

Shakespeare and His Age, with Brian Donovan, Spring 2012

BSU Course # ENGL 4420 / MnSCU Course ID # 125934

Schedule & Contact Information

Class meets 12:00–1:15 P.M., Tuesdays and Thursdays in Hagg-Sauer 113.

Final Exam: Wednesday, 2 May, 1:00–3:00 P.M., in Hagg-Sauer 113.

Office Hours in Hagg-Sauer 374:

Mondays: 9:00–9:50, 10:00–10:50, & 11:00–11:50 A.M., & 1:00–1:50 P.M.

Tuesdays & Thursdays: 9:00–9:50 A.M.

Wednesdays: 9:00–9:50 & 11:00–11:50 A.M., & 1:00–1:50 & 2:00–2:50 P.M.

Office Phone: (218) 755-2838 (messages at 755-2880, 7:30–4:30 M–F)

Fax (for the whole building, so be sure my name is on it!): 755-2822

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Web Site: <http://www.bemidjistate.edu/academics/departments/english/Donovan>

Description and Purpose of Course

Catalog Description: “**4420 SHAKESPEARE AND HIS AGE** (3 credits) A study of Shakespeare's works in the context of his times and of the work of his major contemporaries. (Might not be offered every year)”

This course aims to acquaint you more thoroughly with the work of the world's most celebrated literary author. Though we shall be reading less than a third of his oeuvre here, it also aims to make you a better student of Shakespeare for any works you may hereafter read (or re-read), see, or act in. It aims further to acquaint you with some of the cultural context of his writing career.

For students in our department's teaching licensure program, I am obliged to declare further in this syllabus that students in this course will “understand and apply . . . research methods encompassing content” (Minnesota Rules 8710.4250 Subp. 3.A), and that your success on this front will be assessed. The term paper and the performance project, as evaluated for 48% of course grade, will entail both promotion and assessment of this desideratum.

Required Books

Shakespeare, William. *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare*. Ed. Stephen Orgel and A. R. Braunmuller. New York: Penguin, 2002. Print. ISBN 0-141-00058-9. \$67 new at campus bookstore.

Sidney, Sir Philip. *Sir Philip Sidney's Apology for Poetry and Astrophil and Stella: Texts and Contexts*. Ed. Peter C. Herman. : Glen Allen, VA: College Publishing, 2001. Print. ISBN 0-967-91211-3. \$18.25 new at bookstore.

At least one other reading will be provided as handout.

Requirements

Reading homework: This is a literature class—a reading class. Your main responsibility will be to read the assigned selections carefully, attentively, imaginatively, and on time. Reading itself, however, cannot be evaluated directly, so you will be graded on the basis of what you say in class and on what you write for the class. Having you write is a more challenging and labor-intensive approach to such evaluation than, say, multiple-choice testing, for you and for me both; but I believe that it makes for both more valid evaluation and more of a learning experience for you.

Take-home tests: There will be two or three take-home tests, with questions given out on Thursday and answers due the next Tuesday. You may be required to answer one question or two, for a total of

500–1000 words in any case; and you may or may not get to choose among available questions. Questions will be put briefly: all too well I remember being driven crazy as a student by essay questions that were essay-length themselves. These tests are to be performed individually, not in collaboration with one another. While answering, you may consult class notes, course texts, and a dictionary. Answers should be typed or word-processed, and should express your own insight, deepened and enriched in class we hope, but without recourse to published secondary scholarship and criticism. (Save that for the term paper.) Dates and other details will be set once the selection and order of plays is set, which shall be in light of results from the opening-day questionnaire.

Final Exam (Wednesday, 2 May, 1:00–3:00 P.M.): this exam will require you to answer three questions, which will all count the same. You will get to select each question you will answer, out of a pair; and here again I promise that none of the questions will take more than a sentence or two for me to ask. While answering these questions you may freely consult the assigned texts, and a dictionary if you choose, but not other sources or class notes. (Occasional brief marginal notes in your textbooks are permissible, but do not turn blank spaces in your textbook into cheat sheets for the exams. Use of the textbooks in exams will constitute consent to inspection of them.)

Term Paper (Due Thursday, 12 April): This should be a work of criticism, analysis, and/or interpretation, on one or more of Shakespeare's works, or a specific passage from Shakespeare's work. Or it may be on some other work or works of the period, or on some aspect of the historical and cultural context, provided that you can and do explicitly show and explore some specific relevance to the Shakespearean canon. All paper topics should be discussed and cleared in advance with me. The paper should be a research paper in MLA style, using and citing *scholarly* secondary sources (not stuff from the open, Google-able Web!) as well as primary sources. This paper should be approximately 2000 words in length (6–7 pp., not counting separate "Works Cited" page, which is required, nor separate title page, which is discouraged), with 7 or so secondary (modern, scholarly) sources cited—obvious padding discounted in both cases.

Performance Project: This will be a multi-stage project culminating in the performance of a bit of Shakespearean drama, but also involving preparatory steps that occasion important learning. It may be done individually or in a group, but in either case should involve multiple consultations with me. Begin by selecting a passage from any of the plays of Shakespeare, a passage that makes some sense as a stand-alone excerpt. For a solo project, this should be a monologue; for a group, it should be a scene (or piece of a scene) with as many speaking roles as there are people in the group. Overall length should be one or two dozen lines per person, as lineated in the *Complete Pelican Shakespeare*. In the case of a group project, it is unlikely you will find a scene with the lines perfectly evenly divided among parts, but no one should get less than two. Those with few lines to perform should make up for it in contributions to the project's other stages, and in mute concentration on the scene while others are speaking their parts in performance.

Stage One: Edit your own performance text, comparing all the quarto and first-folio versions available in transcript and/or facsimile form from such Web sites as *Internet Shakespeare Editions* (internetshakespeare.uvic.ca) as well as a modern print edition such as the *Pelican* or *Arden* (and its textual notes) on *every line*. Pick one early printing as your main copy text, borrowing readings from others and from the modern edition where the selected copy text is unsatisfactory.

Stage Two: Mark scansion of every line of verse in the passage, using standard symbols \cup / || above the text.

Stage Three: Block the passage: this means determining and writing down who stands and moves where when.

Stage Four: Rehearse and memorize. This will normally lead to some revisions of the work of Stages Two and Three.

Stage Five: Prepare and submit a written explanation/justification of the more important decisions made in Stages One through Three (and revised in Stage Four), and the interpretation underlying them, along with a full transcript of the results of those stages.

Stage Six: Perform the excerpt as planned, off book, for the class. These performances should be scattered throughout the portion of the semester following Spring Break.

Grading system: Each piece of your work will be graded with a letter grade. For purposes of averaging, A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, and F=0, pluses and minuses add and subtract one-third, and work not submitted at all counts -2. Weights of the various grade components are as follows: take-home tests 24%, term paper 24%, final exam 20%, performance project 24%, class participation 8%.

Sexual Content Warning

Literature very commonly deals with sex, and often in a very uninhibited way. Over a hundred years ago, Thomas Bowdler had an idea for correcting this kind of “problem”; he published censored or expurgated versions of Shakespeare’s plays, so that inhibited and proper Victorian young ladies could read them without scandal or embarrassment. Thus his name became a verb: “to Bowdlerize.” This course will not be Bowdlerized. If you are uncomfortable with talk or discussion pertaining to sex, I respectfully urge that you find some other course to fulfill your requirements.

Accessibility Notice

Students with physical, psychiatric, learning, or other disabilities are heartily welcome in this class. Reasonable and necessary accommodations for disabilities can be arranged. You are responsible for notifying Kathi Hagen (Office for Students with Disabilities, 755-3883, e-mail khagen@bemidjistate.edu), or the instructor, or (preferably) both, regarding special needs and accommodations. Upon request this syllabus itself can be made available in alternate formats.

A Note on Academic Integrity

When you submit intellectual work product (such as term papers or test papers) for academic credit, you are implicitly declaring that the work is your own new and original stuff, the result of your own individual thinking. Your thinking will be much enriched by others’ input, we all hope; but you are expected to digest this input thoroughly and assimilate it into your own thinking, much as your body might digest the tissue of a food plant or animal and convert it into your own body tissue. In the term paper, facts and ideas (as well as actual wording) for which you are indebted to others (your sources) must be precisely noted and carefully acknowledged—even what you have more or less thoroughly “digested”—according to the MLA style. In the take-home tests and the final exam, while I expect your essays to reflect points that I have made in class (and documentation is not required in that case), I also expect them to be freshly formulated during the exam period, in your own words. Demonstrable violation of these expectations will result in a reduced or failing grade for the course, and will also be reported to the Director of Student Life and Counseling, which may result in more severe sanctions if this is not your first offense.

First Month’s Course Calendar (more to come!)

#	Date	Reading in <i>Pelican</i>	Description & Other Agenda
1	Tu 1/10		Introductory Lecture
2	Th 1/12	xliii–lii, 764–6, 965–81	General Introduction & <i>Richard II</i> 1.1–3.1; look over “A Comparative Table,” “Genealogical Chart,” & “Monarchs of England.”
3	Tu 1/17	981–99	<i>Richard II</i> 3.2–5.6
4	Th 1/19	1044–1061; Coke	<i>Henry IV Part 1</i> Acts 1 & 2; Shakespeare and the Law
5	Tu 1/24	1061–79	<i>Henry IV Part 1</i> Acts 3–5; The Four Humors
6	Th 1/26	1086–1103	<i>Henry IV Part 2</i> 1.1–3.1; The Printing House
7	Tu 1/31	1103–22	<i>Henry IV Part 2</i> 3.2–Epilogue; Heraldry
8	Th 2/2	1128–40	<i>Henry V</i> Prologue & Acts 1 & 2; 1944 Movie of Same 0:00–45:48
9	Tu 2/7	1140–52	<i>Henry V</i> 3.Chorus–4.2; 1944 Movie of Same 0:45:48–1:29:49
10	Th 2/9	1152–64	<i>Henry V</i> 4.3–Epilogue; 1944 Movie of Same 1:29:49–2:16:48