English 201: Shakespeare -- Syllabus

Inviting Ourselves In... To Shakespeare

Instructor: Chris Riseley

Office: NSH 2-11

Phone: 541-917-4573

Office Hours: Mon, Tues, Wed, 9:00am to 10.

Office: NSH-110

**Welcome**

It is my hope that our journey into the works and life of William Shakespeare will be both informative and transformative for all of us. As we explore the history, plots, characters, tensions, and language in and behind the plays of William Shakespeare, we will naturally open up doors within ourselves. This class invites us to walk through those doors and explore Shakespeare with the sense that we are not only learning about “the greatest writer in the English language,” but that we are also learning about ourselves and becoming better thinkers in the process.

Our approach to these plays invites us to discuss not only our personal reactions to the work but also to pause and reflect on how these plays remain relevant to our world and our lives today.

Reading Shakespeare for the first time is not easy. Here’s where you can find free audio versions of the three plays we will be studying this term so that you can read the text and listen to a more experienced reader emote the language at the same time: [www.librivox.org](http://www.librivox.org).

**Textbook:**

Open Source and Online -- I’ll show you in class and you can check our calendar.

**Assignments and Exams:**

Midterm and Final: These in-class exams will include short answer and short essay responses that will allow you to feature the depth of your reading and thinking as you have joined our explorations of the plays. Please bring a blue book to class.

Please do not make the mistake that this is a high school course in Shakespeare and that the reading of an “Easy Shakespeare” type translation, or worse, a plot summary, will be all you need to read. Our class is focused on the texts of Shakespeare’s work. We are interested here in using our minds to decode his language, rhythms, and meanings. An easy translation and a plot summary might be a place to turn if you are stuck, but your best preparation for our exams will be found in reading and understanding the plays. I recommend reading acts or scenes out loud to yourself or with friends. Pick parts and have fun. Argue about what a line means. Argue about how a certain piece of language can be said in multiple ways and how different readings change the meaning. Reading Shakespeare is a work out for the brain.

[Term Project:](https://docs.google.com/document/d/11t-H4tNYtxFZN9Fuz9aUqohOsr4sjqoJ16sj511fv2o/edit) This class invites you to develop and share your own thinking about how we continue to experience the works of William Shakespeare today. We will all be working on an open source book about how William Shakespeare continues to remain a source of fascination, confusion, mystery, amusement, entertainment, catharsis, and a rich playground for critical thinking. This project will invite you to write a well researched reflection (minimum of eight pages) that will serve as a chapter for this book. Part of your grade for this assignment will be an oral presentation you share with the class about the process of your work and research.

Daily Reading Checks: Before class ends on each day, I will be sharing the next day’s reading assignments on the board. Daily Reading Checks invite you to show off how well you read the section.

**Grading**

Midterm: 25%

Final: 25 %

Reading/Homework Checks: 25 %

Term Project: 25 % This includes not only working on your own chapter in our book, but also receiving help from and offering help to others as we create a one of a kind document that we might all be proud of. Your oral presentation about your research and development of your chapter also falls into this grading area.

**COURSE OUTCOMES:**

* **Recognize how literature helps in understanding the human condition.**
* **Interpret literature through critical reading.**
* **Demonstrate how literature enhances personal awareness and creativity.**
* **Write and speak confidently about their own and others' ideas.**

**Attendance**

The fourth absences will result in an F grade in this course. Attendance is taken daily.

**Plagiarism**

By now, everyone has learned plagiarism is a form of cheating that involves trying to take credit for work you did not produce. It’s wrong. But I think teachers are somewhat responsible when students feel like cheating in this way. Teachers have an obligation to build assignments that will invite students to bring their own interests to the topic being studied. In this case we must center our work around Shakespeare, but you will find that your chapter of our book can become a creative expression of your own interests. Please see me if that does not immediately happen and we will work to help you produce a chapter that you will be proud to work on yourself and call your own.

**Disability Statement**

Students who may need accommodations due to documented disabilities, who have medical information which the instructor should know, or who need special arrangements in an emergency, should speak with the instructor during the first week of class. If you have not accessed services and think you may need them, please contact Disability Services, 917-4789.