

English 5711: Shakespeare (Romance and Tragicomedy)

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Course Description: A seafaring prince spends a lifetime losing and finding a family, as he sails throughout the Mediterranean world. A husband and wife spend several months clearing up misconceptions about each other, in the midst of a Roman invasion of the British isles. A bookish magician spends a few hours messing with his political enemies, on an island in the middle of nowhere. A jealous king spends a generation redeeming his friends and family, lost on the fictional coastline of Bohemia, through the power of art.

These four stories are the subject matter for four of the last plays Shakespeare wrote: *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale*. As my summaries above indicate, the plays range in subject matter, setting and scope (though there are also similarities between the plays that I've deliberately elided for rhetorical effect). Critics have historically disagreed about how to categorize these plays and whether they all in fact belong to the same genre. Today, these four plays vary wildly in their popularity, from the basically obscure *Cymbeline* to the perennially performed *Tempest*. So it's a valid question whether these four plays in fact belong together, a question our course will test. To put the issue another way, this course will (I hope) reveal the pleasure and the payoff of considering these plays as a set. Some critics categorize these plays together as Shakespeare's "romances," so we will think about them according to that rubric, in terms of what all four plays share in common with romance (adventure, sprawling travel, unlikely coincidences, nobility in disguise, flirtations with the supernatural, etc.). However, we'll also think about other ways to categorize and understand the plays, including the Renaissance dramatic genre of tragicomedy (to that end, we'll read an earlier Shakespeare play, *Troilus and Cressida*, that could also be called a tragicomedy).

While our focus will be a specific set of plays, I also want to use this course to explore Shakespeare's contribution to theatrical art more generally; to consider how reading Shakespeare helps us understand the broad kind of literature we call drama, literature that is acted and performed. Shakespeare's late plays are all characterized by a self-conscious interest in storytelling; specifically by the question of how storytelling works in the theater and how drama tells a story. So these are the perfect plays to help us consider Shakespearean theater more broadly.

Required Texts: (all by William Shakespeare)

– *Pericles* (Pelican Shakespeare Series). New York: Penguin, 2001.
ISBN-13: 978-0140714692

– *Cymbeline* (Pelican Shakespeare Series). New York: Penguin, 2000.
ISBN-13: 978-0140714722

– *The Tempest* (Pelican Shakespeare Series). New York: Penguin, 1999.
ISBN-13: 978-0143128632

– *Troilus and Cressida* (Pelican Shakespeare Series). New York: Penguin, 2000.
ISBN-13: 978-0143131755

– *The Winter's Tale* (Pelican Shakespeare Series). New York: Penguin, 1999.
ISBN-13: 978-0143131748

Shakespeare wrote his plays for performance and never published them, himself, as books to be read. Relatively cheap print copies (called quartos) of individual plays did circulate during his lifetime, some more reliable than others, but the (arguably) more authoritative folio collection of most of his plays was not published until after his death. Consequently, printed editions of the plays vary, to this day. Not just pagination and lineation but content and narrative sequence are editorial choices, when dealing with Shakespeare plays. All of which is to say, if you do not purchase the same editions of the plays that I have ordered, you will have significant difficulty keeping up with this course's online lectures, in which I'll refer to content that may not be in other editions, using page and line numbers that won't match other editions. It is your responsibility to make any extra effort necessary to keep up and follow along with the readings and lectures, should you choose to use other editions of the plays.

If you are interested in purchasing and/or using a book of Shakespeare's complete works, instead of the individual plays, you should be aware that the *Pelican Shakespeare* is a good scholarly resource that includes the same versions of the plays (same content, same line numbers) as the individual editions I've ordered.

Grading and Assignments:

100-93% – A	89-88% – B+	79-78% – C+	69-68% – D+	59-0% – E
92-90% – A-	87-83% – B	77-73% – C	67-63% – D	
	82-80% – B-	72-70% – C-	62-60% – D-	

Paper #1 (staging, 3-4 pages)	– 25% of total course grade
Paper #2 (prosody, 3-4 pages)	– 40%
lecture worksheets (12 total)	– 25% (2% each + 1 free point)
discussion posts (12 total)	– 10% (1% each, two dropped)

The papers will reflect the course's focus on Shakespeare's plays as plays. In the first, I will require you to look at the language of a passage in connection with staging. In the second, you'll consider the poetry of a passage in verse and write about how the verse's meter and form affect its performance as dialogue. I will explain my expectations for the papers in more detail, in lectures, as their deadlines approach.

Each week of the semester, there will be two lecture worksheets, both due at the end of the week (for more specific deadline information, see the course schedule below). These worksheets will not be quizzes on the reading or on the course material, but rather, they will be a component of the lectures themselves. The lectures will be written documents (pdf format) that I post to Canvas, and the documents will include discussion/response-style worksheet questions for you to answer, as well as exercises to complete. For instance, I may ask you to look over a speech in one of the plays we are reading and identify key words. Or I may ask you to "workshop" drafts of outlines or thesis statements for the upcoming papers. Basically, this is my way of prompting you to actively engage with the lecture material, the way you might with classroom discussions and activities. Because the lecture worksheet questions will not typically be about testing for correct answers, I'll grade the worksheets on a completion basis. If you do them, you get the points; though I reserve the option to give no credit or partial credit for wildly inapplicable or barely engaged responses.

In addition to the lecture worksheets, there will be an online discussion or activity each week of class, relevant to that week's course material, in a thread in our course's Canvas Discussion forum. You will be required to post twice in each week's discussion thread, some time over the course of each week. Typically, your first post will be an original contribution to the discussion, and your second post will be a reply to a post by one of your peers in the class. Both posts will typically be no shorter than 100 words and should probably not be longer than 250 words (the idea is to discuss, not pontificate). Like your responses to the lecture worksheets, your posts will be graded on completion, but to receive credit, they must be relevant to the discussion and appropriate in length.

Late Work:

I will give short deadline extensions on the papers if you talk to me about this possibility in advance of the assigned due dates. If you do not arrange an extension with me in advance, I will accept late papers only for three-fourths credit.

I will not accept late lecture worksheets or discussion posts, as their purpose is to encourage and track your regular engagement with the course materials and with your peers, equivalent to attendance and participation in traditional in-person courses. The frequency of these short assignments, each one worth a small amount of points on its own, will allow you to miss one or two due to personal situations without significantly impacting your grade. But if you frequently miss these assignments, the effect will add up. In special cases consistent with University policy, make-up work for missed lecture worksheets and discussion posts may be arranged.

Emergencies and personal situations do come up, so to help you offset them, I am adding one free point to your total lecture worksheet grade, and I will drop two missed posts from your total discussion posts grade. To further help you make up for an occasional missed worksheet or post, I am offering an optional extra credit lecture worksheet that will be posted to our course's Canvas web site the first week of class. This will be a sort of introductory lecture to the themes of the course, and it may make most sense for you to complete it early, but I will leave it up throughout the semester, and you are welcome to do it for the extra credit equivalent of one missed lecture worksheet (2 points) at any time during the semester.

Course Schedule:

On Mondays and Wednesdays, I will post lectures (including lecture worksheet questions) on Canvas that correspond to the reading assignments listed below for those days. And on Mondays, I will open Canvas Discussion threads. I recommend you complete the reading assignments on or before their assigned days, then proceed to read the corresponding lectures, do the worksheets and participate in the discussions; with one exception. I will be posting a lecture worksheet on Pioneer Day (7/24), but I recommend you complete the assigned reading listed for 24 July prior to that day and read my lecture on the following day (Thursday, 7/25), so as to have the holiday free.

Of course, since this is an online course, you can budget your reading time throughout the week, every week, any way you see fit. However, to insure you keep up with the reading on a weekly basis, you will need to complete and submit the lecture worksheets and make your posts to the discussion threads before 5 pm (not midnight) on Fridays.

Please note that while an online course allows for greater flexibility, this course presents the challenge of reading four-hundred year old texts in a compressed six-week Summer time frame. In order to succeed in this course, you will need to devote some time to the reading every week, during the work week (not just on weekends). If you don't have time to devote to this course every week, it's not the course for you.

Week 1: Introduction

F (6/21) Introduction: romance, theater, prosody (extra credit lecture worksheet)

Weeks 2-3: Romance

M (6/24) *Pericles* (Acts I, II, III)

W (6/26) *Pericles* (Acts IV, V)

F (6/28) posts and lecture worksheets due

M (7/1) *Cymbeline* (Acts I, II, III)

W (7/3) *Cymbeline* (Acts IV, V)

F (7/5) posts and lecture worksheets due

Week 4: Romance and Revenge Tragedy?

M (7/8) *The Tempest* (Acts I, II, III)

W (7/10) *The Tempest* (Acts IV, V)

F (7/12) posts and lecture worksheets due, Paper #1 due

Weeks 5-7: Romance and Tragicomedy

M (7/15) *Troilus and Cressida* (Acts I, II, III)

W (7/17) *Troilus and Cressida* (Acts IV, V)

F (7/19) posts and lecture worksheets due

M (7/22) *The Winter's Tale* (Acts I, II)

W (7/24) *The Winter's Tale* (Act III)

F (7/26) posts and lecture worksheets due

M (7/29) *The Winter's Tale* (Act IV)

W (7/31) *The Winter's Tale* (Act V)

F (8/2) posts and lecture worksheets due, Paper #2 due

Course Policies:

Plagiarism:

It is expected that students adhere to University of Utah policies regarding academic honesty, including but not limited to refraining from cheating, plagiarizing, misrepresenting one's work, and/or inappropriately collaborating. This includes the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools without citation, documentation, or authorization. Students are expected to adhere to the prescribed professional and ethical standards of the profession/discipline for which they are preparing. Any student who engages in academic dishonesty or who violates the professional and ethical standards for their profession/discipline may be subject to academic sanctions as per the University of Utah's Student Code: <https://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-410.php>

Course Policies: (continued)

Students with Disabilities (ADA):

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability & Access, 162 Olpin Union Building, 801-581-5020. CDA will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability & Access. To read the full accommodations policy for the University of Utah, please see Section Q.

Campus Safety Statement:

The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit safeu.utah.edu.

Addressing Sexual Misconduct:

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, SSB 328, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677(COPS).