

English 445: William Shakespeare
Draft Syllabus for Study Abroad Proposal
London Fall 2024
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NOTE: This is a revision of the course on Shakespeare that I teach here with some of the opportunities offered by teaching the course in London outlined and with the Study Abroad SLOs—all of which fit perfectly into the course—incorporated. The challenge is that designing a syllabus this far in advance makes it impossible to articulate all of the possible opportunities that one could take advantage of, given that theatres don't release their schedules this far in advance.

With that caveat, there are two major opportunities easy enough to build into the syllabus. First is the possibility of visiting Shakespeare's Globe, the reproduction of an Elizabethan theatre close to the site of the original Globe which has informative exhibits and performances all year around. Second is a trip to Stratford, Shakespeare's birthplace and the home of the Royal Shakespeare Company, where in addition to visiting Shakespeare's home, grave site and various other pieces of Shakespeariana, one can attend RSC performances. I would hope to be able to arrange a weekend visit in which we could see the major Shakespeare sites and see 2 or 3 plays.

Stratford hasn't changed much since Shakespeare's day, but London has, so there are fewer sites to visit in London that will give us a feel for the London he lived in. Fortunately, however, London has many wonderful museums that can give us insight into the culture of his time, and most of these museums are absolutely free. The syllabus outlines the museums that make the most sense to visit in terms of their permanent collections, but there may also be temporary exhibitions on during the semester that would lead to this list of visits being modified or expanded.

In addition to the Globe and the RSC, there will be many other Shakespeare and Shakespeare-related theatrical productions in any given semester in London: the last time I was in London, in a visit of one week, I saw *Othello*, *Twelfth Night*, and *The Winter's Tale* in addition to Daniel Radcliffe in Tom Stoppard's take off on *Hamlet*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. During my visit in October, I plan to see *Macbeth* and *As You Like It*, as well as a new play about Shakespeare's life called *Hamnet*. Beyond Shakespeare, London has a rich performing arts scene, and I would expect to be able to

attend a concert of music from Shakespeare's time. If any plays by his contemporaries were being performed, we could also learn a great deal about Shakespeare by seeing one of those plays. (Spoiler alert: Shakespeare is better, but Marlowe and Jonson and many others are really pretty good too.)

In an ideal world, there would be productions of all the plays I envision teaching and they would be produced in exactly the right sequence. But of course that won't happen, and the modifications needed to take advantage of live theatre will be far more enriching than not. So this syllabus needs to be understood to be far more provisional than a typical syllabus is: if I were selected for the London semester, I would immediately start researching what plays were on for the period of the semester in which I would be teaching and then begin to think about how to incorporate those opportunities. I typically teach Shakespeare in an approximately chronological sequence, but I suspect that this principle of order would have to give way in the face of shorter than a semester theatrical runs. Switching plays in and out according to what we could see is not going to be a problem, as I have never taught the exact same sequence of plays even here in Hawaii. Since I use electronic editions available on-line, there would be absolutely no problem switching texts, even during the semester if something unexpectedly opened and seemed worth seeing. So although the set of plays outlined in this syllabus is almost certainly not exactly the plays we would read in London, I have returned to a somewhat more conventional list of Shakespeare's 'greatest hits' rather than the somewhat more arcane list I have taught the last few semesters both because I expect a more general student population in the Study Abroad population and because the most famous plays are the most commonly produced.

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to the works of William Shakespeare, universally seen to be the greatest writer in the English language, the greatest playwright of all time, and one of the 4 or 5 towering figures in the Western canon. His work has inspired countless other works of art, including other works of literature but also operas, ballets, music, and works in the visual arts. At the same time, Shakespeare is our contemporary, speaking to us about contemporary issues involving sexuality, gender, race, power, and empire, and continues to be performed and adapted for the screen (and virtually every other medium) with seemingly ever-increasing frequency.

Learning Objectives:

The student who completes the course successfully will **know**

- 1) more than a quarter of Shakespeare's plays, which is to say a representative sample of the work of the greatest writer in the English language, including plays across a range of genres and periods in his oeuvre;
- 2) much more generally about the period of the Renaissance and specifically about Elizabethan England, the period during which Europe begins to affect the rest of the world and England begins its imperial expansion (without which for good or for ill—among many other things--Hawai'i would not be a predominately English-speaking state in a country called the United States of America);
- 3) much more about dramatic literature, in terms of its genres, the relation between playscript and live theatre, and the performance culture of English theatre today;

will **do** or **have done** or **have accomplished**:

- 4) the task of reading a substantial body of work in Renaissance English, ten plays and a few shorter poems, and will have seen a number of these works live in the theatre;
- 5) a great deal of in-class discussion of the themes of these works, enhancing his or her ability to discuss and interpret literary works and debate issues raised by them;
- 6) three essays developing his or her power to analyze literary and dramatic texts;

will (or should) **value**

- 7) the beauty and power of Shakespeare's language;
- 8) the ability of older works of literature to speak to and illuminate present-day concerns;
- 9) drama as an important part of our imaginative inheritance and cultural tradition.

In addition to these course objectives which are valid for this course when taught on the Mānoa campus, courses in the Study Abroad Program have certain common course objectives that reflect the goals of Study Abroad. Students in a Study Abroad Program should gain 1) a deeper knowledge and understanding of other cultures and their environments; 2) different perspectives in regard to other nations; 3) increased capacity to analyze issues with appreciation for disparate viewpoints; and 4) increased respect and tolerance for differences. These goals are closely aligned with the goals of every

course I teach. The first two are essentially content goals, the second two method goals. As my classes are always Socratic discussions in a seminar format, the very format of the class necessarily enhances the method goals of being able to work through complex issues with an enhanced appreciation of and ability to handle difference. And with the crucial addition of other times to other cultures and other nations, students in every class I teach will gain a deeper knowledge and understanding and different perspectives on other cultures, other nations, and other periods in history. But obviously, these objectives take on particular force in a Study Abroad context: the students are gaining that deeper knowledge and appreciation simply by their experiences in a foreign country, and the cross-registration in which students from various programs would be taking courses together will present students with even more disparate viewpoints and differences than they would have at home.

So from those four objectives of Study Abroad come four additional learning objectives for this course.

1. In the extended encounter with the Renaissance world depicted by Shakespeare, the student who completes the course will learn an enormous amount about his or her own cultural values and biases and how this may affect his or her ability to work with others.
2. He or she will learn a tremendous amount about that very different cultural perspective.
3. Successful participation in class will necessarily include and involve appropriate and effective communication with diverse individuals and groups.
4. The completion of the essay assignments will necessarily increase the student's capacity to analyze issues with an appreciation for disparate viewpoints.

It perhaps goes without saying that the process of studying Shakespeare in England, the experience of visiting his birthplace and seeing theatre live in London and Stratford, and of course the experience of living in the intense multicultural and global space that is London will reinforce all of these objectives and specific course learning objectives.

Course Format:

This course will be run as a seminar in which all students are expected to come to class having done the assigned reading and come prepared to discuss that reading. Lecturing will be kept to a minimum, only engaged in at those moments where some contextual background is essential to understanding the text or to introduce key concepts. Although we are reading quite a few plays,

they are nonetheless fairly short so the page count will not be high. But the plays are not simple, and they are written in Renaissance English, so keeping up will be important.

In addition to seminar discussions on the reading, we will also spend a fair amount of time seeing the monuments and museums of London and attending live theatre. These should also be thought of as discussions, if not in a traditional classroom setting. I will be posing questions, not delivering answers, and the key to successful visits to these sites will be your engagement with them.

Textbooks:

This is a zero textbook cost course, by which is meant that all instructional materials are available free of charge. Every Shakespeare play is available on the internet, through iBooks or other sites, without any charge. However, not all electronic versions are equal in quality, so I request that that you use the Folger Digital Texts available from the Folger Shakespeare Library ([url: folgerdigitaltexts.org](http://folgerdigitaltexts.org)). If, like me, you still like to have a paper copy you can hold and make notes on, you can certainly print the Folger texts (so your textbook cost is the printing cost). If you already own a copy of the plays or some of them, feel free to use those **as long as** they have act and scene lineation: i.e., when I say turn to Act III, Scene 1, lines 77-80, you can find this place in the text. As the class will be almost 100% discussion, however you access the plays, please bring your device or copy to class and be prepared to access it during class.

However, this does not constitute a license to use those devices for other purposes in class. We meet together in classrooms to have a discussion, and the quality of the discussion stands in direct relation to the attention paid by all the participants to what is being discussed. So this class will be a distraction-free zone: no checking email or texts or social media, no web surfing. I reserve the right to return devices that are being inappropriately used in class after class, and do not expect to receive credit for class participation if you are a distracted student.

Course Requirements and Grading

Your grade for the class will come from four different components. The four components are 1) attendance and participation in class (25% of the grade); 3) three short papers due early in the semester (30% of the grade); 4) a longer

paper due during the final week of classes (25% of the grade); 5) a final exam project due during the final exam period (20% of the grade).

Attendance and Participation in Class:

The quality of the class will be created in large measure by your attendance and participation in class. It is not what I bring to each class but what you bring which will make the biggest difference. So I expect everyone to be in class, having completed the assigned reading (an act or two for each class meeting) and with questions (not answers) about what we have read.

Attendance is mandatory: you are permitted two unexcused absences, and absences will be excused only for situations in which you have written documentation for university-related obligations, accidents, illnesses or emergencies. You will lose a point in your overall grade for every unexcused absence above the approved limit.

I expect participation in class. Come prepared to discuss (not debate), come prepared to ask questions, come prepared to rethink your perspective, on the play, on the issues in the play, even on life. This is why we have classes. If you are not naturally active in class discussions, let's discuss how we can create an environment in which this changes. I am happy to give anyone in class a 'status check' on my assessment of their class participation grade halfway through the semester.

The class will be a mixture of seminar discussion of written texts, visits to key locations in London, and attending live theatre productions. Participation in discussion by all students is essential to the success of the discussion, and obviously participation is impossible without attendance. On the field trips to the location, attendance is even more essential, as there will be literally no class unless you are present.

The 20% assigned to attendance and participation will be split evenly between these two components (unless absences are so numerous that the attendance component is <0).

The Three Short Papers:

In the first half of the semester, we will read six plays, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Henry IV, Part 2*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night*. Listed below is a paper topic each on plays 2 through 6. Out of these five possible assignments, you need to write three papers during this period; which of the three is entirely up to you. If you write more than three, the best three will be counted for the grade and any extra papers will be given some extra credit. These papers are to be no more than 3 pages; I will stop reading them and grade them at the bottom of page 3. Each paper is due at the beginning of the final class on each play (so 9/16, 9/25, 10/7, 10/16, &

10/28). Late papers will not be accepted, as I want your thinking in the papers to feed into class discussion, not just feed off of it. Paper topics:

- 1) Is *The Merchant of Venice* anti-semitic?
- 2) There are at least two moments in Acts 4 and 5 of *Henry IV, Part 2* that horrify many readers and spectators because characters act brutally and apparently dishonorably. Take one of those moments and discuss it. What are these scenes doing in the play? Why do the characters act the way they do? Do we judge the characters for what they do?
- 3) There are two major deception plots in *Much Ado about Nothing* (as well as many lesser ones), but we endorse (or at least enjoy) the one involving the main characters Beatrice and Benedict but are horrified by the subplot concerning Hero and Claudio. Why? Explain the difference.
- 4) Rosalind ostensibly travels to the Forest of Arden to be reunited with her father, but she actually delays revealing herself to him for a long time. Why?
- 5) In *Twelfth Night*, the character Viola—like Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* and Rosalind in *As You Like It*—disguises herself as a man. One difference between *Twelfth Night* and the earlier plays, however, is that there is a second strong and important female character, Olivia. Which of these two is more like Portia and Rosalind? And why? (Feel free to focus on 2 of these three plays or discuss all three.)

Paper #4:

In this class we will have a number of opportunities to see Shakespeare live in the theatre. Your final paper is to analyze one of the performances you have seen this semester, either as part of the class or on your own, comparing it to the 'original' play of Shakespeare. (This does not have to be one of the plays we read for the class, as we are reading only about ¼ of his plays in class.) I will be distributing in class a 'check list' containing some of the aspects of the live production you should be considering, but roughly the issues fall in two categories: aspects of the production which strike you as bringing the play to life in the theatre, and aspects of the production which strike you as embodying the production's interpretation to the play. In the first category, what choices were made about sets, props, costumes? Was music used in the play? How did the acting bring scenes to life as opposed to your experience reading the play in advance? In the second, what choices were made about casting, in terms of gender, race, age, appearance that strike you as different or surprising? Was the entire play performed? Was any of the text changed? Which of the choices described in the first category strike you as modifying or interpreting the play? Setting *Romeo and Juliet* as the story of gangs in New York City in the 1950s, as in *West Side Story*, is a classic example of a

transformative production, so transformative that it creates another work of art. Where is the production you are writing about on the faithful to transformative continuum? My strong advice would be to see the play you wish to write about a second time if possible: re-read or read the play between the two performances and go to the play with a list of things to look for and think about the second time.

I won't set a maximum length for this paper, since there may be a lot to write about a challenging production, but it should be at least 6 pages. Regardless of your major or proposed career, the ability to produce high quality, error-free prose in English is an important life and workplace skill, so the quality of the writing in the papers will be a concern as well as the content. I reserve the option of asking for papers to be revised and resubmitted, and where I see issues with student writing, I will work with the student one-on-one to identify and address the issues.

Final Project:

You will have had a rich experience of Shakespeare, of the theatre, and of living in England in ways that will deepen your apprehension of the period in which Shakespeare wrote, the era in which England takes an important role on the world stage for the first time. For your final project, I would like to see a record of all your experiences during the semester that seem relevant to Shakespeare and the themes of the course. This should include substantive reactions to all of your visits to the theatre, not just the Shakespeare productions. It could also include the historical and cultural sites you visit this semester outside of class (in London or elsewhere if you travel) with whatever reflections you have on these experiences. This can be a traditional paper journal or something more contemporary involving multimedia—your choice as long as it is in a form I can access at the end of the semester.

Class by class Schedule

Aug 26: Introduction & visit to the Globe Theatre and the area of London where theatre was performed in the 1590s (site of the Rose Theatre, Southwark Cathedral)

28: *Romeo and Juliet*

Sept 2: *Romeo and Juliet*

4: *Romeo and Juliet*

9: *The Merchant of Venice*

- 11: *The Merchant of Venice*
- 16: *The Merchant of Venice*
- 18: *Henry IV, Part 2*
- 23: *Henry IV, Part 2*; visit to the National Portrait Gallery
- 25: *Henry IV, Part 2*
- 30: *Much Ado about Nothing*
- Oct 2: *Much Ado about Nothing*; visit to Tate Britain
- 7: *Much Ado about Nothing*
- 9: *As You Like It*
- 14: *As You Like It*
- 16: *As You Like It*
- 21: *Twelfth Night*
- 23: *Twelfth Night*; visit to Victoria and Albert Museum to see the
theatre collections formerly in the London Theatre Museum
- 28: *Twelfth Night*
- 30: *Hamlet*
- Nov 4: *Hamlet*
- 6: *Hamlet*
- Nov 8-10: Visit to Stratford
- 11: no class
- 13: *Othello*
- 18: *Othello*
- 20: *Othello*
- 25: *The Tempest*
- Dec 2: *The Tempest*
- 4: *The Tempest*; final paper due

Study Days and Final Exam period: final project due

Additional Resources:

Participating in a Study Abroad program requires that the student abide by the rules and regulations of the Study Abroad program in addition to those that all UH students need to abide by.

If you consider that you need a reasonable accommodation because of the impact of a disability, please contact the KOKUA program (956-7511 or 956-7612). It is located in Room 013 of QLC, and though they can work with students remotely, it would obviously be preferable to work with them before your departure from O'ahu. I will be happy to work with you and the KOKUA program to meet your access needs related to a documented disability.

Please do not take this class if you cannot attend regularly and cannot be present for the entire course. I understand emergencies happen, so please let me know if you find yourself in an extraordinary situation.

My office hours are listed above. If you need to see me and those times don't work, please email me or speak to me before or after class or call me during office hours to set up an alternative time to meet. I am happy to discuss ideas for papers, questions or thoughts about the reading, and questions or concerns about how the course is going for you.

I expect the written work presented for a grade to be your original work. If you draw on the work of others, that indebtedness needs to be documented through proper attribution. If you have any questions about that process or its opposite—plagiarism—please see me before you turn in work to be graded. I am not requiring the use of secondary sources in the papers for the course but I certainly encourage it for the final paper and many topics will be very difficult to pursue without research using secondary sources. In such a case, proper documentation of your sources is essential, and the MLA Handbook is an appropriate guide to such documentation.

Course grades for this course will be reported using pluses and minuses. The Grade Scale:

A+ 97-100	A 93-96	A- 90-92
B+ 87-89	B 83-86	B- 80-82
C+ 77-79	C 73-76	C- 70-72
D+ 67-69	D 63-66	D- 60-62
F <60		

Please remember that if you are an English major, you need to receive at least a C for this course to count towards your degree requirements in English.

Incompletes will be given only if 1) you are unable to finish the final paper or take the exam because of a medical emergency or personal or family crisis; and 2) you make a written request in advance of failing to submit the work and we are able to discuss your request.