

ENGL 345 Literature and Society

Fall 2020

Paul Yachnin [paul.yachnin@mcgill.ca](mailto:paul.yachnin@mcgill.ca)

Monday and Wednesday, 4-5:30

Office hours: please email me, and we'll set up a time to meet.

## IS SHAKESPEARE MODERN? (AND JUST WHAT DO WE MEAN BY MODERN?)

### Description

In this course, we ask, is Shakespeare modern? Is he a precursor of the political culture of modernity? Is he the author of our ideas about what it is to be a happy and fulfilled person? And what, after all, do we mean when we say the word “modern”? We address these questions by thinking about our own ideas and practices, by reading plays by other early modern playwrights, some other works from the period and a few key readings in political philosophy. But the focus of our attention is a selection of plays by Shakespeare himself.

The lectures for the course will be posted online on our myCourses site. That feature of the course will free us up to do plenty of work in five-person tutorial sessions. The course will also feature student presentations on all the plays and all the key issues in the course. You will sign up to create one three-minute powerpoint presentation on a topic you will choose from a list of topics.

We will spend time developing effective written and oral presentation skills—how to gather, organize, and analyze evidence, how to develop an idea/argument, how to engage and persuade your readers or auditors.

### Texts

All Shakespeare texts except *King Lear* are available free from Oxford Scholarly Editions Online. Note that you have to be connected into the McGill system by VPN to access them. Please buy the Folger edition of *King Lear* (see below). The readings by Taylor, Shapin, and West are available on our myCourses site.

*Taming of the Shrew*

<https://www-oxford-scholarlyeditions-com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/view/10.1093/actrade/9780198129073.book.1/actrade-9780198129073-div1-12>

*A Merry Jest of a Shrewd and Curst Wife*

<http://www.luminarium.org/renascence-editions/jest.html>

*The Roaring Girl*

<https://www-oxford-scholarlyeditions-com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/view/10.1093/actrade/9780199580538.book.1/actrade-9780199580538-div2-95?rskey=ctE2Fo&result=2>

Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, ed. Roma Gill

<https://www.oxford-scholarlyeditions.com/view/10.1093/actrade/9780198127697.book.1/actrade-9780198127697-div1-6>

*Tempest*, ed. Stephen Orgel

<https://www.oxfordscholarlyeditions.com/view/10.1093/actrade/9780198129172.book.1/acrade-9780198129172-work-1?rsk=VsB57x&result=1>

*Merchant of Venice*, ed. Jay Halio

<https://www.oxfordscholarlyeditions.com/view/10.1093/actrade/9780198129257.book.1/acrade-9780198129257-work-1>

*King Lear*, ed. Mowat and Werstine (Folger Shakespeare Library) Kindle Edition

### Evaluation

- Short essays (2 pages, 650 words approx.), 4 x 10% each 40%
- I'll count the best three of four, provided that you write all four.
- Presentation (3 minutes, 1 slide) 15%
- Participation 25%
- Take-home essay (mostly on *King Lear*) (6 pages double-spaced, 1,900 words approx.) due Dec 17. Please email your essay to me at paul.yachnin@mcgill.ca. Please send it as a Word file or a PDF. 20%

### Schedule

day	who	what	read	write	watch / listen (online lectures)
Wed September 2	everyone	Introduction to the course and each other. Thinking about modernity			Introduction to the course (this is just a recorded version of what I'll say by way of introduction in course)
Wed 9	everyone	More about modernity. Discussion of <i>Taming of the Shrew</i>	Please read <i>Taming of the Shrew</i> for this class		What do we mean when we say "modern"?
Mon 14	everyone	<i>Taming of the Shrew</i> and <i>A Merry Jest</i> . Group work—paragraph writing.	Read <i>Merry Jest</i> for his class		<i>Taming of the Shrew</i> —how modern is it?
Wed 16	everyone	Discussion of your paragraphs.			Shakespeare in his time and in ours
Mon 21	everyone	Debate: be it resolved that Katherine is tamed			
Wed 23	everyone	Charles Taylor, from <i>Sources of the Self</i> ; group work on Taylor and modernity	Taylor, from <i>Sources of the Self</i> .		Taylor's modernity

Mon 28	everyone	<i>The Roaring Girl</i> : theatre workshop	<i>The Roaring Girl</i>		ROAR!
Wed 30	everyone	<i>The Roaring Girl</i> continued. Presentation workshop.			
Mon October 5	everyone	Student presentations on <i>Taming of the Shrew</i> and <i>Roaring Girl</i>		1 <sup>st</sup> essay due (2 pages, 650 words approx.) prompt: Moll and Katherine dialogue about the liberation of women. Please email your essay to me by 4:30pm.	
Wed 7	Tutorial group 1 (4-4:40); Tutorial group 2 (4:45-5:25)	<i>Doctor Faustus</i>	<i>Doctor Faustus</i>		The young quester: Christopher Marlowe AND <i>Doctor Faustus</i> : Science and Sin
Wed 7 or Thur 8	Tutorial group 3 (TBD); Tutorial group 4 (TBD)	Faustus	Steven Shapin, from <i>The Scientific Revolution</i>		The world waking up: Shapin on the Scientific Revolution
Mon 12	Nobody (it's Thanksgiving)	Faustus			
Tues 13 or Wed 14	Tutorial group 5 (TBD); Tutorial group 6 (TBD)	Faustus			
Wed 14	Tutorial group 7 (4-4:40); Tutorial group 8 (4:45-5:25)	<i>Faustus</i>			
Mon 19	everyone	Student presentations on <i>Doctor Faustus</i>		2 <sup>nd</sup> essay due (2 pages, 650 words approx.) prompt: is Faustus a tragic hero, a man born before his time? Or a sinner justly punished for pride and blasphemy? Please email your essay to me by 4:30pm.	
Wed 21	everyone	<i>The Tempest</i> : Character workshop	<i>The Tempest</i>		<i>The Tempest</i> : Shakespeare's play for the New World
Mon 26	everyone	<i>The Tempest</i> : group work on Caliban and the question of race	Cornel West, from <i>Race and Modernity</i>		Race vs Recognition: Cornel West on the Racism of

					Modernity
Wed 28	Tutorial group 1 (4-4:40); Tutorial group 2 (4:45-5:25)	<i>Tempest</i>			
Wed 28 or Thur 29	Tutorial group 3 (TBD); Tutorial group 4 (TBD)	<i>Tempest</i>			
Mon Nov 2	Tutorial group 5 (4-4:40); Tutorial group 6 (4:45-5:25)	<i>Tempest</i>			
Mon 2 or Tues 3	Tutorial group 7 (TBD); Tutorial group 8 (TBD)	<i>Tempest</i>			
Wed 4	everyone	Student presentations on <i>The Tempest</i>		3rd essay due (2 pages, 650 words approx.) prompt: is Caliban justly treated by Prospero? Is Caliban a lesser being than Prospero? Please email your essay to me by 4:30pm.	
Mon 9	everyone	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i> : character workshop	<i>Merchant of Venice</i>		<i>The Merchant of Venice</i> The Long Road to Respect for the Whole Human Species
Wed 11	Tutorial group 1 (4-4:40); Tutorial group 2 (4:45-5:25)	<i>Merchant</i>			
Wed 11 or Thur 12	Tutorial group 3 (TBD); Tutorial group 4 (TBD)	<i>Merchant</i>			
Mon 16	Tutorial group 5 (4-4:40); Tutorial group 6 (4:45-5:25)	<i>Merchant</i>			
Mon 16 or Tues 17	Tutorial group 7 (TBD); Tutorial group 8 (TBD)	<i>Merchant</i>			
Wed 18	everyone	<i>Merchant of Venice</i> Debate: be it resolved that Shakespeare's play is anti-Semitic			
Mon 23	everyone	Student		4th essay due (2	

		presentations on <i>The Merchant of Venice</i>		pages, 650 words approx.) prompt: is Shylock the leading figure and the centre of our attention and sympathy in the play? Please email your essay to me by 4:30pm.	
Wed 25	everyone	<i>King Lear</i> three-way debate—Goneril vs Regan vs Cordelia			<i>King Lear</i> in its time and in ours
Mon 30	Tutorial group 1 (4-4:40); Tutorial group 2 (4:45-5:25)	<i>Lear</i>			
Mon 30 or Tues Dec 1	Tutorial group 3 (TBD); Tutorial group 4 (TBD)	<i>Lear</i>			
Wed 2	Tutorial group 5 (4-4:40); Tutorial group 6 (4:45-5:25)	<i>Lear</i>			
Wed 2 or Thur 3	Tutorial group 7 (TBD); Tutorial group 8 (TBD)	<i>Lear</i>			
Thur 3 (make-up class)	everyone	Student presentations on <i>King Lear</i>			
Mon Dec 7	everyone	Wrap up—looking back and looking forward			

**Academic Integrity:** McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity/> for more information). Cases of plagiarism will be reported to the Associate Dean of the Faculty of Arts, in keeping with University policy.

**Students with Disabilities:** The University accommodates students with disabilities through the Office for Students with Disabilities in consultation with the English Department. Please speak with me about special arrangements you might require for exams, papers, or instruction.

**Religious Observances:** McGill's Policy for the Accommodation of Religious Observances recognizes and respects the diversity of its members, including diversity of religious faiths and observances. Students who because of religious commitment cannot meet academic obligations, other than final examinations, on certain holy days are responsible for informing their instructor, with two weeks' notice of each conflict. When the requested accommodation concerns a final examination, students are responsible for advising their Faculty office as soon as possible and not later than the deadline for reporting conflicts. Additional documentation confirming their religious affiliation may be requested. For more information see <http://www.mcgill.ca/student-records/holydays/>.

**LATE WORK:** Failure to submit an assignment by the deadline will result in the assignment being graded from 75 points instead of 100, during the first five days. After five days the respective assignment will not be accepted and will be marked with an F. Missed assignments will be given a new deadline only in cases of medical or family emergencies.