

Department of English & Writing Studies

English 3330E (650)**Shakespeare**

Spring/Summer 2026

Instructor: Dr James Purkis
jpurkis@uwo.ca**Course Delivery:** Online Asynchronous**Antirequisites:** English 2371E, English 2372F/G, English 2373F/G, English 2430E and the former English 3227E.**Prerequisites:** At least 60% in 1.0 of English 1020-1999 or permission of the Department
Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.Course Description

Shakespeare remains the most lauded and influential writer of the English language and an extraordinary cultural phenomenon. This course will study twelve of his plays across genres and the span of his theatrical career. It will also pay keen attention to how his plays have been received over the past 400 years and ask how interpretation of his plays may be shaped by current political and cultural concerns.

Objectives:

By the end of the course, successful students will have attained:

- an increasingly advanced understanding of Shakespeare's drama and how it was created and first performed
- an understanding of the culture of early-modern England, particularly as it pertains to modern constructions of gender, sexuality, race, and class
- a developing facility with a variety of approaches, theories, and techniques that can be applied to the study of dramatic literature, including a critical awareness of knowledge systems that shape our analysis of the text.
- an ability to reflect on their own varied and intersecting positionalities and/or to think critically about ways in which the reception of Shakespeare reproduces or contests existing power structures
- proficiency with essential tools of literary scholarship, including library catalogues and content databases
- an introduction to specialized research tools and their uses
- an advanced ability to analyze a piece of literature within its specific cultural context
- an advanced ability to apply a variety of scholarly or theoretical approaches to the analysis of texts
- the opportunity to develop a clear, concise and effective prose style, free of technical errors
- the opportunity to develop an ability to structure a complex and engaging argument

How To Do This Course

For each unit, you should begin by reading the play for the week. Reading a Shakespeare play takes time to do properly. Performances of Shakespearean drama typically last around three hours and a careful reading will take longer than this. Help yourself to understand the play by reading notes in the edition that you are using when you are unclear of meanings or think that something interesting or unusual is going on. It is a good idea to use a paper copy and make annotations or to keep a way to make notes nearby.

Once you have finished the play, open the learning module. You will see a number of resources listed. Among these will be an introductory document, titled "Introduction", which spells out the material for the unit and what to do with it. Material will include links to video classes (hosted on youtube); supporting documents; articles to read (either in pdf or linked through Library Services resources); links to performances; and/or lecture notes. The introductory document will also include a few questions for you to consider at the end of your engagement with the unit material. These will either be broached by the posted material or be offered as a prompt further thinking. Please do take time to do this thinking. At times, I will add some recommended further reading; you do not need to read these items, but you may find it interesting or helpful to do so.

A separate unit, titled "Assignments", will provide directions for completing the course assessments.

This is an online, asynchronous course. However, I will hold regular office hours over Zoom during which I will be more than happy to discuss course material. I will try to keep the time and day consistent over the 12 weeks, but may have to hold them on different days or at different times on occasions. I will update the Brightspace page to keep you informed of when office hours will run. Office hours may also be arranged by appointment.

Course Materials

Modern editions of Shakespeare's plays differ. Sometimes, when one of Shakespeare's plays exists in divergent early versions, modern edited playtexts may differ significantly. It is therefore essential to attend to the text that you use. Videos and notes will refer to, and use the texts of, the editions provided by the FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY. These are available free online at <https://www.folger.edu/explore/shakespeares-works/download/>

These online texts **do not** provide commentaries or glosses. Commentaries and glosses are just-about essential for studying the play. You can buy physical copies of the Folger Shakespeare texts, which come with explanatory notes not available in electronic form. These are inexpensive and reliable texts edited by Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine. I recommend that you get – and use (i.e. read and annotate) – these physical copies. If using Amazon to order these texts, please be careful, because 1) there are too many spacecraft already, and 2) the links you get after a search are often misleading and may refer you to a different, inferior edition. The printed editions have the following ISBNs:

Twelfth Night (9780743482776)
The Two Noble Kinsmen (9781982170165)
Othello (9780743477550)
Henry V (9781982109417)
Henry IV, Part 1 (9781982122515)
Pericles (9781982170172)
Winter's Tale (9781982122508)

Love's Labour's Lost (9781982164959)
Measure for Measure (9781982157418)
A Midsummer Nights Dream (9780743477543)
Coriolanus (9781982157371)
All's Well that ends well (9781982164966)

The Mass Market paperbacks, available for some titles, cost \$9.99 each. Other paperbacks cost \$12.99 each.

Arden editions of the play are available online through the **Drama Online** database, which is accessible through Western Library Services. Search for the play title on the database. These texts are good scholarly editions and provide notes and glosses aimed to be useful for undergraduates. You can use these glosses and notes alongside the Folger texts.

You may use other editions of Shakespeare's plays for their explanatory notes and introductions. These are plentiful and can often be picked up second hand. If you intend to use a Complete Works, you should use *The Norton Shakespeare* (either Second or Third Edition). For volumes of individual plays, I recommend that you use texts from one of these series: Arden (Third Series), New Cambridge Shakespeare, or The Oxford Shakespeare. Older and less scholarly editions will not be as useful. If you use these recommended editions as your main texts, however, you may find that the lines and even scenes that are cited in course materials do not match your edition.

Methods of Evaluation

Participation	5%	
Passage Analysis	2 x 10%	(due May 25; June 29)
Performance Analysis	20%	(due June 8)
Essay	25%	(due July 18)
Examination	30%	(24 hrs. during 27-30 July period)

Participation

Each week, email me a question that has arisen from your work with course materials. This may be a request for clarification, an objection to what is said in the material, or an issue that arises from your reading that has not been covered by the material. These questions are intended to get you engaging regularly with the plays and the critical material, and will give me a sense of what interests you and how well you are comprehending course material.

Passage Analysis

Twice (see the Schedule), on Thursday afternoon, you will be given a passage from that week's play. You will be required to write an analysis of the passage within 48 hours of the passage being released. I will explain what is required of this exercise in due course (through the "Assignments" unit).

Performance Analysis

You will be asked to analyze a scene or part scene from the 2013 National Theatre production of *Othello*. I will give you several passages to choose from. These passages will be released at the start of the *Othello* week and the analysis will be due on June 8. I will explain what is required of this exercise in due course through the "Assignments" unit.

Essay

A 3 000-word essay on TWO plays. Questions will be given three weeks before the due date. Your essay should be presented in accordance with MLA Guidelines and must include TWO pieces of peer-reviewed secondary reading and a Works Cited list. Your essay will be graded on presentation, articulacy of expression, quality of interpretive analysis, relevance of your choice of secondary reading, and your ability to build that criticism into your own argument.

Exam

During the July 27-30 period, our exam will take place during a 24-hour period. Again, I will explain the format of the exam on OWL Brightspace in "Assignments".

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>.

Additional Information

I will usually answer email inquiries within 24 hours, although I will not always do so over the weekend. It is almost always better to discuss complex ideas in person or face-to-pixelated-face on Zoom during office hours. The times and links for Office Hours each semester will be posted on OWL.

Please submit electronic copies of all assignments through OWL. MS Word format is preferred, as it allows me to make incidental comments efficiently.

Statements

Academic Consideration

General information about missed coursework

Students must familiarize themselves with the *University Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs* posted on the Academic Calendar: <https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/academicconsiderationSep24.pdf>

This policy does not apply to requests for academic consideration submitted for **attempted or completed work**, whether online or in person. The policy also does not apply to students experiencing longer-term impacts on their academic responsibilities. These students should consult: [Accessible Education](#).

For procedures on how to submit Academic Consideration requests, please see the information posted on the Office of the Registrar's webpage: <https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academicconsiderations/>

All requests for Academic Consideration must be made within 48 hours after the assessment date or submission deadline.

All academic consideration requests must include supporting documentation; however, recognizing that formal documentation may not be available in some extenuating circumstances, the policy allows students to make one Academic Consideration request **without supporting documentation** in this course.

Assignments with flexible deadlines and any term work that does not count towards the course grade are **not** eligible for additional consideration.

In response to this policy, and to make things easier for all of us, I am using a system of grace days, which – in effect – brings a flexible deadline to all assignments with the exception of the final exam and the in-class writing assignments. This is how the grace-days system works:

You are each given FIVE grace days, which you can use at once, or share between your assignments. You will not be penalized for a late submission as long as you can cover the delay through using your grace days. When your grace days are gone, they are gone, and you are faced with a late assignment. If you submit an assignment after the due date and the expiration of your grace days, the grade will be reduced by a penalty of 2% for each calendar day that it is late. Note that Senate regulations stipulate that **all assignments must be completed by the last day of classes.**

In the case of prolonged extenuating circumstances that exceed the five grace days, a request for academic consideration must be made to the Academic Advising office of the student's Faculty of Registration.

Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes the completion of a [Western Student Medical Certificate \(SMC\)](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation, by a health care practitioner.

Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods as well as practice laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled in the last week of term **always** require formal supporting documentation.

Attendance

This is a purely distance and asynchronous course, so there is no attendance requirement. Do, though, see "Participation" in the "Methods of Evaluation" section.

Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Intellectual Property/Copyright

All instructor-written materials (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students' personal use within the course, and remain the instructor's intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the Western Multicultural Calendar.

Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Academic Support & Engagement <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western:
<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

The use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools/software/apps is not allowed on the course. The course is intended help students develop writing, critical-thinking, and research skills, and this development may be hampered by use of such tools. Sanctions for the use of AI in writing submitted work will match those for plagiarism.

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

Plagiarism Checking

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

UNIT 1 (MAY 5-8)	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	
UNIT 2 (MAY 11-16)	TWELFTH NIGHT	
UNIT 3 (MAY 18-22)	LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST	(PASSAGE ANALYSIS 1 – DUE MAY 25)
UNIT 4 (MAY 25-29)	THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN	
UNIT 5 (JUN 1-5)	OTHELLO	(PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS – DUE JUNE 8)
UNIT 6 (JUN 8-12)	CORIOLANUS	
UNIT 7 (JUN 15-19)	HENRY IV PART 1	
UNIT 8 (JUN 22-26)	HENRY V	(PASSAGE ANALYSIS 2 – DUE JUNE 29)
UNIT 9 (JUN 29-JUL3)	MEASURE FOR MEASURE	
UNIT 10 (JUL 6-10)	ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL	
UNIT 11 (JUL 13-18)	PERICLES	(ESSAY DUE JULY 18)
UNIT 12 (JUL 21-24)	WINTER'S TALE	
EXAM JULY 24 HOURS DURING EXAM PERIOD 27-30		