learning that goes on in class.

Therefore, more than 4 absences will affect the final grade adversely; more than 7 absences will result in automatic failure of the course.

Late Work and Requests for Extensions:

Any late Focus Questions (see requirements) can receive only minimum credit, or an OK--the equivalent of a 1.0 or D on a 4-point scale. A late draft of the short analytic essay or the scholarly essay will result in the reduction of the final grade by .50 (1/2 a letter grade) for every day beyond the due date, but, more importantly, it will make it impossible for you to receive feedback from your scholars' group and from me. If you do not submit the drafts of your scholarly essay by the due date, I will not be able to give you my written response to the draft. Late submission of the two bibliographic projects will result in the reduction of the final grade by .50 (1/2 a letter grade) for every day beyond the due date.

In the event of extreme circumstances, such as sickness, family tragedy, or an emergency, I can be reasonable about deadlines and the possibility of extensions. But you **must** request an extension on your work **prior** to the due date. I **may** grant an extension provided you have a legitimate reason. You can contact me via e-mail or phone. **I will not grant any extensions of deadlines if you do not request one prior to the due date.**

Plagiarism:

The University Affairs Council has asked all faculty to include the following statement in our course policies:

"By accepting admission to Radford University, each student makes a commitment to understand, support, and abide by the University Honor Code without compromise or exception. Violations of academic integrity will not be tolerated. This class will be conducted in strict observance of the Honor Code. Please refer to your Student Handbook for details."

Plagiarism--including the use of work submitted to another course without the consent of both instructors, the use of work by another person, or the use of someone else's words, ideas, or arrangement of ideas without giving proper reference to the author--is a serious violation of the Honor Code. This applies to all electronic sources found on the Worldwide Web or on other on-line databases such as those available through McConnell Library. Please see the section on plagiarism in your Student Handbook. Be especially careful, as you complete your scholarly essay, that you do not use the ideas of other critics without giving them credit even if you do not use direct quotations. You must give credit to a critic when you paraphrase his or her ideas.

**Required Texts:**

Drakakis, John, ed. *Alternative Shakespeares*. New York: Routledge, 1985.

*MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. Ed. Joseph Gibaldi. New York: MLA, 1998. Strongly Recommended

Shakespeare, William. *As You Like It*. New York: Penguin/Putnam, 1998.

---. *King Lear*. New York: Penguin/Putnam, 1998.

---. *Macbeth*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999.

---. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. New York: Penguin/Putnam, 1998.

---. *Othello*. New York: Penguin/Putnam, 1998.

---. *The Taming of the Shrew*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1996.

---. *The Tempest*. New York: Penguin/Putnam, 1998.

**Engl. 472: Syllabus**

1/9 Introduction: Goals, Expectations, Requirements

**Assignment for next class is to visit our course web site, download and print out all course materials and bring them to the next class. I suggest you do this in McConnell Library at one of the computers that has access to the Web and is connected to a printer. The reading assignment is David Underdown's "The Taming of a Scold" (Xerox) and two focus questions on that article.**

"The Elizabethan World Picture" VS. New Historicist View of

Early Modern England

1/11 New Historicism, Early Modern England, and Shakespeare's plays

**Focus Questions Due**: 2 questions on Underdown essay (Xerox)

Discussion of the historical and discursive contexts that shaped Shakespeare's texts

Viewing of *Midsummer Night's Dream* excerpts

**"Shakespeare's Festive Comedy" As Disruptions Of Gender And Power** **Relations:  *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *As You Like It***

1/16 ***"This is to Make an Ass of Me . . . "*** *Or: Disrupting natural, sexual, and political hierarchies*

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1594-95) : Acts 1 and 2. **Focus Questions Due**: one for each act

1/18 *MSND* : Acts 3 and 4**. Focus Questions Due:** one for each act

1/23 *MSND* Act 5 and Montrose, "*A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the Shaping Fantasies of Elizabethan Culture: Gender, Power, Form" (Xerox). **Focus Questions Due**: one for act 5 and two for Montrose

Viewing of clips from Joseph Papp's Central Park adaptation of *MSND*

1/25 ***Clothes Make the Man?*** *Or: what happens when a boy actor plays a female character (in love with a man but) disguised as a male with whom another female character (played by a boy actor) falls in love?*

*As You Like It* (1598-1600): Act 1. **Focus Question Due**: one for Act 1. Viewing of excerpts from BBC production of *AYLI*

1/30*AYLI*: Act 2 and 3. **Focus Questions Due**: one for each act.

2/1 *AYLI*: Act 5. **Focus Question Due**: one for act 5.

2/6 Belsey, "Disrupting Sexual Difference: Meaning and Gender in the Comedies," Alternative, 166

**Focus Questions Due**: 2 on Belsey's article

Description of [annotated bibliography](file:///C:/472annbibs.htm) and [analytic essay](file:///C:/472inrpessay.htm) assignments. Visit our web pages, download and print a copy of the description of these assignments. Just click on the hot links here. Bring the hard copies to class today.

2/8 Library Research Instruction: Attendance Required. Class meets in McConnell Library Computer Instructional Room. RU Electronic Catalog, Library Homepage, Interlibrary Loan, MLA Bibliography, JStor, Project Muse, Historical Abstracts, Infotrac Expanded Academic Index,

**Shakespeare's Less Mature Comedies:** *The Taming of the Shrew* (1590-1594)

2/13 *Taming of the Shrew*: Act 1 and 2 and selected readings from the "Contexts" sections of the text (pages TBA). **Focus Questions Due**: one for each act and one for each section on the "Contexts." Viewing of excerpts from the Burton/Taylor interpretation of *Shrew*.

2/15 Viewing Day: Class rescheduled so that you can view the filmed BBC version of the play about which you will write your analytic essay, annotated bibliographies, and scholarly essay. All films of the plays read for this class are available on reserve in McConnell Library. You may view the films in the viewing room of the library. Bring your text and read along as you view the film. This should take roughly three hours.

2/20 *Shrew*. Acts 3 and 4 and selected readings from the "Contexts" sections of the text (pages TBA). **Focus Questions Due**: one for each act and one for each section on the "Contexts." Viewing of excerpts from BBC production of *Shrew*.

2/22 *Shrew* Act 5 and Karen Newman's article, "Renaissance Family Politics and The Taming of the Shrew" (Xerox). **Focus Question Due**: one for Act 5 and two on Newman's article.

2/27 Analytic Essay Due. This 3-5 page typed essay will **analyze one section** **of the Shakespearean play which you have selected for your annotated bibliography and scholarly essay.** See [Analytic Essay](file:///C:/472inrpessay.htm) description for complete requirements.

3/1 ***"Is this the promis'd end?"*** *Or: Interrogating Political, Familial, and Sexual Power Relations*

*King Lear*. Act 1. **Focus Question Due**: one for act 1. Viewing: excerpts, Olivier's *Lear*

3/6  *King Lear*. Act 2. **Focus Question Due**: one for act 2.

3/8 *King Lear*. Act 3. **Focus Question Due**: one for act 3 Viewing: excerpts, Olivier's *Lear*

**Spring Break 3/10 - 3/18**

3/20 *King Lear*. Acts 4 and 5. **Focus Questions Due**: one for each act. Viewing: Oliver's *Lear*

3/22 [**Annotated Bibliography #1 Due**:](file:///C:/472annbibs.htm)  10 item (minimum) working bibliography typed in MLA form and Xeroxed for each member of your scholar's group; five typed or handwritten annotations, each on a different source from your working bibliography. Click to see examples of a [working bibliography](file:///C:/472Smplwrkbib.htm) and an [annotated bibliography.](file:///C:/472smplannbib.htm)

Class Meets in McConnell Library for Research Day to work on second annotated bibliography. Meet in lobby to discuss what kinds of research to do next.

**Interrogations Of Political Power And Domination**

3/27 ***"Fair is Foul, and Foul is Fair******..."*** *Or: Language and power unravel*

*Macbeth* (1606-7): Act 1 and 2 and selected readings from the "Contexts" sections of the text (pages TBA). **Focus Questions Due:** one for each act of the play and one for each chapter from the "Contexts"

3/29 *Macbeth:* Act 3 and 4 and selected readings from the "Contexts" sections of the text (pages TBA). **Focus Questions Due:** one for each act of the play and one for each chapter from the "Contexts"

4/3 *Macbeth*: Act 5. **Focus Questions Due**

[**Annotated Bibliography #2 Due**](file:///C:/472annbibs.htm)

The Scholarly Essay: Expectations, Options, Strategies

How to Incorporate Research Into Your Own Thinking

Model Scholarly Essays: National Undergraduate Research Conference Papers

4/5 In-class guided freewrite to prepare for drafting your scholarly essay. In your freewrite consider questions such as the following:

What might be the main question you will address in your essay? Why is this an important question to answer in order to appreciate something you've noticed in the play? Why does this question about the play seem interesting to you? Which scholarly articles do you plan on using, and how or why might you use them? What's your plan for your essay? What is your tentative thesis, or (at least) what is the main issue you are exploring in the play? Can you make a stab at a possible conclusion you might draw about this issue? What scenes in the play do you think you might focus upon in exploring this issue and demonstrating your thesis about it (if you've got one at this point)? List the scenes. Then go back and look at a couple of them closely. Spend some time writing about what you're seeing in the scenes now that you scrutinize them more closely. Can any of the scholarly readings you've done help you in demonstrating your thesis? Might your thesis disagree with any of the scholars you've read? Do any of the scholarly pieces you've read provide you with historical context or other information you can use? Which ones? How can you make your essay original? How will you avoid making it merely a patchwork quilt of other scholars' ideas? What are you doing in your essay that is slightly different from what others have done? Has anyone looked at the same issue your are addressing? How do you know this? How is your way of looking at the issue slightly different from any other scholar's you've read?

**This is a required assignment related to your scholarly essay**. You should do about 10 pages of freewriting at the minimum, beginning the work in class and completing it at home. You will include this freewrite in the folder in which you will submit your final scholarly essay.

**Interrogations Of Race and Colonial Expansion**

4/10 ***"An Old Black Ram is Tupping Your White Ewe"****: Or, Gaps in the Discourses of Racial and Sexual Difference*

*Othello* (1604):Act 1 and 2. **Focus Questions Due**.

4/12 *Othello*: Act 3 and 4. **Focus Questions Due**

4/17 *Othello*: Act 5 and Karen Newman's "'And Wash the Ethiop White" (Xerox). Focus Questions Due: one for act 5 and two for the article.

4/19Draft of Scholarly Essay Due (Typed in MLA Form). Please provide a Xerox copy for each member of your group

4/24 ***"That Foul Conspiracy of the Beast Caliban"*** *Or: Gaps in Legitimizing Colonialism*

*The Tempest* (1610-11). Acts 1-3. **Focus Questions Due**: one for each act.

4/26 *Tempest*: Acts 4-5 and Barker and Hulme's "Nymphs and Reapers Heavily Vanish: The Discursive Contexts of The Tempest, *Alternative*, 191. **Focus Questions Due**: one for each act and two for the article.

**Final Exam:** Final Revision of Scholarly Essay Due. Attendance Required. Please consult handout for list of materials to be submitted along with it in manila folder.