

Shakespeare with a Difference

LITR 208: Shakespeare's Plays

Class Hours: TTh 2-3:30

Professor: Todd Barnes

Office hours: TTh 4-5 and by appointment

This course aims to familiarize students with the works of Shakespeare and his inheritors through an exploration of three plays (*Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, and *The Tempest*) and their varied afterlives. The focus of the course will be “Shakespeare with a Difference,” meaning that we will examine 1) how cultural difference is represented in these plays and 2) how various cultures have interacted with early modern texts that differ quite radically (historically and geographically) from their own. We will begin the course by looking at early modern notions of authorship as they relate to performance and printing practices. Next, we will read *Merchant of Venice* as we interrogate how its stage history has performed its characters’ national, racial and gendered identities differently alongside diverse national, legal, religious, scientific and economic norms. We will read and discuss the complicated nature of using Shakespeare on pages, stages and screens in order to “perform identity.” Are these performed identities Shakespeare’s? Are they ours? Are the attempts to represent (and thereby domesticate) selves radically other than our selves? Building on this idea of “performing identity” through Shakespeare, we will move on to look at *Othello*. After surveying some of Shakespeare’s sources, we will consider the play’s afterlife, particularly as it was performed in the minstrel shows of the nineteenth century. Our final task will be to engage with *The Tempest*, a play taken up by many in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a metaphor for colonialism. We will read plays and watch films that restage Shakespearean identities in modern, global contexts, paying close attention to the aesthetic and political implications of such performances.

Required Texts:

- William Shakespeare. The Arden Edition (3rd Series) of the following plays: *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, and *The Tempest*
- Aimé Césaire. *Une Tempête*.
- A course reader which will include work by the following writers: M. Bristol, T. Hawkes, S. Orgel, A. Gurr, J. Roach, R. Schechner, M. Omi & H. Winant, E. Lott, G.K. Hunter, P. Brown, G. Taylor, L. Lerner, al-Wazzan, H. (Africanus, L.), C. West, J. Jorgens, J.L. Austin, R. Barthes, S. Palfrey, D. Lanier, C. Belsey, G. Holderness, and others.

Participation/Attendance

This class will not be possible without your participation. Unlike some courses, the success of this course depends on your contributions, your labor, and your perspective. Each class meeting will cover a wide range of material. The lessons of this course build cumulatively, so any absence threatens to quickly push you far behind.

Papers (late/format)

No late papers will be accepted. Your essays need not be perfect, but I do expect them to be on time. If you are struggling with a project, let me know in advance, and we can arrange an extension.

All papers are to be typed and formatted according to the most recent MLA guidelines. Refer to Diana Hacker's *A Writer's Reference* for help with these guidelines. For additional help in writing papers, I encourage you to visit our Center for Academic Success.

Their helpful website can be found here:

<http://ww2.ramapo.edu/academics/cas/>

For assistance/guidance in writing papers for literature courses, you can also use the following helpful links:

<http://phobos.ramapo.edu/majors/literature/homeEssaysLitCourses.htm>

Plagiarism

Plagiarism, etymologically, means *kidnapping*. Do not steal the brainchildren of others. Students who engage in plagiarism will suffer the consequences set forth by the university. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, see one of the instructors or the university's guidelines at: <http://library.ramapo.edu/plagiarism.html>

Disabilities/Accommodations

If you feel you might need any accommodations in order to succeed in this course, please let me know privately as soon as possible. Also, you should contact the Office of Specialized Services at 201.684.7514 (voice), 201.684.7092 (TTY), or oss@ramapo.edu (email).

Requirements/Grades

Your weighted grade in the course will be determined according to the following schema:

80% compositions

10% Student Performances

10% discussion/participation/blog assignments/quizzes

Course Blog

The virtual component of this course is substantial. This semester, we will be utilizing the **My Ramapo Luminis Portal** located here:

<https://my.ramapo.edu/cp/home/displaylogin>

Students are required to regularly post comments and feedback through this site's message board. Stay tuned for more information on how this will work.

Compositions

In this course, there will be four major compositions (three on paper and one on stage). The first essay (3-4 pp) will investigate how early modern conventions allow particular speech acts to perform within *The Merchant of Venice*. The second essay (4-5 pp) will allow you to explore differences between two "Shakespearean" texts in two different historical periods (comparing Shakespeare's *Othello* with T.D. Rice's *Otello: A Burlesque Opera* or Alexander Do Mar's *Desdemonum: An Ethiopian Burlesque, in Three Scenes*). The final essay (8-10 pp) will require you to deal more thoroughly with Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and its relationship to one of its reimaginings (you will be provided with a list).

Prospective Schedule:

Week One: Reinventing Notions of Authorship

Bristol, M.	"Shakespeare: the Myth"
Hawkes, T.	"Or" from <i>Meaning by Shakespeare</i>
Lakoff, G./Johnson, H.	<i>Metaphors We Live By</i> (excerpt)
Barthes, R.	"Death of the Author"

8/22 T: Introductions/Intentional Fallacy/Authenticity

8/24 Th: Introductions/Metaphoricity/The Author Function

Week Two: Different Shakespeares, Shakespeare and Difference

Shakespeare, W. *Merchant of Venice* (Act I-II)
Orgel, S. *The Authentic Shakespeare* (excerpt)
Gurr, A. “Shakespeare’s Playhouses”
Hunter, G.K. “Elizabethans and Foreigners”

9/2 T: Shakespeare’s Self-differing Corpus
9/4 Th: Elizabethan Outsiders

Week Three: Performing the Other

Shakespeare, W. *Merchant of Venice* (Acts III-V)
Austin, J.L. *How to Do Things with Words* (Lectures I-IV)
Lerner, L. “Wilhelm S & Shylock”

9/9 T: Performativity
9/11 Th: Citing Early Modern Notions of Self and Other

Week Four: Ritual and Performance

Roach, J. *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (excerpt)
Schechner, R. “Restoration of Behavior”
Taylor, G. “Revising Shakespeare”

9/16 T: Different Centuries, Different *Merchants*
9/18 Th: Rituals of Exclusion/Inclusion
Paper 1 Due

Week Five: Un-Mooring Origins

Shakespeare, W. *Othello* (Acts I-III)
al-Wazzan, H.
(Africanus, J.L.) “Description of Africa” (excerpt)
Cinthio *Hecatommithi* (excerpt)

9/23 T: *Othello*’s Historical “Origins”/Early Modern Moors
9/25 Th: Travel Narratives and Problems in Historiography

Week Six: Reinventing Race

Shakespeare, W. *Othello* (Acts IV-V)
Omi, M./Winant, H. “Racial Formation in the United States”
West, C. “Race and Modernity”

9/30 T: Race, Structure and Signification
10/2 Th: Film Screenings: Excerpts from Orson Welles’ *Othello* (1952), Laurence Olivier’s *Othello* (1965) Janet Suzman’s *Othello* (1987); Jeffrey Sax’ *Othello* (2001), Nelson’s *O* (2001) and Bhardwaj’s *Omkara* (2006)

Week Seven: *Othello* and the Minstrel Tradition

Lott, E. *Love & Theft* (excerpt)
Rice, T.D. *Otello: A Burlesque Opera*
Do Mar, A. *Desdemonum: An Ethiopian Burlesque, in Three Scenes*
Bristol, M. “Charivari”

10/7 T: *Othello* and Minstrelsy: Representing “Authentic” Blackness
10/9 Th: Fred Wilson’s *Speak of Me as I Am*

Week Eight: Tempestuous Subjects

Shakespeare, W. *The Tempest* (Acts I-II)
Brown, P. “‘This Thing of Darkness I Acknowledge Mine’: *The Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism”

10/14 T: *The Tempest* and the New World
10/16 Th: Colonialism and Its Discontents
Paper 2 Due

Week Nine: Ariel and Caliban Learn to Curse

Shakespeare, W. *The Tempest* (Acts III-V)
Bate, J. “Caliban and Ariel Write Back”

10/21 T: Masters and Servants
10/23 Th: Counternarratives from Imperialism to Empire

Week Ten: Sycorax, (Ariel), Miranda and Her Mother

Dryden, J./D'Avenant, W.

& Shadwell, T.

The Tempest, or the Enchanted Island (excerpt)

Thompson, A.

“Miranda, Where’s Your Sister?” Reading Shakespeare’s
The Tempest”

10/28 T: Maternity under Erasure

10/30 Th: Screenings: Greenaway’s *Prospero’s Books* (1991), Jarmann’s *The Tempest* (1979), Wilcox’ *Forbidden Planet* (1956), and Bender’s *The Tempest* (1999)

Week Eleven: Adaptation and Intercultural Performance

Césaire, A.

Une Tempête

Ray, K.

Eastwards (excerpt)

11/4 T: Négritude

11/6 Th: Shakespeare in India; Ivory’s *Shakespeare Wallah* (1965) (excerpt)

Week Twelve: Research Methods

11/25 T: Formulating a Research Question

11/27 Th: Writing an Annotated Bibliography; World Shakespeare Bibliography

Week Thirteen: Peer Review

12/2- 12/4 Peer Review

Week Fourteen: Rewriting and Rehearsing

Jorgens, J.

“Realising Shakespeare on Film”

11/11 T: Writing Workshop

11/13 Th: Writing Workshop

Week Fifteen: Student Performances

11/18 T: Student Performances

11/20 Th: Student Performances

Week Sixteen: Final Paper Conference

12/9 Research Presentations/Conference