

Shakespearean Afterlives: The Bard and Adaptation
400-level
Meets 2x week for 75-80 minutes

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Office Hours and Location

Contact Email

What is adaptation? Why adapt? This upper-division course is a study of Shakespearean adaptations, appropriations, echoes, and riffs for the stage and screen. The course is divided into four distinct units on major Shakespearean tragedies: *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth*. Students will read these plays over the course of the semester alongside dramatic and film adaptations of those works. In addition, we will consider the role that adaptation of canonical work plays in theatre and film, as well as the “value” adaptations do (or perhaps do not) possess. In addition to reading and analyzing Shakespeare’s work, student will have the opportunity to analyze work by underrepresented groups including women and people of color.

Course Objectives

In this class students will:

- 1.) Gain a working understanding of adaptation theory/theories.
- 2.) Practice adapting a Shakespearean text into a new play of their own devising.
- 3.) Consider the historical, political, and social contexts of Shakespearean adaptations as well as the works’ performance implications.
- 4.) Develop their ability to analyze dramatic literature and develop coherent and sound written arguments about these plays.
- 5.) Practice public speaking by presenting their own analyses and research in front of the class.

Required Texts:

Shakespeare’s plays (any unabridged version or anthology):

Othello

King Lear

Macbeth

Hamlet

In addition, students are required to have ready access to the following plays:

Lee, Young Jean. *Lear*.

Morrison, Toni. *Desdemona*.

Msomi, Welcome. *uMabatha*.

Sears, Djanet. *Harlem Duet*.

Stoppard, Tom. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*.

Vogel, Paula. *Desdemona: A Play about a Handkerchief*.

Other plays, essays, and films will be made available to you.

Grading

In-Class quizzes/writing assignments	100 points
Midterm Essay Exam	100 points
Adaptation Project	100 points
Directorial Treatment and Presentation	100 points
Final Anthology Project	100 points
Total:	500 points

A=90-100%; B = 80-89%; C=70-79%; D=60-69%; F=0-59%

Class Participation: You are required to attend and participate in class. Please bring the assigned reading with you to every class as we will be working directly from it. Classroom discussions require alertness, constructive engagement with, and respectful attendance to your instructors and fellow students. Please do not text, check e-mail, or engage in extraneous talking during class. I reserve the right to ask any disruptive student to leave the room; should we do this, that student will receive an absence for the day and may not make up missed assignments.

Attendance: more than 4 unexcused absences will result in a failing grade in the course.

ASSIGNMENTS

In-Class Quizzes/Writing Assignments (100 points)

Periodically throughout the semester, I will give in-class pop quizzes. Make sure to stay up-to-date on your reading in order to be prepared for these. As the term “pop quiz” implies, I will give no prior notice.

Adaptation Project (100 points)

Each student will have the opportunity to choose one of the Shakespeare plays discussed in class to adapt into your own 5-10 minute play. You will present these plays in an end-of-semester play reading festival.

Midterm Essay Exam (100 points)

You will write an analytical essay in class in lieu of a midterm multiple-choice exam. This will be a way for you to apply what you have learned during the class. More details will follow later.

Directorial Treatment and Presentation (100 points)

You will choose one of the play adaptations discussed in class to (hypothetically) direct. You will write an analytical directorial treatment over this particular play, including an analysis of its major action, the characters, and the reason you have chosen to direct *this* play *now* (as opposed to Shakespeare’s “original” or another adaptation). You will then present this information to the class as if we are your production team who will help mount this performance. More details to come.

Final Anthology Project (100 points)

You will propose the creation of your anthology of Shakespearean adaptations and accompany it with a 5-7 paper that justifies your choices, making it clear to the publisher why they should publish this book in this particular way. Your anthology proposal should include 15 plays. You may choose to focus your anthology on one particular play, a genre, or the entire canon. Justify your organization in your anthology proposal. While you are welcome to use plays from this course, seven of these plays must be outside the course reading list. Additional details are forthcoming.

Course Calendar

This calendar is subject to change due to course developments

<u>Week 1</u>	<u>In-Class</u>	<u>What's Due?</u>
T	What is Adaptation?	
R	What is Adaptation? contd.	Julie Sanders, Part 1: “What is Adaptation?” & “What is Appropriation?”

UNIT 1: *OTHELLO*

<u>Week 2</u>		
T	<i>Othello</i>	<i>Othello</i> , Shakespeare
R	<i>Othello</i> and film <i>Othello</i> , contd.	<i>Desdemona, a Play about a Handkerchief</i> , Paula Vogel

<u>Week 3</u>		
T	<i>Othello</i> , contd.	<i>Harlem Duet</i> , Djanet Sears
R		

<u>Week 4</u>		
T	contd.	<i>Desdemona</i> , Toni Morrison
R	contd.	

UNIT 2: *KING LEAR*

<u>Week 5</u>		
T	<i>King Lear</i> In-Class screening: <i>Ran</i> , directed by Akira Kurosawa	<i>King Lear</i> , Shakespeare
R	contd.	

<u>Week 6</u>		
T	<i>King Lear</i> , contd.	<i>Lear</i> , Young Jean Lee
R	contd.	

<u>Week 7</u>		
T	The Problem of Adaptation	“Surviving Performance: Shakespeare’s Contested Works,” Margaret Jane Kidnie
R	MIDTERM ESSAY EXAM	

UNIT 3: *MACBETH*

Week 8

T

Macbeth
 In-Class Screening:
 ShakespeaReTold, *Macbeth*
contd.

Macbeth, Shakespeare

R

Week 9

T

Macbeth, contd.

uMabatha, Welcome Msomi

R

Week 10

T

Macbeth, contd.
Sleep No More

— *Sleep No More* reviews
 — “Felix Barrett and
 Maxine Doyle of
 Punchdrunk,” Josephine
 Machon

R

Macbeth and film

UNIT 4: *HAMLET*

Week 11

T

Hamlet
Hamlet and film

Hamlet, Shakespeare

R

Week 12

T

Hamlet, contd.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead, Tom Stoppard

R

contd.

Week 13

T

Hamlet, contd.

BOY, Erik Ehn

R

contd.

Week 14

No Classes – Break

Week 15

T	Directorial Presentations
R	Directorial Presentations

Week 16

T	Play-Reading Festival
R	Play-Reading Festival

Finals Week

Final Anthology Project Due
Debrief