

Shakespeare and Film

English 208

Prof. Nicholas Jones
Oberlin College

MW 1:30 – 2:20, K 343
Discussion sections F 1:30 – 2:20, K 343 or 2:30 – 3:20, K 235
Film showings M 7 – 10 pm, King 239

My office: Rice 103. Office Hours (no appointment needed): MTTh 2:30 – 4:00. Otherwise, by appointment: e-mail me or see me in class for an appointment. My e-mail: njones@oberlin.edu.

Introduction

What happens when Shakespeare is produced on screen? Given the powerful status of "the Bard" in many cultures of the twentieth century, a Shakespeare film must be studied not merely in itself, but also as a contribution to the ongoing reinterpretation and appropriation of Shakespeare; so we'll read plays, study films, and work on the theoretical and cultural relationships between them.

This is a **Shakespeare** course: we read the plays, study their language and structures, discuss them as dramatic literature. We'll be reading one history play (*Henry V*), two tragedies (*Hamlet* and *Macbeth*), three comedies (*Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), and a late romance (*The Tempest*). The course counts as a pre-1700, British, Gateway course for the English major.

It is also a **film** course: we study these films in terms of camera technique, film history, and importance to the time and place they were produced. We study the work of some famous directors (Kurosawa, Polanski, Olivier, Branagh). Sometimes the films aren't by great directors, but each one is interesting and worthwhile as a film and as an interpretation of Shakespeare. English 208 counts as a cross-referenced elective for the Cinema Studies major.

One of my goals is to help you see how rich Shakespeare's texts are, how they present multiple possibilities to those who interpret them. Another goal is to help see the films as exciting, rich, and meaningful texts in themselves, as works of creative imagination that are worth close examination. So, on the one hand -- Shakespeare; on the other -- film. And between them, the intertextual relationship, a relationship (like any other) involving various amounts of exploitation, of appropriation, of homage, of critique, of rebellion, and of love.

Prerequisites

As with all English Department Gateway courses, this course is open to students who have completed any Writing Intensive course, or have gained Writing Certification in any course in the Humanities. It is also open to those who have achieved a 5 on the AP exam in English Language/Composition or English Literature/Composition, or a score of 710 or better on the SAT II Writing test. Other students may be admitted by consent of the instructor, with the understanding that students should be able to demonstrate the ability to handle writing, discussion, and analysis in ways typically taught in Writing Intensive classes.

Texts

You are required to have your own good copies of the seven plays we read (Henry V, Much Ado About Nothing, Macbeth, Hamlet, Twelfth Night, A Midsummer Night's Dream, and The Tempest). I have ordered inexpensive versions through the Oberlin Bookstore (they have bought collections of the tragedies and comedies that actually give you a few more titles). You don't have to buy these versions; you may use any modern texts of these plays, as long as they have footnotes. A collected works of Shakespeare will be fine.

Written work (more specific assignments for the papers will be distributed later)

Paper 1: Due Sunday, Sept. 26. 3-4 pages. Scene analysis: Branagh, *Henry V*. 10% of grade.

Paper 2: Due Thursday, Oct. 14. 6-8 pages. Comparison of an aspect of two *Macbeth* films. 15% of grade.

Paper 3: Due Sunday, Nov. 21. 10-12 pages. Analysis of an issue in the history of *Hamlet* films, including research into other films, criticism, etc. 25% of grade.

Project: Due Friday, Dec. 17. 10-12 pages, or a creative project in another format accompanied by 5 pages of discussion and analysis. Possible formats: critical paper; research paper; scene presentation; video project; storyboard; partial screenplay; poster; etc. 25% of grade.

Weekly Post: Each Tuesday, each student will post a response in the 100-200 word range on Blackboard to the Monday film showing. Before you post, read all the previous postings; when you write, take into account what folks have said, as it seems relevant. Before Wednesday class, you should read all the rest of the postings after you submitted.

Discussion Prep: With one or two other students, initiate two Friday discussion classes (we'll divide into 1:30 and 2:30 sections). Prepare about 10 minutes of questions, thoughts, issues, video clips, etc. Hand in (e-mail is fine) a one-page lesson plan by Friday noon before the discussion.

Film Fact Sheet: With one or two other students, prepare a 2-page sheet to hand out in class Monday for that week's film, collecting information and resources relevant to the film: production team, cast, release date, as well as important circumstances in the making of the film, and a selection of reviews.

Weekly Post, Discussion Prep, and Film Fact Sheets won't be handed back with grades, but your work on the three of these, along with participation, will be graded at the end of the semester and count for the remaining 25% of the final grade.

Handing work in

Due dates for papers and project are real deadlines: I expect the work to be handed in then. Plan ahead for time to study, write, edit, and proofread your work. Don't ask me for extensions: if you need to turn it in late, then do so. If you have an emergency situation (sickness, family emergency), let me know and I'll take it into account (work pressure does not count as an emergency). Otherwise, the grade on the paper will be reduced, beginning an hour or so after the deadline, one mark (for example, B+ to B) per two days late.

All papers are due by midnight on the due date, at the latest. They are submitted in the digital drop box in Blackboard. Papers must be in Word format, and the filename should follow this protocol:

YourLastNameYourFirstInitialPaperNumber.doc

(for ex: **JonesNPaper1.doc**)

If something goes crazy with Blackboard, don't panic; send me an e-mail with the paper attached.

Attendance

You need to come to class on time and stay through the class period. If you have more than 3 unexcused absences, your grade will be affected. Excuses for absence include sickness and family emergency but not pressure of other work; excuses need to be given in writing or e-mail.

Film showings on Monday evenings are important, since seeing the film in company with others is one key element of understanding a film. But they are not mandatory: if you want to see the film on your own, it's up to you, as long as you've seen it by the time of the first class on the film. Films will be available on reserve, and are generally available as well at Campus Video, Netflix, Blockbuster, etc.

Participation

It is critical that you get involved in the discussion (even on lecture days, but especially during discussions). There are many strategies for doing so: questions, comments, suggestions for steering the discussion in a different direction, expression of enthusiasms or doubts or problems, invitations for others to speak.

Honor code

All work is to be done under provisions of the Oberlin College Honor Code. All ideas and language derived from someone else's work, directly or indirectly, should be cited. All outside sources of ideas and facts must be acknowledged in papers. Each paper should have the Honor Pledge typed and signed (typing your name constitutes a signature for electronic submissions). It will be understood that postings submitted on Blackboard are your own work. See http://www.oberlin.edu/students/student_pages/honor_code.html.

Reasonable accommodation

If you have a documented disability and wish to request accommodation, please let me know early in the semester.

Calendar			Assignment	Film Showing
Fri	Sept.	3		
Mon	Sept.	6	Labor Day: no class	No film
Wed	Sept.	8	Read <i>Henry V</i> , Acts 1-2	
Fri	Sept.	10	Discussion Sections	
Mon	Sept.	13	Finish <i>Henry V</i>	Kenneth Branagh, <i>Henry V</i>
Tues	Sept.	14	Weekly Post	
Wed	Sept.	15	Scene Study TBA	
Fri	Sept.	17	Discussion Sections	
Mon	Sept.	20	Read <i>Much Ado</i> , Acts 1-2	Kenneth Branagh, <i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>
Tues	Sept.	21	Weekly Post	
Wed	Sept.	22	Finish <i>Much Ado</i>	
Fri	Sept.	24	Discussion Sections	
Sun	Sept.	26	Paper 1 Due	
Mon	Sept.	27	Read <i>Macbeth</i> , Act 1	Roman Polanski, <i>Macbeth</i>
Tues	Sept.	28	Weekly Post	
Wed	Sept.	29	Read <i>Macbeth</i> , Acts 2-3	
Fri	Oct.	1	Discussion Sections	
Mon	Oct.	4	Finish <i>Macbeth</i>	Billy Morrissette, <i>Scotland, PA</i>
Tues	Oct.	5	Weekly Post	
Wed	Oct.	6	Assignment TBA	
Fri	Oct.	8	Discussion Sections	
Mon	Oct.	11	Assignment TBA	Akira Kurosawa, <i>Throne of Blood</i>
Tues	Oct.	12	Weekly Post	
Wed	Oct.	13	Assignment TBA	
Thurs	Oct.	14	Paper 2 Due	
Fri	Oct.	15	Discussion Sections	

Fall Break				
Mon	Oct.	25	Read <i>Hamlet</i> , Acts 1-2	Franco Zeffirelli, <i>Hamlet</i>
Tues	Oct.	26	Weekly Post	
Wed	Oct.	27	Read <i>Hamlet</i> , Act 3	
Fri	Oct.	29	Discussion Sections	
Mon	Nov.	1	Finish <i>Hamlet</i>	Laurence Olivier, <i>Hamlet</i>
Tues	Nov.	2	Weekly Post	
Wed	Nov.	3	Assignment TBA	
Fri	Nov.	5	Discussion Sections	
Mon	Nov.	8	Assignment TBA	Michael Almerayda, <i>Hamlet</i>
Tues	Nov.	9	Weekly Post	
Wed	Nov.	10	Assignment TBA	
Fri	Nov.	12	Discussion Sections	
Mon	Nov.	15	Read <i>Twelfth Night</i> , Acts 1-2	Trevor Nunn, <i>Twelfth Night</i>
Tues	Nov.	16	Weekly Post	
Wed	Nov.	17	Finish <i>Twelfth Night</i>	
Fri	Nov.	19	Discussion Sections	
Sun	Nov.	21	Paper 3 Due	
Mon	Nov.	22	Assignment TBA	<i>Shakespeare in Love</i>
Tues	Nov.	23	Weekly Post	
Wed	Nov.	24	Assignment TBA	
Fri	Nov.	26	Thanksgiving	
Mon	Nov.	29	Read <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	Peter Hall, <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>
Tues	Nov.	30	Weekly Post	
Wed	Dec.	1	Assignment TBA	
Fri	Dec.	3	Discussion Sections	
Mon	Dec.	6	Read <i>The Tempest</i> , Acts 1-2	Derek Jarman, <i>The Tempest</i>
Tues	Dec.	7	Weekly Post	
Wed	Dec.	8	Finish <i>The Tempest</i>	
Fri	Dec.	10	Discussion Sections	
Mon	Dec.	13	Final Class	
Fri	Dec.	17	Project Due	