

ENGL 5223 002, Advanced Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture: Shakespeare in Film

ENGL 5933 004, Advanced Studies in Popular Cultures and Popular Genres: Shakespeare in Film

ENGL 6203 002, Seminar in Renaissance Literature and Culture: Shakespeare in Film

Teacher: D. Stephens

Textbooks Required:

A subscription to Prime Video is required; 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 \$9.00 for one month. Information is here, under “See More Plans” beneath the orange box:

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

Ed. Greenblatt, Stephen, *The Norton Shakespeare eBook*. This digital Shakespeare at around \$35 is cheaper than buying well-annotated individual volumes of the four plays. I do not recommend free online editions, and even other good editions may omit entire scenes. Your student account will be charged several days into the Intersession for the ebook, which will be on Blackboard; please talk with me before deciding to opt out.

Description: 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 Kaurismäki’s Finnish *Hamlet Goes Business* and 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 primarily of discussion and film-watching.

No *specific* prior knowledge of Shakespeare is required, but students should already be comfortable with reading Shakespeare’s language, because this class is not an introduction to Shakespeare. If you have taken a prior high-school or college course that included a few Shakespeare plays, 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 many 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.

MA advisory codes:

Generalist B – Renaissance Literature and Culture

Specialist 2 – Cultural Studies

Specialist 5 – Gender and Sexuality