

## ENGLISH 163F

### Shakespeare Now and Then: The Plays on Stage and Screen Monday/Wednesday 3pm-4.20pm

(Preliminary syllabus – subject to change)

#### **Karen Britland**

Office hours: Monday 4.30-5.30pm and by appointment

Email: [britland@startmail.com](mailto:britland@startmail.com)

#### **Course Description**

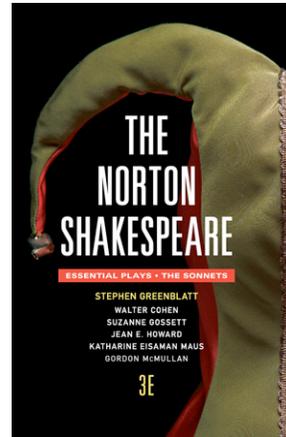
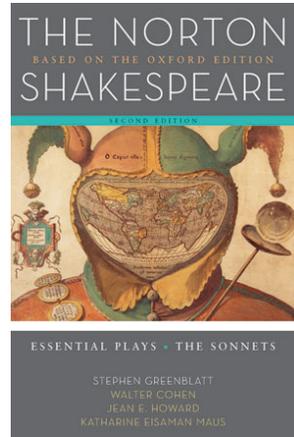
We will read and discuss five of Shakespeare's most famous plays (including *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*), and we will watch some of their modern film adaptations (for example, Baz Luhrman's *Romeo + Juliet* and a weird Australian *Macbeth* with school-girl witches). The course will emphasize the importance of developing the skills of close-reading for both written and visual texts. It is designed both for students with a serious interest in Shakespeare and for those without much prior experience of Shakespeare or literature. By looking at movies, we will constantly remind ourselves that Shakespeare's plays were written to be performed as popular entertainments and do not necessarily have to be understood as "high culture," while also paying attention to the ways in which social and historical contexts are important for meaningful literary interpretation. The final project will encourage you to develop research skills, to investigate the cultural and historical significance of a recent Shakespearean movie, and to demonstrate how Shakespeare's texts are used to comment on contemporary social and political concerns.

#### **By the end of the module, students will have attained:**

- \*an understanding of the original situations in which Shakespeare's plays were written and performed;
- \*an understanding of the ways in which cultural discourses do not just reflect external social circumstances, but also help to shape those circumstances;
- \*an understanding of how Shakespeare's plays have been interpreted and reinterpreted across time, and how they have been used to comment on contemporary concerns;
- \*skills in close-reading and film analysis;
- \*the ability independently to undertake research both online and in the libraries, and to evaluate the validity and reliability of secondary sources of information;
- \*the ability to construct a concise, written argument that engages with a range of primary and secondary sources.

### Course Texts:

All the plays for this course are to be found in *The Norton Shakespeare: The Essential Plays/The Sonnets*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt *et al.* (Norton, 2015): ISBN-13 978-0393938630. Other material will be available online.



[NOTE: The *Norton Shakespeare* has just been published in its 3rd edition. This means that copies of the 2nd edition are going cheap. I don't mind whether you buy the 2nd or 3rd editions, but if you buy the 3rd edition you will also get access to the Norton website, which has additional helpful materials.]

### Class Participation and Attendance:

You are required to attend all classes and to participate in class discussion. **Please contact Karen Britland ([britland@startmail.com](mailto:britland@startmail.com)) in advance if you are going to miss a class.** You are permitted to miss one class and retain an A grade for participation and attendance. All subsequent absences will result in a reduction of your grade. If you miss two or more classes because of circumstances beyond your control, you are permitted *one* make-up assignment. (Ask Karen Britland for more details.)

### Class Schedule:

#### Week 1

Sept 25 (M) introduction to class: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (the play's opening scenes)

Sept 27 (W) *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (discussion of the play)

[close-reading assignment given out]

#### Week 2

Oct 2 (M) class on film-theory vocabulary

Oct 4 (W) *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (discussion of movie versions)

[close-reading assignment to be submitted]

Week 3

Oct 9 (M) *Romeo and Juliet* (the play's opening scenes)

Oct 11 (W) *Romeo and Juliet* (discussion of the play)

[\[film-analysis assignment given out\]](#)

Week 4

Oct 16 (M) *Romeo and Juliet* (discussion of the play)

Oct 18 (W) *Romeo and Juliet* (discussion of movie versions)

Week 5

Oct 23 (M) *Hamlet* (the plays' opening scenes)

Oct 25 (W) *Hamlet* (discussion of the play)

[\[film-analysis assignment to be submitted\]](#)

Week 6

Oct 30 (M) *Hamlet* (discussion of movie versions)

Nov 1 (W) *Hamlet* and how to do the research project

[\[research project instructions given out\]](#)

Week 7

Nov 6 (M) *Macbeth* (the play's opening scenes)

Nov 8 (W) *Macbeth* (discussion of the play)

Week 8

Nov 13 (M) *Macbeth* (discussion of the play)

Nov 15 (W) *Macbeth* (discussion of movie versions)

**Thanksgiving Break: Nov 20-4**

Week 9

Nov 27 (M) *Henry V* (opening scenes)

Nov 29 (W) *Henry V* (discussion of the play)

Week 10

Dec 4 (M) *Henry V* (movie versions)

Dec 6 (W) Conclusion and research-project help

[\[research project submitted on or before 13 December\]](#)

**Assignments and grading**

1. close-reading assignment: 2 double-spaced pages, 12-point font = 15%
2. film-analysis assignment: 4 double-spaced pages, 12-point font = 25%
3. research project: 6 double-spaced pages, 12-point font (or an equivalent 10-minute audio and/or visual presentation) = 30%
4. attendance and participation = 30%

### **Assignment schedule (or when to hand stuff in)**

1. close-reading assignment – emailed to [britland@startmail.com](mailto:britland@startmail.com) NO LATER than 11.59pm on **4 October 2017**;
2. film-analysis assignment – emailed to [britland@startmail.com](mailto:britland@startmail.com) NO LATER than 11.59pm on **25 October 2017**;
3. research project – emailed (or otherwise delivered) to Professor Britland NO LATER than 11.59pm on **13 December 2017**.

**PLEASE NOTE:** It is your responsibility to ensure that your work is delivered to Professor Britland on or before the due date, and in a file format that Professor Britland can open, read *and* annotate. **Please submit your work in a .doc, or .docx file.** Pages files and .pdf files will only be accepted in extenuating circumstances. Any work that cannot be opened will be considered unsubmitted and therefore late. Late papers will be marked down by half a grade for every calendar day past the due date. Computer malfunction is not a valid excuse for the non-submission of a paper. Please keep back-ups of your work and consider submitting your paper early to avoid last-minute problems.

You are required to submit all THREE written assignments in order to pass the class. **If you have not submitted all your written assignments by midnight on 15 December 2017 at the very latest, you will automatically fail the course.**

### **Further Explanation of Writing Assignments—Expectations and Purposes**

#### **1. Close-reading assignment**

Some of you taking this class might be new to Stanford. Some of you may never have taken a literature class before. It seems only fair that the first assignment should be designed to enable you to gauge the level of writing required for this class and also help you to understand your professor's grading policies. Close reading is a skill that you will be required to demonstrate in every paper for this class. In this assignment, you will develop an argument about a short passage from a Shakespeare play, supporting that argument by explication of such details in the passage as word choice, verbal repetition, figurative language, or patterns of imagery and tonal shifts. This assignment will give you the practice and feedback you need to help you in your later writing for the class.

#### **2. Film-analysis assignment**

Do you think Hamlet was mad? Do you think King Lear is a whining old man? How useful are these assumptions anyway? Shakespeare's plays were written to be performed and therefore were designed, in part, to allow actors and directors to make their own decisions about how to portray the storylines and characters. There is no one right way to interpret Shakespeare. By looking at different movies of the plays, you'll be able to see how different characters can be portrayed in radically different ways. The film-analysis assignment asks you to do a close reading (using the skills you developed in the previous close-reading assignment) of a short section from a movie, explaining how a particular director and/or actor drew out certain aspects of the play. In later assignments, you'll be encouraged to use film analysis to support your own arguments about how Shakespeare's plays should be understood. For example, you might assert that you believe that Hamlet

is mad, and you might try to show this by close reading the text, but you could also go further and analyze Mel Gibson's crazy portrayal of the mad prince to show that you are not alone in thinking that Hamlet was insane. **The film-clips for this assignment will be provided online. Please do not do your film analysis on a different clip. It will not be graded.**

### **3. Research project**

This assignment is intended to provide a platform from which you can draw together all the skills and knowledge about Shakespeare you have been developing over the semester. You are invited to choose a Shakespeare movie and undertake a research project into its production, release, and critical reception, and you might like to consider a few of these questions as you prepare your project: What was going on in society at the time the movie was made and how did this affect the way it was directed and received? Who was its director? Were its stars famous or were they little-known actors? What aspects of the movie were foregrounded in the trailer and pre-release publicity? What was the poster like? What did newspaper and magazine reviews of the movie say? You are particularly encouraged to think about how audiences might have perceived the movie: for example, Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* (1968) looks horribly dated to us now, but, at the time of its release, it was ground-breaking and potentially controversial. How did this movie, or others like it, help to keep Shakespeare on the map?

The purposes of this assignment are: (1) to enhance your library research skills; (2) to help you discern more fully which sources are reliable and appropriate ones for academic and professional research tasks; (3) to help you practice how to present data synthesized from multiple sources; (4) to give you practice in proper referencing, citation and bibliographic procedures.

In researching your topic, you must consult at least four sources. Of these, only one may be an encyclopedia entry (NB: while Wikipedia is becoming more and more reliable, we encourage you to find and use another encyclopedia). One may be a well-chosen website (preferably one attached to a university – look for the .edu suffix on the URL). You must also use at least two sources that are non-encyclopedia print sources. The paper should present a well organized *synthesis* of the information you have gathered, providing proper citation of the sources from which the information derives. A bibliography of works consulted should be attached. Please note: any time you use sources other than your own thoughts, you need to acknowledge them properly. Not doing so is PLAGIARISM. This intellectual theft is a serious offense with serious consequences, so make sure you do not commit it, either inadvertently or deliberately.

**Students with documented disabilities:** Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) located within the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). SDRC staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an *Accommodation Letter* for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the SDRC as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066).