

January 2024 Intersession

ENGL 4933, Studies in Popular Culture and Popular Genres: Film Noir

Professor M. Keith Booker

Textbooks Required: None. Electronic textbook will be supplied free of charge.

Description: Dark, violent, dangerous, cynical, and sexy, film noir has produced some of the most memorable films in American cinematic history. Film noir has been described as the most American of all film genres, yet it has also exercised a broad international influence (such as its crucial influence on the French New Wave), as well as an extensive influence on the works of contemporary American filmmakers (such as Quentin Tarantino). This course is intended to provide a survey of some of the leading works of film noir as well as a look at a few films clearly influenced by film noir, especially recent films that have used noir motifs in ways so inventive that they revise our understanding of the original noir cycle.

Essays, exams, and other major requirements: Students will be expected to view the required films on their own, generally via rental from Prime Video or another streaming service. Grade to be determined from a series of daily written assignments and a final exam.

ENGL 5223, Advanced Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture: Shakespeare in Film ENGL 5933, Advanced Studies in Popular Cultures and Popular Genres: Shakespeare in Film ENGL 6203, Seminar in Renaissance Literature and Culture: Shakespeare in Film

Teacher: D. Stephens

Textbooks Required:

Each student must have a subscription to Prime Video; if timed correctly, this may be obtained as a free one-month trial that covers the dates of the course, or it may cost as much as \$7.49 for one month. Information is here, under “Explore Other Plans” (just above the orange button):

https://www.amazon.com/amazonprime?_encoding=UTF8&pd_rd_r=ce6f99f1-b9cb-4ff6-85fc-d80d65691ced&pd_rd_w=zi5Kz&pd_rd_wg=7XCJZ&qid=1601330401

Greenblatt, Stephen, et al., eds. *The Norton Shakespeare*, Third Edition, Digital Edition. W. W. Norton, 2015. ISBN 978-0-393-68349-3. Ebook, delivered by VitalSource to our Blackboard site.

Description: We will read four plays by Shakespeare and watch many film adaptations of these works—some at full length and many more as clips. Here is a sampling: we will analyze Asta Nielsen’s 1921 *Hamlet* starring herself, and we will compare modern Hamlets played by David Tennant, Patrick Stewart, Benedict Cumberbatch, Adrian Lester, and Andrew Scott. We will look at selections from Aki Kaurismaki’s Finnish *Hamlet Goes Business* and from Kurosawa’s *The Bad Sleep Well*. We will view *The Tempest* in a science-fiction adaptation and in a stop-motion puppet production. We will see Caliban played as everything from a hairy, white-skinned Neanderthal to an angrily proud colonial slave. We will familiarize ourselves with adaptations of *Twelfth Night* that include Dinita Gohil playing Viola in a sari and an all-male stage production featuring Mark Rylance in a Tudor dress and Stephen Fry in yellow stockings. We will analyze a 1911 *Merchant of Venice* with a Shylock played as a grotesquely stereotyped Jew and watch Al Pacino’s culturally complex portrayal of Shylock in 2004, asking ourselves what it means that this production elides Portia’s racism. We will not search for the “best” version of each play or criticize productions for not being “faithful” to the written texts; instead, we will use our literary- critical powers to discuss how each director uses the materials of cinema to give a particular interpretation of a play, how each director’s interpretation speaks to and from its cultural moment, and what that director’s interpretation means to us in terms of the intersectional issues of today. We will read half of a play each night; class time will consist of discussion and film-watching, but there will be some lectures, and students taking the course at the 6000 level will give class presentations.

No *specific* prior knowledge of Shakespeare is required, but students should already be fairly comfortable with reading Shakespeare’s language, because this class is not an introduction to Shakespeare. If you have taken an undergraduate course that included some Shakespeare, you should be fine.

Essays, exams, and other major requirements: due to the time constraints of Intersession, there will not be a full-length essay requirement. Instead, there will be very short writing assignments—some at home, some in class—and a final exam. Active and consistent class participation will be the central requirement, but the class will be relaxed and mutually supportive in this regard. Students taking the class as ENGL 6203 will conduct a moderate amount of research into literary criticism of one or more film adaptations and will make a brief presentation about what they have learned.

MA advisory codes:

- **Generalist B – Renaissance Literature and Culture**
- **Specialist 2 – Cultural Studies**
- **Specialist 5 – Gender and Sexuality**