

## ENGLISH 455: SHAKESPEARE

**Instructor:** Dr. Daven M. Kari

**Office:** English Department, Scott Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor

**Phone:** 714-556-3610, ext. 2513; **E-mail:** [dkari@vanguard.edu](mailto:dkari@vanguard.edu)

**Office Hours:** MF 10:00-10:50 a.m., and by appointment

**Required Text:** Shakespeare, William. *The Riverside Shakespeare*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997.

### Course

**Description:** English 455: Shakespeare is designed for both English majors and theater students in its focus on the plays of what many consider to be the greatest writer to use the English language. This course treats a variety of Shakespeare's plays, including his tragedies, comedies, history plays, romances, and blended works such as tragi-comedies. Ideally, this approach to Shakespeare will allow students to discover the range of his genius and learn to appreciate both the fine points of his language and craft as well as the impressiveness of his larger themes.

### Course

**Requirements:** The primary focus of this course will be on the reading and discussing of Shakespeare's plays. Each play should be read prior to the class period in which it is to be discussed. In practice, we will be reading about one play per week, as listed on the syllabus. Multimedia presentations will assist students with the process of interpreting Shakespeare's works, but cannot replace individual diligence. The course requirements for a grade are as follows:

Quizzes—9/10	45%
Paper	25%
Critique	10%
Final Project	10%
Attendance & Participation	<u>10%</u>
Total	100%

At the end of the semester, grades will be assigned as follows:

90 points and above	= A	60-69 points	= D
80-89 points	= B	59 points and below	= F
70-79 points	= C		

**Quizzes** will take the place of larger examinations. Keeping up is vital. To facilitate regular reading and to reinforce understanding of the plays, quizzes will be given on the first day each play is listed. Each quiz will include about five questions and will be worth five points. Quizzes cannot be made up, but students only have to take nine of the ten quizzes given, or may drop their lowest score when taking all ten quizzes.

**Critique:** Each student is responsible for attending a Shakespearean production and writing a 2-3-page critique on it. When available, students may see a Shakespearean production on campus, or students may also elect to attend an off-campus production of a Shakespearean play. Be sure to clear this choice with the instructor in advance of attending the play.

**Final Project:** Shakespeare's plays were designed to be shared on stage and have their greatest power in the theater. Therefore, to help students better understand his work, each student is required to stage a two-minute monologue from one of the plays covered this semester, or develop a four to five-minute scene from one of these plays. See below for details.

**Class Participation:** Because English 455 involves considerable in-class discussion, students are expected to attend all classes. Any absences will affect the student's performance in this course, and may affect his or her grade. If a student misses more than six classes (3 weeks), the student will automatically fail himself or herself in the course. A limited number of make up options may be offered for students facing unanticipated and unavoidable conflicts. Late arrivals and early departures will result in a partial or total loss for class attendance. Three tardies equal one absence. To receive full credit for attendance, students must bring their books regularly to class. Furthermore, students are expected to be attentive and respectful in class. Using lap top computers and cell phones in class is not allowed. Students will be marked absent when found using these devices. The best part of learning in a university context usually occurs during discussion time, so stay alert to the fine insights many will share in this course.

**Final Paper:** To receive credit in English 455, each student is to complete a 10-12-page (3000-3600 word) paper treating some literary aspect of the writer's career and writings covered in this course. This paper should include *at least 8 scholarly secondary sources*, in addition to the primary sources used. Students may consider a wide range of topics, such as an analysis of one or two characters in a play, the treatment of themes in several plays, or the analysis of a scene as a reflection of the entire play. *The topic for this paper is to be cleared with the instructor no later than November 3, 2008.* By this date students should present the instructor with a one-page proposal along with a list of at least eight scholarly sources. The proposal should present the proposed thesis and discuss how this argument is to be developed in a context of the secondary sources listed. Both the proposal and the final paper should be written in proper MLA format and use proper documentation throughout. *The paper is due no later than December 3, 2008. No late papers accepted. Early submissions are welcome.*

Type all assignments on standard-sized, regular bond typing paper. On page one, double-space your name, instructor, course and section number, and date on four separate lines in the upper left side of the page and within the one inch margins. Place the title on the second line below the information block just described, and then type the first line of your paper on the second line below the title. Double-space the text and leave one-inch margins. Place your name, section number, the current

date, and a page number across the top of each page; triple-space after this heading before starting to type the text. Paper clip (do not staple) all assignments.

**Plagiarism:** One of the best signs of maturity is respect for other people's property and rights. Taking other people's ideas, formulas, phrases, or writings without giving proper credit constitutes a theft, commonly known as plagiarism. Students also need to be very careful to give proper attribution for sources taken from the internet. Using papers submitted for credit in other classes is also a form of plagiarism, even if the student submitting the paper wrote it. Any student found guilty of this crime will be subject to failure in English 455 and possible further disciplinary action by the Academic Dean's Office. Use of papers written for other courses is also an academic crime and will result in a failing grade.

## SYLLABUS

<b>August 27</b>	Introduction to course
<b>September 1</b>	<b>Labor Day Holiday</b>
<b>September 3</b>	<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> and “The Mythos of Spring”—quiz and discussion
<b>September 8</b>	“
<b>September 10</b>	<i>Othello</i> and lecture on tragedy—quiz and discussion
<b>September 15</b>	“
<b>September 17</b>	<i>Twelfth Night</i> —quiz and discussion
<b>September 22</b>	“
<b>September 24</b>	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i> —quiz and discussion
<b>September 29</b>	“
<b>October 1</b>	<i>Hamlet</i> —quiz and discussion
<b>October 6</b>	“
<b>October 8</b>	<i>Hamlet</i> --continued
<b>October 13</b>	“
<b>October 15</b>	<i>Macbeth</i> —quiz and discussion
<b>October 20</b>	“
<b>October 22</b>	<i>King Lear</i> —quiz and discussion
<b>October 27</b>	“
<b>October 29</b>	“

November 3	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i> —quiz and discussion <b>Topics must be cleared with the instructor by this date</b>
November 5	“
November 10	<i>Henry V</i> —quiz and discussion
November 12	“
November 17	Assign Final Project and discuss performance expectations <b>Critique is due—no late papers accepted</b>
November 19	<i>The Winter’s Tale</i> —quiz and discussion
November 24	“
November 26	Independent Research
November 27-28	<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>
December 1	<b>Recap of Concepts in Shakespeare’s Plays</b>
December 3	<b>Rehearsal</b> <b>Papers are due—no late papers accepted</b>
December 8	“
December 9-12	<b>Final Exam Week—TBA</b>

**N.B. Please note that this schedule may be adjusted to meet student needs better. Do stay alert for refinements of this sequence of planned sessions. As a rule, always be prepared by the first day a play is listed on the syllabus.**

## Critique of a Play<sup>1</sup>

The critique you are required to write for this class—a critique of a live Shakespearean production—should adhere to the following format. Each critique should be a minimum of three pages in length, be typed, use double spacing, and have appropriate margins and font size for MLA format. It should carry a structure similar to that of any critical paper, including an introduction with a thesis, a body with examples and evidence supporting the thesis, and a conclusion that does not simply reiterate the introduction, but provides some sense of clarity with respect to the journey on which you have taken the reader.

First off, please keep your audience in mind. You are, essentially, reporting to a readership that is knowledgeable about the theater, particularly with regard to Shakespeare, but has not yet had the opportunity to see this production. Your job is to tell them if they should spend their time and money to go, or if they should stay home. If you are interested in using a model for this critique, simply refer to *The Los Angeles Times Calendar* section, to *Entertainment Weekly*, to *Time* or *Newsweek* magazine, or to any other publication that reviews movies and plays.

To a degree, your thesis is your informed impression about the play. Did you like the play or not? Were you bored? Was the play engaging, exciting, average, or mediocre? You can add to the introduction by creating atmosphere. Consider mentioning when you went, who you were with, and what you were feeling as you entered the theater. If you have never been to this particular theater, what did you think of it?

The body of the critique provides specifics regarding why you did or did not like the play. Things to focus on might include the acting. Consider such matters as whether or not the play was believable, whether some performers were stronger than others (and you can mention names and why some actors were stronger or weaker than the others), whether the directing was successful and why, and whether the production went smoothly and was paced appropriately. Also consider such aspects of the production as set design, costuming, lighting, and even the story itself and the characters involved.

Finally, and most importantly, given the nature of this class, how did the theater and its players, director, and technicians succeed in interpreting Shakespeare for an audience? What elements were successful and why? What elements were not successful? How would you rate this production as an example of Shakespearean theater? And remember that good writing is itself dramatic, giving readers a sense of the excitement that all well written language conveys in helping us better appreciate our lives and efforts to express what is most important to us.

**Due no later than November 17, 2008**

---

<sup>1</sup>Adapted from the lecture material of Professor Warren Doody, with his permission.

## Shakespeare Final Project<sup>2</sup>

The final exam for this course consists in staging a four to five-minute scene from a Shakespearean play, preferably from one of the ten plays covered in this course. You will be assigned to a group of either three or four students; this group will be made up of a balanced mix of men and women, as well as Theater and English majors, to better facilitate the process. The specifics are as follows:

1. Choose a director from your group.
2. Find a scene in a play that has the same cast breakdown, more or less, as your group. In other words, if you have four people in your group, then you need to find a scene that has four characters in it. Everyone **MUST** be onstage in the scene, with the lines to speak and things to do. The director may have a smaller role onstage to balance the extra duties offstage. Feel free to double up as you see fit; an actor can play more than one role if the scene calls for it. Also, actors may play the role of a man or a woman, as needed in the scene.
3. The scene must be blocked, which simply means that the movements of the actors in the scene must be designated. Blocking is stage movement. The director, for the most part, will be responsible for blocking the scene, although actors are welcome to contribute ideas.
4. You will be responsible for props and any chairs, benches or other items that will contribute to the verisimilitude or realism of the scene. The Theater Department may be able to help you with this, but you should not necessarily count on it. Sound effects, set design, and costumes are all welcome, although not mandatory.
5. All actors must be off-book by the time of the performance. "Off-book" simply means that all lines must be memorized. There are to be no scripts onstage. Believe it or not, this is the easiest part of creating a character. However, having said that, start memorizing soon. The sooner you memorize your lines, the sooner you can create a three-dimensional character.
6. This project will probably be one of the more enjoyable finals you will take in your Vanguard University career, so have fun with it. You will be performing on the Lyceum stage (if possible) in front of your peers. You are welcome to invite friends and family. Please remember the cardinal rule of theater: thou shalt not be boring.
7. Showtime: Final Exam Time, or TBA

---

<sup>2</sup> Special thanks to Prof. Warren Doody for allowing the adaptation of this assignment.

## Final Paper

### Critical Analysis Paper

To receive credit in English 455, each student is to complete a 10-12-page (3000-3600 word) paper treating some literary aspect of the writer's career and writings covered in this course. This paper should include *at least 8 scholarly secondary sources*, in addition to the primary sources used. No Wikipedia articles or fluff from general Google searches. Consider using JSTOR and other credible academic search engines, or at least Google Academic. Students may consider a wide range of topics, such as an analysis of one or two characters in a play, the treatment of themes in several plays, or the analysis of a scene as a reflection of the entire play. ***The topic for this paper is to be cleared with the instructor no later than November 3, 2008.*** By this date students should present the instructor with a one-page proposal along with a list of at least eight scholarly sources. The proposal should present the proposed thesis and discuss how this argument is to be developed in a context of the secondary sources listed. Both the proposal and the final paper should be written in proper MLA format and use proper documentation throughout. ***The paper is due no later than December 3, 2008. No late papers accepted. Early submissions are welcome.***

This paper involves the analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of one or more Shakespearean plays covered in this course. The key is choosing your thesis wisely, and the possibilities for this are endless. For example, you might write a theoretical paper, such as a feminist interpretation of *Much Ado About Nothing*, a psychoanalytical interpretation of *Hamlet*, or a Marxist interpretation of *The Merchant of Venice*. These are all viable approaches for this paper. You might simply answer one of the many questions raised in these plays, such as why does Hamlet wait so long to act? How does Shakespeare seem to feel about the character of Shylock? How does he seem to feel about Henry V? How about King Lear? Is Macbeth imposing his own free will on things, or is he at the mercy of the fates (or some combination thereof)? Or consider writing a paper comparing and contrasting plays, plots, characters, or themes. You may also consider using the study guide questions to guide your own development of a useful research question and argument.

Approach your paper the way an attorney approaches a case in court. You are making an argument, then backing it up with evidence from the play itself and from relevant outside sources. Remember the value of designing your paper with the key components of an argumentative paper: a concise and engaging thesis presented in an opening that provides a context and a forecast for the rest of the paper; a body that fulfills the promised agenda given in the thesis and offers concise examples to illustrate major points; a conclusion that grows out of the discussion and ends the paper at a higher level of understanding than where the paper began.

N.B.: Please offer analysis, not just plot summary. Move beyond the obvious and use secondary sources to augment and support your insights, not to replace them.