Spring 1-15-2011

ENG 5002-001: Neglected Shakespeare

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Eng 5002: Neglected Shakespeare

spring 2011 / Section 001

Dr. Chris Wixson

syllabus

"Every age creates its own Shakespeare." — Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All*

course description

This advanced course in the work of William Shakespeare situates at its center plays that have been at various times marginalized due to what were perceived as irredeemable "flaws" in character, plot, structure, and theme, many finding themselves "rediscovered" in the modern period when their darker sensibilities found greater resonance. These "lost" plays, that so rarely find their way to the stage or even to the classroom, are exciting, brilliant, insightful, and beautiful, all qualities that belie their overlooked status and make them well worthy for close exploration. The existence of a so-called "minor" canon also begs the questions of what is major and why and how these distinctions have shaped our sense of what is (and is not) "Shakespearean."

We will start in the 1590s with the much-derided masterpiece *Titus Andronicus* and the rhetorically effervescent *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, jump to the so-called "problem plays" of the middle period, and conclude among the romances. In addition to very close readings and re-readings of the plays, there will be a fair amount of secondary readings in theory, history, and criticism as well as frequent writing assignments of various lengths involving research and designed to be challenging. Our course will also include regular excursions into theatrical practice. Hopefully, enrollment in the course indicates an enthusiasm for as well as some grounding in the usual suspects among the plays of William Shakespeare. Plays with which you already should be generally familiar include *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *Richard II*, *As You Like It*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Henry V*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *The Tempest*. Having solid experience with Shakespeare’s greatest hits is important in an advanced course for a couple of reasons. One, the plays we read in this course tend towards much denser and more obscure language than those that usually appear in classrooms. Two, in addition to analyzing these lesser known plays on their own, we will be discussing how thematic strands and choices made in them relate to those made in the canonical works and connect to ways in which Shakespeare has been reified as a cultural institution. The course approaches these plays as both literary *and* theatrical texts, discussing not only their political, historical, and modern implications but also their potential for acting, directorial, and technical choices.

course texts

*The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. David Bevington

*The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare, 2nd Edition* Russ McDonald

*Three Classical Tragedies*, ed. Bevington/Kastan
**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 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 one unexcused absence before your grade is negatively affected. After that, each unexcused absence will lower your participation grade by a letter. **More than three unexcused absences will result in a “0” for participation. More than four 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.
We will take as a foundational assumption Donald Finkel’s idea that “knowledge is grounded in some other process than transfer from an unimpeachable Authority,” that our work together is a collaborative process of inquiry. 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. We will meet on February 15th by the racquetball courts at the SRC, but both sessions after that will take place in Coleman Hall 1255 (the auditorium). 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. 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 plays 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 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

*Two scholarly papers that are engaged, engaging, and articulate. The first will be a narrowly focused Notes and Queries-style assignment which will be presented at the English Studies conference on Saturday, April 2nd. The second is a 10-12 page conference length paper, the topic developed in consultation with me.

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

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

*Group “hosting” of one play

*Active, Engaged Participation in Performance

group hosting
Everyone will be required to group “host” a session. You are responsible for the entire session and may structure it as you wish with a few caveats. In addition to enabling and directing a meaningful class conversation about the entire play, a central component of your session should be to provide us with a sense of a few voices within the critical conversation around the play, presenting relevant articles with precision, concision, and clarity — not only what they each individually say but how they speak to one another. You are representing a critical conversation, not a series of isolated pieces. This part of the session should focus on the play through the lens of the various voices in this conversation — how the play both supports and challenges the readings presented — and situating ourselves within this critical conversation. (Identifying such voices will be challenging since these plays are considered “minor.”) Please provide the rest of the class with an annotated bibliography of the secondary sources you discuss. As we are devoting space to both in other sections of the course, this session should be entirely a scholarly discussion; no “acting out” of scenes or playing video clips in class.

longer paper topic
It is important to identify as early as possible in the term your area of interest for the final paper. (I am assuming seminarians are bringing with them critical problems and issues of interest to them from earlier coursework.) A draft is due immediately after spring break so I advise you very strongly to do a couple things. One, the course is focused on a small number of plays; reading them early in the course allows you to get a sense of the movement of the semester and pinpoint plays that speak to your topic. In fact, it is expected that plays will be read and reread. Two, come see me. I can hopefully save you some time and point you in lucrative directions. If, for instance, you would like to focus on British nationalism and the female body, Cymbeline is the play to study.

final grades
Your final grade in the course will be determined by your performance on the following assignments:

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Shorter Scholarly Paper</td>
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<td>Longer Scholarly Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Critical Papers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performance / Hosting / Participation</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, 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 5002: Neglected Shakespeare
Spring 2011

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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<td>Course Introduction</td>
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<td>Screening of Juliet Taymor's Titus (1999)</td>
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<td>Titus Andronicus</td>
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<td>Sonnet #130</td>
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<td>Elaine Scarry, Introduction to “The Body in Pain” (handout)</td>
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<td>Ania Loomba, “Wilderness and Civilization” (E-reserve)</td>
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<td>Titus Andronicus</td>
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<td>Lisa Dickson, “High’ Art and ‘Low’ Blows” (Database)</td>
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<td>Deborah Willis, “The Gnawing Vulture” (Database)</td>
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<td>Marshall, “The Pornographic Economy of Titus Andronicus” (E-reserve)</td>
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<td><strong>Short Critical Paper #1 Due</strong></td>
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<td>Love’s Labour’s Lost</td>
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<td>Orchestration: Winter’s Tale</td>
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<td>Love’s Labour’s Lost</td>
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<td>Orchestration: Julius Caesar</td>
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<td>Patricia Parker, “Preposterous Reversals” (database)</td>
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<td>Stephen Booth, “Love’s Labour’s Lost and King Lear” (e-reserve)</td>
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<td>Performance - Wear comfortable clothing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orchestration: Henry V (Prologue)</td>
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<td>Review and Bring all Three Orchestinations / Meet at the SRC</td>
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<td><strong>First Scholarly Paper Due</strong></td>
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"Measure for Measure is the single exception to the delightfulness of Shakespeare's plays. It is a hateful work, although Shakespearean throughout. Our feelings of justice are grossly wounded in Angelo's escape. For cruelty, with lust and damnable baseness, cannot be forgiven, because we cannot conceive them as being morally repented of. [Angelo's pardon and marriage] is likewise degrading to women. Isabella contrives to be unamiable, and Claudio is detestable."

—Samuel Taylor Coleridge

March 23

Measure for Measure

Dollimore's "Transgression and Surveillance..." (e-reserve)
Desens' The Bed-Trick in English Renaissance Drama (e-reserve)
DiGangi's "Pleasure and Danger: Measuring Female Sexuality..." (database)

Short Critical Paper #2 Due

9

Timon of Athens

Discussion Lead #1

SPRING BREAK

23

The Winter's Tale (film)

Long Scholarly Paper Draft Due (5-6 pages with Bibliography)

30

The Winter's Tale

Howard Felperin, "The Deconstruction of Presence in TWT" (e-reserve)

**Saturday, April 2nd - English Studies Conference 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

April 6

Pericles / Bedford 94-7

Discussion Lead #2

"[Pericles'] plot is preposterous, its characters flat, its moralizing simplistic, its mode of representation old-fashioned and undramatic, its style uneven and often insipid, its authorship uncertain, and its text unreliable."

—Walter Cohen, scholar

"A mouldy tale ... and stale, [Pericles' popularity is in its use of] "scraps out of every dish." —Ben Jonson

13

Performance — Wear comfortable clothing

Review Love's Labour's Lost / Meet in CH 1255

Short Critical Paper #3 Due

20

Cymbeline

Jodi Mikalachki, "The Masculine Romance of Roman Britain" (database)

Discussion Lead #3

"Cymbeline is an appalling slapstick (but not slapdash) rehash of King Lear. ... A god descends from heaven to tell Shakespeare to stop asking his questions, and the play is closed by the ramblings of an idiotic old Lear, babbling of buffoons and giants who will one day bring the good government, the wise order that will make men happy." —Edward Bond, 20th c. playwright

27

Presentation of (Written) Abstracts / Short Critical Paper #4 Due
The Final Exam session is a required performance session and will take place Wednesday, May 4th, 5:15-7:15 in Coleman Hall 1255. A theatrical exercise will be due along with the long paper.

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.

1/24/11 In this 2-3 page single-spaced paper (around 1200 words), situate yourself critically in relation to the articles and the play due for this session. 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?

3/1/11 For this short 2-3 single-spaced page paper (around 1200 words), you are to look to the primary documents in the Bedford Companion, 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) that 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 either Love’s Labour’s Lost or Measure for Measure.

2. You must choose one primary document from Bedford chapters 7-9. It is a good idea to read the section before working with the primary historical documents. Obviously, too, some issues work better with certain plays 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 Shakespeare’s play within a larger cultural dialogue significantly influenced the way we interpret the play.

4/12/11 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. The Bantam edition includes source material for Timon of Athens and Titus Andronicus. (I can provide source material for any of our others.) Choose one play (one you didn’t work on in the "word" paper) and read the 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.

4/26/11 Choose one of our plays (one that you have not worked on in a short paper or in the word paper) and examine (via EEBO) the various 17th century editions in which it 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.