

Global Shakespeares: Text, Culture, Appropriation
KHC 107

Fall 2012
Tuesdays/Thursdays 11-12:20
Room: KHC 107

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Office hours: W 2-4 pm and by appt.

Course Description & Objectives

A Kuwaiti playwright, in the aftermath of 9/11, turns Hamlet into an Islamist terrorist and Ophelia into a suicide bomber. A Martinican poet rewrites *The Tempest* from the perspective of Caliban. An Indian filmmaker remakes *Macbeth* as a Mumbai underworld police thriller. The College Board, as it does almost every year, includes a Shakespeare essay on the AP English exam. What can these diverse events tell us about the cultures that produce them and the plays that inspire them? Why do contemporary artists feel such a recurring need to parrot and parody "Shakespeare," and how much of this activity is about Shakespeare at all?

This seminar will provide a solid college-level introduction to reading and writing about Shakespeare's plays. But it will also serve as a window into a larger discussion about culture-shaping texts and text-shaping cultures. We'll examine dramatic texts, films, and videos of theatre productions (including those available online through MIT's [Global Shakespeares Electronic Archive](#)). We'll discuss dissident, postcolonial, and feminist interpretations of Shakespeare and cast a sidelong glance at absurdist, sci-fi, and "teen" adaptations. We will also read the "original" Shakespeare plays to which the rewriters respond. Our method will shift back and forth between close reading and socio-historical analysis, asking why certain Shakespeare plays inspire the adaptations they do. Beyond learning about particular adaptations, the deeper point is to make sure you never read a "Great Book" the same way again.

Required Texts:

- Arden Shakespeare: *The Tempest*. Ed. Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan.
- Shakespeare, *Four Tragedies: Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth*. Ed. D. Bevington and D.S. Kastan (Bantam Classic Paperback)
- Aimé Césaire, *A Tempest*
- Djanet Sears, *Harlem Duet*

- Paula Vogel, *Desdemona: A Play About a Handkerchief*
- Sulayman Al-Bassam, *The Al-Hamlet Summit*

Many readings posted at

http://blackboard.bu.edu/bin/common/course.pl?course_id=_55306_1

Films: I will arrange screenings or send you YouTube links.

Class blog: <http://www.globalshakespearesBU.blogspot.com>. Please check the blog the night before each class meeting; comments on each other's posts are encouraged. The first two blog posts are required and are part of your participation grade.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory

Academic Dishonesty

Students are expected to abide by both KHC and BU's Undergraduate Academic Conduct Code. The Academic Conduct Code can be found at

<http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/>.

Grading

- Class participation (20%). This includes class discussion and good work on our blog.
- Two 10-minute "CSI" presentations, done with a partner starting week 4, on the Contexts, Subtexts, and Intertexts of the adaptation or offshoot we are reading (10%)
- First, short essay (3 pages): close reading of a passage or analysis of a word cluster in Shakespeare's *Tempest* (10%)
- Second essay or project (4-5 pages): compare an adaptation with its original OR write your own short Shakespeare-based text, with a page explaining your choices (15%)
- Independent research on one particular Shakespeare-based adaptation or offshoot not covered in class, chosen in consultation with me:
 - "table of correlates" comparing interesting features of the original Shakespeare play with their correlates in the adaptation/offshoot. (5%)
 - writeup on the work's contexts/subtexts/intertexts. More details on this in class. It involves some secondary research, drawn mainly from sources I provide. With the "correlatives," it contains most of the pre-writing for the final paper. (5%)
 - final paper (10 pages) (20%)
- Cumulative final exam (15%)

How to Do Well in This Course

Read, listen, participate, present:

- Complete and prepare to discuss the day's reading. Mark up PDFs on printouts or online, mark up your books, and ALWAYS bring the text to class.
- Watch three required films (at evening screenings or on your own); take notes.
- Go to the theatre! We have trips scheduled to see professional productions of Hamlet (Oct 11) and Macbeth (Oct 25). Please save the dates.
- For presentations, be organized, responsible, and brief. Make a handout. Don't ramble.
- In discussion, don't just "express your opinion": listen carefully to your classmates and try to get a real conversation going.

Write:

- I will distribute writing handouts to help you hone the craft of developing and supporting a thesis for a humanities paper. I'll also hand out self-assessment questions for you to submit along with every paper.
- We will focus systematically on "pre-writing" – textual analysis guided by structured note-taking. Do yourself a favor: work as hard as you can on these exercises. Then your paper will basically write itself.
- You may rewrite one of the first two papers; I will average the grades.

Ask for help before you need it!

- Ask classmates and friends to help you brainstorm for papers and to look over your drafts for holes in your reasoning (but make sure the final product is your own work).
- The writing tutors are there for you – use them! But remember that a writing tutor is a sounding board, not a proofreader.
- See me with any questions: in office hours or by appointment. I do read drafts.

Schedule of Readings

PART ONE. What's in a Name? The Shakespeare Brand

Tuesday, Sept. 4 Intro

Read together in class (I'll bring handouts):

- The Onion, "[Unconventional Director Sets Shakespeare Play In Time, Place Shakespeare Intended](#)"
- excerpt from Hamlet III.ii (The Mousetrap)
- 2-page excerpt from Beckett, Waiting for Godot
- 2-page excerpt from Tom Stoppard, [Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead](#) (1967)
- Anna Akhmatova's short poem "[Reading Hamlet](#)" (1909)

Thursday, Sept 6 What is Shakespeare?

To multiply the theoretical perspectives available to us (without cluttering up the syllabus), I will divide the class into two groups with different reading assignments and ask each group to present the articles they read to their classmates. Ahead of your presentation, please post key quotes from the articles you read (or a two-sentence paraphrase) on the class blog, <http://www.globalshakespearesBU.blogspot.com>.

All watch these videos:

- <http://www.americanrepertorytheater.org/events/show/donkey-show> (start; 5:10)
- 7-minute PBS report, "Supreme Court Justice Puts Hamlet on Trial," <http://video.pbs.org/video/1592102353> (watch enough to get the idea)

Group 1:

- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Shakespeare: A Tribute"
- Terence Hawkes, "By," 1-11 in *Meaning By Shakespeare*

Group 2:

- Dennis Kennedy, "Shakespeare Without His Language"
- Laura Bohannon, "Shakespeare in the Bush"

Tuesday, Sept 11: Special guest, Prof. Graham Holderness

- Explore online and find a Shakespeare appropriation that you find striking. It can be a performance, a text, a product, or anything else that makes motivated and creative use of Shakespeare's image or works. (<http://globalshakespeares.mit.edu/> is a good place to start.) Link to it and comment on it [on our class blog](#). This is your last required blog post (part of your participation grade); further posts are for extra credit.
- Read Graham Holderness, "Introduction" and "Life One" (1-44) in *Nine Lives of William Shakespeare* (2011), and prepare good questions for Prof. Holderness.

Thurs, Sept 13 Art and authority

- Shakespeare's [Sonnet 66](#)
- Manfred Pfister, "Route 66: The Political Performance of Shakespeare's Sonnet 66 in Germany and Elsewhere," in *Four Hundred Years of Shakespeare in Europe*
- In class, we'll watch a scene from Tengiz Abuladze's film *Repentance* (1984).

PART TWO. No Holds Bard: Four Plays and their Afterlives

Post-colonial Tempests

Tuesday Sept 18

- Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (through 3.1)

Thursday, Sept 20

- Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (3.2-end)
- "Sources" in *Arden Tempest*, 287-314

- Stephen Greenblatt, "Learning to Curse: Aspects of Linguistic Colonialism in the Sixteenth Century" (1976)

Tuesday, Sept 25

Begin student "CSI" presentations on contexts-subtexts-intertexts of the texts we study

- Aimé Césaire, *A Tempest*
- Octave Mannoni, "Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization," 331-342 in *Arden Tempest*
- "Transatlantic Routes" section intro in *The Tempest and Travels*
- Presentation: Lucy Rix, "Maintaining the State of Emergence/y: Aimé Césaire's *Une tempête*" in *The Tempest and Travels*

Thurs, Sept 27

NO CLASS - ML at a conference in Scotland

- ➔ First paper (close reading of a passage or theme in *The Tempest*) due by email Friday, Sept 28

Political Hamlets

Tuesday, Oct 2

- Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

Thurs, Oct 4

- Finish *Hamlet*
- In class: work through handout on different *Hamlet* texts (Q1, Q2, F)

Tues, Oct 9 - No class (Monday schedule). This Thurs we'll go to the theatre.

Thurs, Oct 11

- S. T. Coleridge, on *Hamlet*;
- [excerpt from Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*](#)
- Presentation: Heiner O. Zimmermann, "Is *Hamlet* Germany?," 293-318 in *New Essays on Hamlet* OR Gary Taylor, "1790," from *Reinventing Shakespeare* (your choice)
- That evening, go by T to see the Globe *Hamlet*: 7:30pm at ArtsEmerson in Boston.

Tuesday, Oct 16

Discuss the production we saw. Also...

- Watch on YouTube: Grigori Kozintsev, *Gamlet* (1964)
- Boris Pasternak's short poem "Hamlet" from *Doctor Zhivago* (1957)
- Jan Kott, "Hamlet at Mid-Century" in *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (1957)
- Presentation from G. Kozintsev, *Ten Years With Hamlet*

Thursday, Oct 18

- Jawad al-Asadi, *Forget Hamlet* (2000)
- Presentation: Margaret Litvin, "When the Villain Steals the Show: The Figure of Claudius in Five Arabic Hamlet Plays"

Tuesday, Oct 23

- Sulayman al-Bassam, *The Al-Hamlet Summit* (playtext, video)
- 2010 students' email exchange with Al-Bassam (find it on class blog);
- Presentation: Margaret Litvin, "Explosive Signifiers: Sulayman Al-Bassam's Post-9/11 Odyssey"

Macbeth on Stage and Screen

Thursday, Oct 25

- Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (read entire play)

Friday, Oct 26 (note revised date!!)

- We'll go by bus to the Actors' Shakespeare Project *Macbeth*; 7:30pm at the Chevalier Theatre in Medford (this special academic event has been rescheduled to avoid conflicting with the mandatory KHC event Thursday night). Meet 6pm at KHC.

Tues, Oct 30

- Discuss the text and the production we saw
- In class, watch clips of Joe Macbeth (1955) and Rupert Goold's *Macbeth* (2009)
- Presentation: P. Donaldson, from "Shakespearean Films/Shakespearean Directors".

Thurs, Nov 1 Special guest, Prof. William Carroll

- Akira Kurosawa, *Throne of Blood* (1957)

➔ Second paper due by email Friday, Nov 2. Comment on an adaptation - or write your own.

Tues, Nov 6

- Reading from Ayanna Thompson and Scott Newstok, eds, *Weyward Macbeth*
- Performance of student adaptations.

Thurs, Nov 8

- Vishal Bhardwaj, *Maqbool* (2004)
- Presentation: from S. Alter, *Fantasies of a Bollywood Love Thief* (2007)

Feminist Othellos

Tues, Oct 13 and Thurs, Nov 15

- Othello

Tues, Nov 20 - No class (ML at Middle East Studies Assn conference)

Thurs, Nov 22 - No class (Thanksgiving)

Tuesday, Nov 27

- Paula Vogel, *Desdemona: A Play About a Handkerchief*

Thurs, Nov 29

- Djanet Sears, *Harlem Duet*
- Presentation: online interviews with Sears; essay in Margaret Jane Kidnie, *Shakespeare and the Problem of Adaptation*

PART THREE. Workshop and conclusion (3 classes)

Tues, Dec 4

By now, you have chosen an appropriation of a Shakespeare play to write on. What are the textual resources made available by that play? How would an adapter approach them?

- Read intros of Fischlin & Fortier and Julie Sanders books on adaptation
- In groups, discuss the Shakespeare correlatives in the adaptations you've chosen

Thurs, Dec 6

- Correlatives assignment due
- In groups, present the contexts/subtexts/intertexts of your chosen adaptations

Tuesday, Dec 11

- CSI Writeups due
- Concluding discussion

Papers due Tuesday, Dec 18.

Final exam will be held during regularly scheduled time slot.