Spring 1-15-2012

ENG 4752-001: Shakespeare in Play: Macbeth

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Eng 4752: Shakespeare in Play: *Macbeth*

spring 2012 / Section 001  
Dr. Chris Wixson

syllabus

course description

This advanced, experimental course seeks to demonstrate the exciting cross-pollination of literary and theatrical approaches to drama, centering itself around a single play, *Macbeth*, approaching it both as literature and as a script. One of the many oddities about the earliest extant copy of *Macbeth* is its traces of another hand at work in it besides William Shakespeare's. The version of the play included in the 1623 First Folio seems to be a revision likely authored by Thomas Middleton, a talented, successful, and prolific young playwright who worked closely with the King's Men. This kind of artistic collaboration was very common at the time, although Middleton's updates may have been done after Shakespeare's retirement or death. The two also worked together on the often neglected *Timon of Athens*. That Middleton's idiom is oranges to the Bard's apples makes these texts provocative pastiches and a fascinating context for our endeavors. In addition to robust explorations of *Macbeth* and a fair amount of secondary readings in theory, history, and criticism, we will read another of Middleton’s plays as well as *Timon of Athens*. Class discussion and frequent writing assignments of various lengths (involving research and designed to be challenging) will be juxtaposed with regular excursions into theatrical practice, culminating in a performance. As such, this course provides an opportunity to encounter the plays of another accomplished Early Modern playwright and to experience Shakespeare's language in both scholarly and theatrical contexts. Again, English 4752 is an advanced course in Shakespeare so enrollment should indicate an enthusiasm for as well as some grounding (such as English 3802/92) in the usual suspects among the plays, particularly the major tragedies.

course texts

*Macbeth*, ed. William C. Carroll  
*The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare, 2nd Edition* Russ McDonald  
*Three Classical Tragedies*, ed. Bevington/Kastan  
*Five Plays*, Thomas Middleton

**Our secondary readings will be handed out or can be accessed through Booth Library journal databases.**

**With an eye towards one’s permanent library, a few recommendations. Marjorie Garber’s *Shakespeare After All* is the best academic overview of Shakespeare’s plays. Tiffany Stern’s *Making Shakespeare* is a thorough account of the conditions of playgoing, playwriting, playmaking, and play publishing during the period. The introductory essays to each play in *The Norton Shakespeare* are written by some of the most brilliant figures in contemporary Early Modern scholarship and are incredibly insightful. David Bevington’s editing of the plays, wherever you can find it, is superlative.**
attendance
Mandatory.

If you become suddenly ill (think Bubonic plague) or the victim of emergency circumstances, please email me or a member of the seminar as soon as possible and stay in touch. Excused absences are accompanied by appropriate legal or medical documentation. Any unexcused absence will seriously undermine your (and our collective) success in this course. That being said, don’t come to class if you haven’t done the reading. Attendance will be taken at each class session – you are allowed three unexcused absences before your grade is negatively affected. After that, each unexcused absence will lower your participation grade by a letter. More than six unexcused absences will result in a “O” for participation. More than nine unexcused absences will result in a grade of no credit for the course. Habitual lateness (beyond once) will also affect your grade negatively since it is disruptive and disrespectful.

class participation
Mandatory.

Think of our meetings potluck conversations; everyone simply must contribute. Participation in a seminar means careful preparation of the reading, frequent contributions to discussions, and engaged critical thought. You should come to each session armed with observations, opinions, questions, and insights, ready to take an active part in the ongoing dialogue about the course materials and your course projects.

If you plan on doing any of the following things, you should probably drop this class:
1. Remaining in your comfort zone and not talking in class and justifying the silence by saying you are ‘just the type of person who likes to sit back and listen to what everyone else has to say.’ Certainly, listening is a premium in this class and is a crucial human skill. But real listening only happens in an exchange. Letting everyone else do the talking means that you’re not really listening because you are busy keeping yourself safe. Of course, this ‘safety’ is an illusion.

2. Remaining in your comfort zone and not talking in class and justifying the silence because you assume that you don’t know enough to participate in class and other people (especially those who talk) do. To approach the class and the work in a way that suggests that one can speak only about what is already known is not only dangerous, but it’s also intellectually lazy.

3. Complaining when everyone does talk that it’s a waste of time and inefficient. Or remaining so married to ways you have been taught in other courses and disciplines that you see as a ‘tangent’ any meaningful, principled discussion that doesn’t necessarily mention the word “theme” or “symbolism.” Just because the normative educational culture of a nation afraid more than anything else that its students will learn to think divides classroom activity into binaries of ‘on-task’ and ‘off-task’ doesn’t mean that that is a useful or even humane way of doing things.

In short, for our endeavor to succeed, there are three preconditions that must be met: everyone must have done the reading and done it critically and carefully; everyone must be willing to take intellectual risks and be open to uncertainty; and everyone must be willing to engage respectfully.

Although I’m likely to talk a lot (that’s my character), I won’t give lectures, and the content and direction of the class is largely in your hands. In other words, I will serve as a resource and guide and occasionally cranky curmudgeon, but it’s your class to shape and energize. Individually and collectively, this course carries with it a responsibility to drive the inquiry and conversation. As a consequence, class participation will count for a major part of your grade.
On days marked for performance, please wear comfortable clothing and sneakers. On the Shakespearean stage, the presence of the actor was known as “the ability of the body.” Our explorations of these texts this term will include acts of interpretation performed as we seek ourselves to embody the language. You will not be judged on acting ability; this side of the course is an opportunity to approach the act of interpretation in a different way than we do as scholars. We will explore speaking through movement as well as through words. There will be a (hopefully only initial) trepidation with and uncertainty surrounding this approach, and going outside of the traditional English “comfort zone” will yield insightful results on their own but also in tandem with classroom discussion. There will be badminton.

**class preparation**

In addition to your written assignments, what else you bring to share need not be written out (although you may be asked to do so) but should refer to specific passages in the reading as the basis for formulating a broader discussion topic. Come to class with an agenda. That means coming with lucrative questions that you think the texts are asking with their form and content, not simply questions you have about the texts. In addition, you may also wish to read the introductions to our plays, although I would advise doing so AFTER you have read each play; consider this sentence a formal spoiler alert. Besides preparation, class participation also means responding constructively, respectfully, and energetically to what other seminarians share, that you work actively to stretch yourself intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. In short, you are expected to work actively to contribute to the class’s overall movement and to strive to promote dialogue between yourself and other seminarians. I TAKE THIS GRADE VERY SERIOUSLY.

In a 2010 article in Profession, Marjorie Garber advocated reading Shakespeare in what she called “slow motion,” that is to say putting off the interpretive move that has dominated study of the plays for the past two decades: historicizing. While we will approach the material in historical ways at various times during the term, class discussion should focus on the plays’ language. Garber directed her students to “read until they are halted by something contrary to their expectation—something ‘wrong,’” something that stopped them in their tracks, something they did not already “know” from the cultural consciousness [or undergraduate experience] of what Shakespeare had said, written, intended, or meant in the play” (153). Such passages are what you should bring to class. At the beginning of each session, we will all contribute suggestions of words and images as well as thoughtful questions that arise from these specific passages and go from there. Put another way, read for and bring to class what the Greeks referred to as aporia, textual moments of doubt, perplexity, impassability. In post-structuralist terms, these are sites in the text where an irresolvable suspension exists between one meaning and another — a gap of undecidability, multiplicity, and meaningful ambiguity which nourishes conversation.

**assignments**

*Four Short papers, each two single-spaced pages in length. See prompts on schedule.

*Active, Engaged Participation in Discussion — defined as TALKING productively

*Active, Engaged Participation in Performance

*A Final Performance Project and Essay

**Your final grade in the course will be determined by your performance on these assignments according to the following breakdown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Four Short Scholarly Papers</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performance / Participation</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Project and Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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**Because this is an advanced course (thus a thinking-intensive and collaborative venture), you must be committed to becoming more resourceful and reflective as an interpreter, researcher, discussant, performer, and writer. The degree to which you demonstrate this development in class and in your written work will certainly be a factor in my determination of your term grade. All course assignments must be completed.

**late papers**
These are no fun for me to keep track of and only put you further behind. For each day beyond the scheduled due date, late papers will be penalized a third of a letter grade. **After a week, I will no longer accept the paper, and it becomes a “0.”** Again, if you become ill or the victim of emergency circumstances, please email me as soon as possible and stay in touch.

**cell phone and computer use**
You may bring your computer to class with you, assuming that you use it in a scholarly and responsible fashion. This means that you will only have applications and windows related to the current discussion open. **You may not check email, news, or box scores, surf the web, use chat applications, play games, or otherwise distract yourself and those around you from the class conversation with your computer.**

You are likewise expected to use cell phones in a responsible manner: **turn them off when you come in to class.** If you have an emergency for which you must be available, you must discuss it with me beforehand and keep your phone on vibrate. **Under no conditions are you allowed to text message, take pictures or video (illegal in class), play games, or use the cell phone in any other manner during class.** The nature of our scholarly endeavor together necessitates mutual respect and dedicated attention during the too short time we have to discuss these texts. Violating any of these policies will result in your participation grade being lowered by a full letter grade for each violation.

**academic integrity**
Any paper with your name on it signifies that you are the author—that the wording and major ideas are yours, with exceptions indicated by either quotation marks and/or citations. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use (appropriation and/or imitation) of others' materials (words and ideas). We will discuss how to avoid it. Evidence of plagiarism will result in one or more of the following: a failing grade for the assignment, an F in the course, and a report filed with the Student Standards Office.

**special needs and situations**
If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.
Eng 4752: Shakespeare in Play: Macbeth
Spring 2012

Dr. Chris Wixson

course calendar

**THIS SCHEDULE MAY CHANGE AT ANY TIME ACCORDING TO THE NEEDS AND DEMANDS OF THE CLASS. MAKE SURE YOU ALWAYS BRING IT WITH YOU FOR MODIFICATION.**

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<thead>
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<th>January</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Course Introduction / Conversations in Shakespeare</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Conversations in Shakespeare</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td><em>Macbeth</em> / Act One (Words)</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>NO CLASS — MLK’S BIRTHDAY</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td><em>Macbeth</em> / Reread Act One (Images)</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td><em>Macbeth</em> / Act Two (Words)</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td><em>Macbeth</em> / Reread Act Two (Images)</td>
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<td>“How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?”, L.C. Knights (handout)</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td><em>Macbeth</em> / Reread Act Two (Goold version)</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td><em>Macbeth</em> / Act Three (Words)</td>
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<td>February</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td><em>Macbeth</em> / Reread Act Three (Images)</td>
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<td>Read excerpts from <em>The Witch</em> (pp. 155-9)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td><em>Macbeth</em> / Reread Act Three (Goold version)</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td><em>Macbeth</em> / Act Four (Words and Images)</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td><em>Macbeth</em> / Reread Act Four (Goold version)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td><em>Macbeth</em> / Act Five (Words)</td>
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</table>
13 Macbeth / Reread Act Five (Images)
15 Macbeth / Reread Act Five (Goold version) / Critical Paper Due
17 NO CLASS – LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY

20 The Revenger's Tragedy
22 The Revenger's Tragedy
24 The Revenger's Tragedy

27 The Revenger's Tragedy / Conversations in Criticism
   Stallybrass’ “Reading the Body” (handout)
   Neill’s “Necrophilia and The Revenger’s Tragedy” (e-reserve)
   “Necrophilia and The Revenger’s Tragedy...”, Karen Coddin (database)

29 The Revenger's Tragedy

March 2 Timon of Athens

5 Timon of Athens
7 Timon of Athens
9 Timon of Athens

HAPPY SPRING BREAK!!

19 Staging Macbeth
   Read pieces by Simon Forman, David Garrick, Sarah Siddons, and Derek Jacobi

21 Bedford pages 360-3, 374-5, 393-5, and 398-9

23 Research PunchDrunk's Sleep No More

26 Shakespeare Without Words(Macbeth’s environment)
   Read selections from section 4 in the Macbeth volume
   “The Smell of Macbeth,” Jonathan Gil Harris (Project Muse)

28 Shakespeare Without Words

30 Shakespeare Without Words
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>April 2</td>
<td>Speaking Shakespeare / Orchestration: <em>Henry VI Part Three</em></td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Orchestration: <em>Winter's Tale</em></td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Orchestration: <em>Julius Caesar</em></td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Company Meeting / Group Rehearsals</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Group Rehearsals</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Group Rehearsals / <strong>Critical Paper #2 Due</strong></td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Group Rehearsals</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Group Rehearsals</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Company Meeting / Conclusion / Evaluation</td>
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The Final Exam session is a required performance session and will take place Thursday, May 3rd, 8-10:00 AM in Coleman Hall 1255.

**Short Critical Paper Assignment Topics:**

**WARNING:** The intellectual pre-writing work for these assignments will be challenging and time-consuming. I provide the prompts here so that you may start early. In addition, because these are challenging, it is expected that you will be working closely with me during your writing process for each one.

For this short 2-3 single-spaced page paper (around 1200 words), you are to look to the primary documents in our edition of *Macbeth*, which are artifacts of early modern English culture capable of shedding interesting light on the plays we have read. For instance, one might write about Shakespeare’s *Othello* or *Taming of the Shrew* as plays that participate in a larger social debate about how husbands should treat their wives. You might argue that, although, say, Othello directly violates the English church’s official teaching (in the *Homily of the State of Matrimony*), husbands should use peaceful means of cultivating their wives’ good behavior, he nonetheless acts in complete accord with the underlying assumptions of that institution that women are corruptible and weak. You would then look carefully at the language and action of the play to illustrate the connections between Othello’s behavior and the homily’s instruction. You would, of course, quote from each text to support your analysis. Requirements for this assignment are:
1. You must work on Macbeth.

2. You must choose one primary document from sections 3, 5, or 6 in our edition of Macbeth. Supplementary background reading that may also be useful can be found in Bedford chapters 7-9. It is a good idea to read the section introduction before working with the primary historical documents. Obviously, too, some issues at play in Early Modern culture work better with this play than others.

3. You must make clear the ways in which the two texts speak to one other and the way(s) in which situating Macbeth within a larger cultural dialogue significantly influenced the way we interpret the play.

2/27/12 In this 2-3 page single-spaced paper (around 1200 words), situate yourself critically in relation to the articles and The Revenger’s Tragedy. Academic professionals often find themselves in the position of “respondent” on a conference panel. That person is given the papers presented on the panel a month or so early and asked to relate the papers together, identifying convergences and divergences, and (most importantly) synthesizing their arguments together to produce an original point. In other words, the respondent answers the question: “The arguments of all these papers taken together, so what?” So your task here is not simply to respond to each article (“I agree with...” / “I don’t agree with...”) but, again, to synthesize them together to help build a larger argument all your own. What larger interpretive implications do these articles have when considered together?

3/20/12 Shakespeare’s originality as a playwright emerges less as an inventor and more of an adapter. Most of the plays in this course are derived from sources. Read Macbeth’s source material provided, looking for places where Shakespeare diverges with his play. Write a 2-3 page single-spaced paper (around 1200 words) in which you identify one of those places and make an argument for why it is a significant diversion in terms of how we interpret the play.

For example, in one of the versions of source material for Pericles, Pericles’ daughter is named Thaisa. Shakespeare instead gives the name Thaisa to Pericles’ wife. As such, in a play that flirts dangerously with incest, a student last year argued that Shakespeare represents sexual relations between the two as perfectly appropriate marital intimacy yet retains the hint of transgressive sexuality as part of the play’s larger deconstruction of the tragicomic romance formula.

4/20/12 Examine (via EEBO) various 17th through 19th century editions in which Macbeth exists. In a 2-3 single-spaced page paper (around 1200 words), make an argument in which you identify how a key paratextual element influences the way a reader interprets the play. You might, for instance, compare how a play appears in quarto form versus in the First Folio. Or you could look at the way in which the play is laid out on the page, how it is framed, or any illustrations that accompany the text. Title pages are certainly a place to look but not the only place. Allow yourself enough time on EEBO – it will take some to fully browse the various versions.

Last year, for instance, one seminarian found that the 1611 quarto edition of Pericles has an image on its first page of a tower with a cross shaped window and the text “Be Just And Fear Not” below it. He found it interesting that the King James Bible was also completed in 1611. His paper explored the implications of approaching Pericles as a Christian tract (encouraged by that cover art) within a tradition of older morality plays (Everyman, Castle of Perseverance, Mankind) that dramatized Christian ideology and would have been familiar to original audiences. The play’s focus on endurance, faith, virginity, and conversion was especially resonant in his analysis.

5/3/12 The second half of the course will be largely focused on creating an experience of a single scene or two that synthesizes music, costume, movement, and text. Your final paper in the course must demonstrate the way in which theatrical and literary approaches to Macbeth specifically create a more profound understanding of the play. Your 2-3 single-spaced page paper (around 1200 words) MUST avoid generalization and instead focus on a significant passage or two (different from those you will be performing) that becomes the context in which you argue how the various ways of experiencing Macbeth (seeing it, reading it, hearing it, performing it, smelling it etc.) produce a more complicated yet more meaningful engagement. Turn in this paper after your performance during the final exam session.