

Shakespeare: Tragedies (Fall 2020)

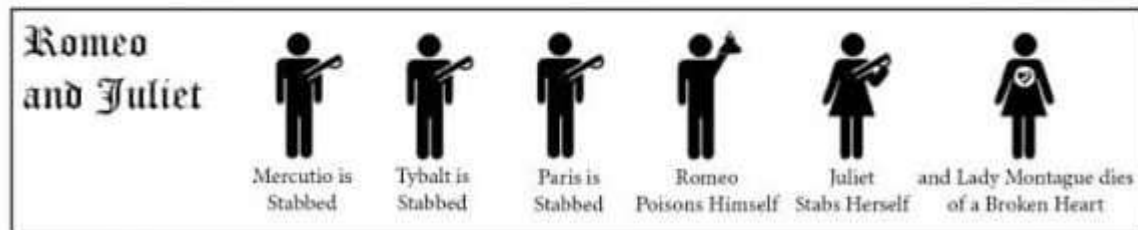
Dr. Jenny C. Bledsoe

Shakespeare's Tragedies

Everybody Dies.

Original Concept
by Cam Magee

Design by
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Shakespeare's tragedies include some of his most popular plays, such as *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Othello*. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a tragedy as a "drama ... dealing with the downfall or death of the protagonist, typically a political leader or royal personage who is brought to ruin because of his or her own error or fault, or because of a conflict with a greater force (such as fate or the gods)" ("tragedy," n. 1b). The focus on the protagonist's "tragic flaw" emerged from Aristotle's *Poetics*, which is our first reading this semester. Beginning our course with a discussion of catharsis and tragedy in Aristotle, we will frame Shakespeare's works in relation to earlier literary and dramatic traditions. In ENGL 4313/5583, we will read and analyze a selection of Shakespeare's tragedies, from the classics *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* to two of his "classical" tragedies, *Titus Andronicus* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, which are set in the ancient world. Our final play, *Troilus and Cressida*, is sometimes labelled a "problem play" because of its generic ambiguity, falling between comedy and tragedy. For all five plays, Shakespeare consulted source material to inspire his dramatic works; we will read short selections of classical and medieval stories that influenced each play. As a class, we will analyze Shakespeare's plays in a variety of contexts, from classical and medieval precedents to early modern and contemporary performances. The non-Shakespearean readings include excerpts from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Plutarch's *Lives*, Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, Robert Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*, and Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles*. We will also evaluate Shakespearean performance by learning about early modern theatrical practices and by watching and analyzing modern adaptations of his plays.

BOOKS

The following five books are required; they are all Folger Shakespeare Library editions (ed. Barbara Mowat et al.). All other readings will be available via a link or PDF on Blackboard.

- Shakespeare, William. *Antony and Cleopatra*. ISBN: 9780743482851.
- ---. *Hamlet*. ISBN: 9780743477123.
- ---. *Macbeth*. ISBN: 9780743477109.

- ---. *Titus Andronicus*. ISBN: 9780671722920.
- ---. *Troilus and Cressida*. IBSN: 9780743273312.

You will also be required to rent *Antony and Cleopatra* via YouTube for the adaptation discussion; the rental options are currently \$2.99 (SD) or \$3.99 (HD). The production of *Macbeth* we are watching is freely available on YouTube.

ASSIGNMENTS

Undergraduate Requirements (ENGL 4313)	Deadline	Percentage of final grade
Attendance	ongoing	10%
Participation including contributions during class (6%) & in online discussions (7x, 2% each)	ongoing	20%
OED journals Weekly <i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> journal entries: 3 words per entry, around 3 sentences per word	Submit via Blackboard by 4:30pm each Wednesday for 13 weeks (see schedule below for deadlines)	13% (1% each)
Adaptation discussions (3 entries, 2x) We will all watch an adaptation of two of our plays on our own time (you will have several days between our final class on the play and when the discussion posts are due). <i>Macbeth</i> is free on YouTube, and <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> can be rented on YouTube for a few dollars. You will then post <u>3 entries of 3– 5 sentences each</u> for each film. The open forums for our discussions will include (1) historical and cultural setting, (2) dialogue and use of original language, (3) major changes to characters and scenes, and (4) lighting, costumes, and props.	1) Sun., Sept. 6, 11:59pm 2) Sun., Sept. 27, 11:59pm	8% (4% each)
Literary analysis (5 pages) As a literary analysis, this paper should be grounded in close readings of one of the first three plays we read in class.	Sun., Oct. 11, 11:59pm <i>On Sept. 30, bring notes and quotes for the paper to class.</i> <i>On Oct. 7, bring a draft of the paper to class for peer review.</i>	13%
Adaptation project (select your own play and film)		
• Paper analyzing a Shakespeare adaptation (film, stage production, etc.) of your choice (5 pages)	Sun., Nov. 1, 11:59pm <i>On Oct. 21, bring notes and quotes for the paper to class.</i>	12%

	<i>On Oct. 28, bring a draft of the paper to class for peer review.</i>	
• Presentation (5 minutes)	Wed., Nov. 4, in class (4:30–7:10pm)	4%
Creative research project		
• Proposal (1 page), plus bibliography of 3 potential secondary sources and the play that inspires your project	Sun., Nov. 15, 11:59pm	4%
• Creative product (a short story, poem, short play, dramatic performance, graphic novel, podcast, animation, multimedia narrative, board game, video, etc.). No specific length, but the final product should match the amount of work required for an 8–10-page research paper	Wed., Dec. 9, 4:30pm	15%
• Accompanying introduction and explanation of the final product (at least 500 words)		
• Annotated bibliography of sources consulted for the project (at least 5 secondary sources)		
• Informal presentation of creative project via Zoom	Wed., Dec. 9, 4:30–7:10pm	1%

Graduate Requirements (ENGL 5583)	Deadline	Percentage of final grade
Attendance	ongoing	10%
Participation including contributions during class (4%) & in online discussions (7x, 2% each)	ongoing	18%
OED journals Weekly <i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> journal entries: 3 words per entry, around 3 sentences per word	Submit via Blackboard by 4:30pm each Wednesday for 13 weeks (see schedule below for deadlines)	13% (1% each)
Adaptation discussions (3 entries, 2x) We will all watch an adaptation of two of our plays on our own time (you will have several days between our final class on the play and when the discussion posts are due). You will then post <u>3 entries of 3–5 sentences each</u> for each film. <i>Macbeth</i> is free on YouTube, and <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> can be rented on	1) Sun., Sept. 6, 11:59pm 2) Sun., Sept. 27, 11:59pm	6% (3% each)

YouTube for a few dollars. The open forums for our discussions will include (1) historical and cultural setting, (2) dialogue and use of original language, (3) major changes to characters and scenes, and (4) lighting, costumes, and props.		
Literary analysis (5 pages) As a literary analysis, this paper should be grounded in close readings of one of the first three plays we read in class.	Sun., Oct. 11, 11:59pm <i>On Sept. 30, bring notes and quotes for the paper to class.</i> <i>On Oct. 7, bring a draft of the paper to class for peer review.</i>	10%
Adaptation project (select your own play and film)		
• Paper analyzing a Shakespeare adaptation (film, stage production, etc.) of your choice (5 pages)	Sun., Nov. 1, 11:59pm <i>On Oct. 21, bring notes and quotes for the paper to class.</i> <i>On Oct. 28, bring a draft of the paper to class for peer review.</i>	10%
• Presentation (5 minutes)	Wed., Nov. 4, in class (4:30–7:10pm)	3%
Source comparison research paper (5 pages)	Sun., Nov. 22, 11:59pm	10%
Creative research project <i>For graduate student projects, we can discuss additional options, depending on your career goals. For example, you might find it more useful to write a traditional research paper and lesson plan for your final project.</i>		
• Proposal (1 page), plus bibliography of 4 potential secondary sources and the play that inspires your project	Sun., Nov. 15, 11:59pm	4%
• Creative product (a short story, poem, short play, dramatic performance, graphic novel, podcast, animation, multimedia narrative, board game, video, etc.). No specific length, but the final product should match the amount of work required for an 8–10-page research paper • Accompanying introduction and explanation of the final product (at least 500 words) • Annotated bibliography of sources consulted for the project (at least 8 secondary sources)	Wed., Dec. 9, 4:30pm	15%
• Informal presentation of creative project via Zoom	Wed., Dec. 9, 4:30–7:10pm	1%

COURSE SCHEDULE

Introduction to Shakespearean Tragedies

Aug. 19 Required reading: syllabus & excerpt from Aristotle's *Poetics* ([PDF](#))
Recommended reading: Helen Cooper, "Shakespeare's Medieval World" ([PDF](#))

Macbeth

Aug. 26 *Macbeth* (1606?), Acts I–III (pp. 7–115)
[OED Journal #1 due by 4:30pm](#)

Sun., Aug. 30: online discussion #1 due by 11:59pm

Sept. 2 *Macbeth*, Acts IV–V (pp. 119–191)
Holinshed, *Chronicles* (1587) on Kings Duncan, Macbeth, and Duffe ([PDF](#))
[OED Journal #2 due by 4:30pm](#)

Sun., Sept. 6: *Macbeth* adaptation posts due by 11:59pm

Antony and Cleopatra

Sept. 9 *Antony and Cleopatra* (pre-1608, 1606?), Acts I–II (pp. 7–111)
[OED Journal #3 due by 4:30pm](#)

Sun., Sept. 13: online discussion #2 due by 11:59pm

Sept. 16 *Antony and Cleopatra*, Acts III–IV (pp. 115–235)
[OED Journal #4 due by 4:30pm](#)

Sun., Sept. 20: online discussion #3 due by 11:59pm

Sept. 23 *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act V (pp. 239–275)
Plutarch, "The Life of Marc Antony," *Parallel Lives*, trans. North (1603) ([PDF](#))
[OED Journal #5 due by 4:30pm](#)

Sun., Sept. 27: *Antony and Cleopatra* adaptation posts due by 11:59pm

Titus Andronicus

Sept. 30 Legend of Philomela from Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (Folger appendix, pp. 225–39)
Titus Andronicus (c. 1590–1593), Acts I–II (pp. 7–87)
[OED Journal #6 due by 4:30pm](#)
[Bring to class: notes and quotes for literary analysis](#)

Sun., Oct. 4: online discussion #4 due by 11:59pm

Oct. 7 *Titus Andronicus*, Acts III–IV (pp. 91–207)
[OED Journal #7 due by 4:30pm](#)
[Bring to class: draft of literary analysis](#)

Sun., Oct. 11: Literary analysis due by 11:59pm

Hamlet

Oct. 14 *Hamlet* (1601?), Acts I–II (pp. 7–119)
OED Journal #8 due by 4:30pm

Sun., Oct. 18: online discussion #5 due by 11:59pm

Oct. 21 *Hamlet*, Acts III–IV (pp. 123–235)
OED Journal #9 due by 4:30pm
Bring to class: notes and quotes for adaptation paper

Sun., Oct. 25: online discussion #6 due by 11:59pm

Oct. 28 *Hamlet*, Act V (pp. 239–287)
Saxo Grammaticus, *Historia Danica* (c. 1216) (PDF)
OED Journal #10 due by 4:30pm
Bring to class: draft of adaptation paper

Sun., Nov. 1: Adaptation paper due by 11:59pm

Adaptations galore!

Nov. 4 Adaptation presentations (4:30–7:10pm)
After presentations: brainstorm ideas for creative research projects

Troilus and Cressida

Nov. 11 *Troilus and Cressida* (1601–1602?), prologue & Acts I–II (pp. 13–107)
OED Journal #11 due by 4:30pm

Sun., Nov. 15: Creative research project proposal due by 11:59pm

Nov. 18 *Troilus and Cressida*, Acts III–IV (pp. 111–207)
OED Journal #12 due by 4:30pm

Fri., Nov. 20: online discussion #7 due by 11:59pm

[Graduate students only. Sun., Nov. 22: Source comparison research paper due by 11:59pm]

Nov. 25 Thanksgiving Break, no class

Dec. 2 *Troilus and Cressida*, Act V (pp. 211–265)
Excerpts from Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde* (mid-1380s) and Robert
Henryson, *Testament of Cresseid* (second half of 15th c.) (PDFs)
OED Journal #13 due by 4:30pm

Creative research projects on Shakespeare

Dec. 9

Creative research project, explanatory essay, and annotated bibliography
due by 4:30pm

Informal presentations and discussion during final exam time