

## Shakespeare and the Medieval Tradition

Course	English 234, Section A
Instructor	Ms. Jenny Bledsoe
Time	M/W/F, 9:30–10:20am
Office hours	M 12–1pm, W 11am–12pm, and by appointment
Contact	jbledsoe@agnesscott.edu



*Mummers in a medieval play.*  
Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 264, fol. 21v.

### Course description, objectives, and texts

#### **Course description**

In this course, we will read five Shakespeare plays of a variety of genres, including *The Taming of the Shrew*, *King Lear*, *Richard III*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. In each unit, we will read a medieval or early modern text before or after the Shakespeare play. Some of these works served as direct source material for Shakespeare's plays, while others provide us with a context in which to interpret Shakespeare's work in relation to medieval literary and dramatic traditions. For example, in our second unit, we read *King Lear* alongside excerpts from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* and Holinshed's *Chronicles* to explore how both pre-modern history writers and Shakespeare constructed a narrative about Britain's ancient history. The non-Shakespearean readings include excerpts from the writings of Geoffrey Chaucer, St Thomas More, Giovanni Boccaccio, and John Donne. We will also read a passage from the Bible, a fairytale, and several works of recent scholarship on Shakespeare and his medieval sources. The major assignments for the course include an exercise in making a quarto manuscript with an accompanying paper, a presentation and short paper on a modern adaptation of one of Shakespeare's plays, and a longer research or creative project.

English 110 or the equivalent (including exemption) is a pre-requisite for the course. For SUMMIT requirements, this class fulfills a Global Learning Elective as an area studies course. It falls in the SUMMIT Intellectual Breadth Category for the Arts and Humanities. For the English major, this course fulfills the requirement for a pre-1800 course.

#### **Learning objectives**

By the end of the course, students will be able to ...

- ❖ evaluate Shakespeare's works within their historical and cultural context
- ❖ explain and study how Shakespeare utilized medieval sources in his plays
- ❖ understand and express how material culture and printing history influence our reception of Shakespeare's works
- ❖ analyze Shakespeare's works using the *Oxford English Dictionary*, contemporary criticism, and early printed editions
- ❖ explore how Shakespeare's plays are being adapted in our culture in new stage performances, films, or other settings
- ❖ prepare and deliver an effective oral presentation on a literary work
- ❖ understand and practice writing as a recursive process, including research, drafting, revision, and reflection

## Required books and other readings

The following books are required. For book information, go to [agnesscottshop.com](http://agnesscottshop.com), hover over the “Books” tab, then click on the “textbooks and course materials” link. Select the English department (ENG) and the course number (234) and section (A) to view the textbooks. All other readings will be available online via a link on Moodle or course reserves.

- ❖ Shakespeare, William. *King Lear*. (All Folger Shakespeare Library editions.)
- ❖ ---. *Measure for Measure*.
- ❖ ---. *Richard III*.
- ❖ ---. *Romeo and Juliet*.
- ❖ ---. *The Taming of the Shrew*.

## Course policies

**Academic honesty policy.** The Agnes Scott College honor code embodies an ideal of character, conduct, and citizenship, and is an important part of the College’s mission and core identity. This applies especially to academic honesty and integrity. Passing off someone else’s work as your own represents intellectual fraud and theft and violates the core values of our academic community. To be honorable, you should understand not only what counts as academic dishonesty, but also how to avoid engaging in these practices. You should:

- ❖ review each course syllabus for the professor’s expectations regarding course work and class attendance.
- ❖ attribute all ideas taken from other sources; this shows respect for other scholars. Plagiarism can include portraying another’s work and ideas as your own, buying a paper online and turning it in as if it were your own work, or not citing or improperly citing references on a reference page or within the text of a paper.
- ❖ not to falsify or create data and resources or alter a graded work without prior consent of your professor. This includes making up a reference for a works cited page or making up statistics or facts for academic work.
- ❖ not allow another party to do your work/exam or submit the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from the course instructors. Cheating also includes taking an exam for another person, looking on another person’s exam for answers, using exams from previous classes without permission, or bringing or using unauthorized notes or resources (i.e., electronic, written, or otherwise) during an exam.
- ❖ not facilitate cheating, which can happen when you help another student complete a take home exam, give answers to an exam, talk about an exam with a student who has not taken it, or collaborate with others on work that is supposed to be completed independently.
- ❖ be truthful about the submission of work, which includes the time of submission and the place of submission (e.g., e-mail, online, in a mailbox, to an office, etc.).

You should understand that penalties result from dishonest conduct, ranging from failure of the assignment to expulsion from the college. You should speak with your professors if you need clarification about any of these policies.

**Attendance policy.** You will have three personal days for the entire semester. You do not need to inform me of the reason for your absence, and you may use these personal days as you see fit. The personal days include any days when you are sick (except for extreme circumstances), so you may want to save them up until later in the semester just in case. If you miss no more than three days of class, you will receive a 100 for the attendance portion of your grade. After three absences, the attendance portion of your grade starts going down as follows:

- ❖ 4 absences = 90
- ❖ 5 absences = 85
- ❖ 6 absences = 80
- ❖ 7 absences = 75
- ❖ 8 absences = 70

If you have a serious issue that causes you to miss more than three days of class, please inform me about the situation as soon as possible.

**Communication.** Email is the best way to contact me if you have questions or concerns. Generally, I will respond to all student email within 24 hours (although on weekends and holidays, it may take a little longer). Likewise, there may be instances when I will need to contact you by email. It is your responsibility to check your email account at least once every 24 hours.

**Course evaluations.** Near the end of the semester you will be notified by email and provided with a link to follow to complete course evaluations online outside of class. I want you to know that your feedback on the course is extremely valuable to me, the department, and the administration. In particular, I take your comments very seriously and use them to improve the course the next time I teach it. Please do fill out a course evaluation when you receive the emailed link at the end of the semester. If at least 90 percent of the class has completed the evaluations for the course by 11:59pm on Friday, December 14, I will award everyone ½ a point of extra credit on the final grade.

**Inclusion.** This course adheres to the principles of diversity and inclusion integral to the Agnes Scott community. We respect people from all backgrounds and affirm people's decisions about gender expression and identity. Please feel free to correct me if your preferred name or gender pronoun are different from that listed on the class roster.

**Late work policy.** All assigned work must be completed on time and submitted via Moodle. If an assignment is due in class, you must submit an electronic copy of the assignment on Moodle by the time class begins (9:30 a.m.). If an assignment is not due in class, the assignment will be due on Moodle on the due date by the time specified (often but not always 5pm or 11:59pm). Late assignments will be lowered 5 points for every calendar day they are late, unless you have received approval from the instructor before the deadline (note: requests are not guaranteed approval). No assignment will be accepted more than 7 days past the due date.

**Submitting assignments.** All assignments will be submitted through Moodle. When an assignment is due in class, you should submit the paper on Moodle by the time class begins (9:30am).

**Technology policy.** When you are not actively using your laptop or tablet to view a reading for the class or take notes, I expect you to put your devices away and to give your full attention to the discussion. You should not use a cell phone at any time during class. I reserve the right to revoke your technology privileges if you use your devices for activities unrelated to class.

## Resources

**Access and disability resources.** I strive to create an inclusive learning environment for all. I am invested in your success in this class and at Agnes Scott, so please let me know if anything is standing in the way of your doing your best work. This can include your own learning strengths, any classroom

dynamics that you find uncomfortable, ESL issues, disability or chronic illness, and/or personal issues that impact your work. I will hold such conversations in strict confidence. Agnes Scott College seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, please contact Rashad Morgan in the Office of Academic Advising (x6174) to complete the registration process. Once registered, please contact me so we can discuss the specific accommodations needed for this course.

**Center for Writing and Speaking.** The Center for Writing and Speaking (CWS) is a peer tutoring organization devoted to improving and enhancing students’ writing and speaking skills. Staffed by trained peer tutors, the CWS provides students of all ability levels with individual assistance in writing papers and in preparing and practicing speeches and presentations. The CWS is a great place to bring any project at any stage in your composing process. CWS tutors can talk with you about your purpose, organization, audience, design choices, or use of sources. They can also work with you on sentence-level concerns (including grammar and word choice), but they won’t proofread for you. Instead, they’ll discuss strategies and resources you can use to become a better editor of your own work. Tutoring is offered Sunday through Thursday from 9am to 10pm and Friday from 9am to 4pm. You can schedule an appointment online at <https://www.agnesscott.edu/writingandspeaking/>. You can also utilize the CWS’s open hours on Mondays from 7 to 11pm when students are invited to spend 15 minutes with a tutor on a small task.

**Title IX.** For the safety of the entire community, if you have experienced or have any information about sexual misconduct, the college strongly urges you to immediately report such information to Title IX Coordinator Karen Gilbert at [kgilbert@agnesscott.edu](mailto:kgilbert@agnesscott.edu) or 404-471-6435.

## Course requirements & grading

### **Course requirements**

At least one week ahead of the deadline (and usually about two weeks before), you will receive an assignment sheet for each of the assignments listed below. These assignment sheets contain more details about the requirements and goals for each paper, presentation, and activity.

<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Percentage of final grade</b>
Attendance	ongoing	10%
Participation	ongoing	10%
Required meeting with professor	c. first few weeks of semester	1%
Completion of daily <i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> word search journal	checked each Friday	15%
Short reflection papers on Units 1 & 2, 2 pages each	Fri., Sept. 21, 9:30am; Wed., Oct. 10, 9:30am	5% each
Quarto manuscript creation with accompanying paper, 3–4 pages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshop: Fri., Oct. 19, 9:30am</li> <li>• Paper deadline: Sun., Oct. 28, 5pm</li> <li>• Quarto manuscript due in class on Mon., Oct. 29</li> </ul>	15%
Project on a modern adaptation of one of our plays (sign-up day on Wed., Sept. 5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation, 10 minutes</li> <li>• Paper, due around two weeks after presentation date, 4–5 pages</li> </ul>	Varies according to presentation date; papers due at 11:59pm. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pres: Sept. 17; paper: Oct. 1</li> <li>• Pres: Oct. 8; paper: Oct. 22</li> <li>• Pres: Oct. 31; paper: Nov. 12</li> <li>• Pres: Nov. 12; paper: Nov. 28</li> <li>• Pres: Dec. 3; paper: Dec. 10</li> </ul>	5% pres. 10% paper

Final project (option for creative or research project)		
• Proposal, 1 page	Sun., Nov. 4, 5pm	2%
• Required meeting with professor about proposal	Week of Nov. 5	1%
• Progress report	Sun., Nov. 18, 5pm	1%
• Presentation, 6–8 minutes	Fri., Dec. 7 or Mon., Dec. 10	5%
• Final product (8-page paper or equivalent)	Mon., Dec. 17, 5pm	15%

## Grading rubric

You will earn letter grades for all assignments. Individual assignments will have their own assignment sheets which will articulate the standards for grading that assignment. The following is a general description of the standards for each letter grade:

- ❖ Work that earns the grade of “A” will be *substantially above average*, well exceeding all of the expectations of the assignment.
- ❖ Work that earns the grade of “B” will be *above average*, meeting the assignment requirements and exceeding some of them.
- ❖ Work that earns the grade of “C” will be *satisfactory*, meeting the basic requirements of the assignment.
- ❖ Work that earn the grade of “D” will be *unsatisfactory*, not fully meeting all of the basic requirements of the assignment.
- ❖ Work that earns the grade of “F” will be *far below satisfactory*, falling substantially short of the basic requirements of that assignment.

I use the following grading rubric, which I customize to each assignment, to comment on your writing:

Concerns <i>Areas that need work</i>	Criteria <i>Standards for assessment</i>	Advanced <i>Evidence of exceeding standards</i>
	<b>Basic requirements</b> Does the assignment meet the length requirement and format the composition as outlined on the assignment sheet?	
	<b>Claim / Argument</b> Has the writer presented a clear argument or observation about the text? Does the writer make specific, rather than generalized claims, about the text?	
	<b>Evidence</b> Does the assignment include properly cited quotations from the text analyzed? Does the assignment offer sufficient evidence to support the argument(s) the writer is making? Does the writer explain how the evidence offered supports the claim?	
	<b>Organization</b> Is the assignment organized and arranged effectively? Does the writer transition smoothly between ideas and paragraphs?	
	<b>Writing</b> Is the writing stylistically interesting and sophisticated? Is the writing free of grammar and spelling errors?	

Paper comments and grades will be posted to Moodle.

## Grading scale

When calculating final grades, please note that I do not round up. Because of this, take note of the significant ½ point extra credit opportunity if the class completes the online course evaluations at the end of the semester.

Points/Percentage	Letter Grade	ASC point scale
93.00–100	A	4.00
90.00–92.99	A–	3.67
87.00–89.99	B+	3.33
83.00–86.99	B	3.00
80.00–82.99	B–	2.67
77.00–79.99	C+	2.33
73.00–76.99	C	2.00
70.00–72.99	C–	1.67
67.00–69.99	D+	1.33
63.00–66.99	D	1.00
60.00–63.00	D–	0.67
0–59.99	F	0.00

## Course schedule and logistics

### Important dates for Fall 2018

Date	Event
August 29	Classes begin
August 31	Last day to add or drop using AscAgnes
September 4	Last day to add a fall class or change to audit
September 15	Last day to drop without a W
October 28	Last day to drop with a W or change to pass/fail
December 10	Last day of classes
December 12–17	Exam period

**Final exam.** There will be no final exam. Your final project is due at the end of the exam period since this final project is completed *in lieu* of a final exam.

## Course schedule

CR = online course reserves

M = link to online version via Moodle

The course schedule may be modified slightly during the semester. Check announcements on Moodle for updates. I will inform you during class of any changes to the reading and writing requirements. Informal writing assignments may be added during the semester.

Wednesday, August 29                      Introduction to the course

### **Unit 1. Marriage and Gender Roles: *The Taming of the Shrew***

Friday, August 31                      Cooper, “Shakespeare’s Medieval World,” 9–41 (M)

Monday, September 3	Labor Day: No class
Wednesday, September 5	Genesis 1–2 (M) Shakespeare, <i>The Taming of the Shrew</i> , Induction & Act I (p. 7–69) <b>Sign-up day for individual presentations</b>
Friday, September 7	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i> , Acts II & III (p. 73–135)
Monday, September 10	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i> , Act IV (p. 139–191)
Wednesday, September 12	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i> , Act V (p. 195–221)
Friday, September 14	Chaucer, <i>Wife of Bath's Prologue &amp; Tale</i> (CR)
Monday, September 17	Anglican Homily on Marriage (1562) (CR) Presentation(s) on a modern adaptation of <i>The Taming of the Shrew</i> [Paper deadline after presentation: Monday, October 1, 11:59pm]

## **Unit 2. The Mythical Pre-History of Britain: King Lear**

Wednesday, September 19	Excerpt: Geoffrey of Monmouth, <i>History of the Kings of Britain</i> (CR)
Friday, September 21	No class <b>Reflection paper on Unit 1 due on Moodle by 9:30am</b>
Monday, September 24	Excerpt: Raphael Holinshed, <i>The Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Ireland</i> , 2nd edition (1587) (CR)
Wednesday, September 26	Shakespeare, <i>King Lear</i> , Act I (p. 7–69)
Friday, September 28	<i>King Lear</i> , Act II (p. 73–119)
Monday, October 1	<i>King Lear</i> , Act III (p. 123–167)
Wednesday, October 3	<i>King Lear</i> , Act IV (p. 171–223)
Friday, October 5	<i>King Lear</i> , Act V (p. 227–261)
Monday, October 8	<i>Gesta Romanorum</i> : Theodosius the Emperoure (M) “The princess who loved her father like salt” fairytale (M) Presentation(s) on a modern adaptation of <i>King Lear</i> [Paper deadline after presentation: Monday, October 22, 11:59pm]
Wednesday, October 10	John Higgins, “The Tragoedye of Cordilla,” <i>The Mirror for Magistrates</i> (1574) (M) <b>Reflection paper on Unit 2 due on Moodle by 9:30am</b>
Friday, October 12	Fall Break: No class

### **Unit 3. Richard III: Disability and History**

Monday, October 15	Shakespeare, <i>Richard III</i> , Act I (p. 9–89)
Wednesday, October 17	<i>Richard III</i> , Act II (p. 93–125) Katherine Schaap Williams, “ <i>Richard III</i> and the Staging of Disability,” <i>British Library</i> (M)
Friday, October 19	<b>Material culture day!</b> Exercises with quills, quarto manuscripts, and movable type
Monday, October 22	<i>Richard III</i> , Act III (p. 129–193)
Wednesday, October 24	<i>Richard III</i> , Act IV (p. 197–263)
Friday, October 26	<i>Richard III</i> , Act V (p. 267–303)
<b>Sunday, October 28, 5pm</b>	<b>Deadline for paper accompanying quarto manuscript</b>
Monday, October 29	Excerpt: St Thomas More’s <i>History of King Richard III</i> (CR) <b>Quarto manuscript due in class</b>
Wednesday, October 31	Allison Hobgood, “Teeth Before Eyes: Illness and Invisibility in Shakespeare’s <i>Richard III</i> ,” <i>Disability, Health, and Happiness in Shakespeare</i> , ed. Sujata Iyengar (Routledge, 2015), 23–40 (CR) Presentation(s) on a modern adaptation of <i>Richard III</i> [Paper deadline after presentation: Monday, November 12, 11:59pm]

### **Unit 4. Saints, Sex, and Justice: Measure for Measure**

Friday, November 2	Giovanni Battista Giralaldi a.k.a Cinthio, “Epitia,” <i>Hecatommithi</i> (CR)
<b>Sunday, November 4, 5pm</b>	<b>Deadline for final project proposal</b>
Monday, November 5	Shakespeare, <i>Measure for Measure</i> , Acts I & II (p. 7–89)
Wednesday, November 7	<i>Measure for Measure</i> , Act III (p. 93–127)
Friday, November 9	<i>Measure for Measure</i> , Act IV (p. 131–169)
Monday, November 12	<i>Measure for Measure</i> , Act V (p. 173–211) Presentation(s) on a modern adaptation of <i>Measure for Measure</i> [Paper deadline after presentation: Wednesday, November 28, 11:59pm]
Wednesday, November 14	Julia Reinhard Lupton, excerpt from “Saints on Trial: The Genre of <i>Measure for Measure</i> ” (110–11); “Saint Cecilia” (318–23); “Saint Paul the Hermit” (84–85) (all CR)



### **Unit 5. Love, Mortality, and Burial: Romeo and Juliet**

Friday, November 16	Boccaccio, "Catalina," <i>Decameron</i> 10.4 (CR)
<b>Sunday, November 18, 5pm</b>	<b>Deadline for progress report on final project</b>
Monday, November 19	Shakespeare, <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , Prologue & Act I (p. 7–61)
Wednesday, November 21	Thanksgiving Break: No class
Friday, November 23	Thanksgiving Break: No class
Monday, November 26	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , Act II (p. 65–111)
Wednesday, November 28	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , Act III (p. 115–173)
Friday, November 30	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , Act IV (p. 177–207)
Monday, December 3	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , Act V (p. 211–243) Presentation(s) on a modern adaptation of <i>Romeo &amp; Juliet</i> [Paper deadline after presentation: Monday, December 10, 11:59pm]
Wednesday, December 5	A sermon by John Donne (CR)
Friday, December 7	Presentations on final projects
Monday, December 10	Presentations on final projects
<b>Monday, December 17, 5pm</b>	<b>Final project due on Moodle.</b> If any of you have a creative project that you need to submit in person, I can also be in my office at this time.