SHAKESPEARE’S SONNETS AND ROMANCES

In 1609, Shakespeare’s sonnets were first published, and now four hundred years later we will investigate their nuances and meanings to understand the cultural context from which they were born. As radical rewritings of the Petrarchan form, these sonnets interrogate desire, love, possession, and sexuality, as they both emulate and disrupt the poetic conventions. Along side the sonnets, we will read four of Shakespeare’s late plays: Pericles, The Winter’s Tale, Cymbeline, and The Tempest, all of which push the boundaries of genre and theatrical tradition. As these plays seemed to move beyond the conventions of comedies, tragedies, and histories, the nineteenth-century scholar Edward Dowden created a new category for them: Romances. In this summer course, we will examine these Romances in the context of the revisionist sonnets that appeared in print at approximately the same time as these late plays were first performed on the stage.

Frontispiece of the first edition of Shakespeare’s Sonnets and the newly discovered “Cobb” portrait of William Shakespeare
This syllabus is subject to change at the whim of the mercurial instructor

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<th>Date</th>
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| **W 6/3** | *The sonnets*  
Read Shakespeare Sonnets 1-154; Concentrate on sonnets 1-18 | Norton Introduction to the sonnets  
“Formal Pleasure…” (Vendler)  
“Voicing the Young Man” (Sullivan) | Assignment                                      |
| **M 6/7** | *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*  
Concentrate on sonnets 19-37 | Norton Introduction to *Pericles*  
“Shakespeare’s Romances” (Fuller)  
“Incest and Authority…” (Frye) | Commentary 300-350 words  
Group A  
Sonnet Presentations |
| **W 6/9** | *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*  
Concentrate on sonnets 37-54 | “Revolution…” (Grazia)  
“Mr. Who He?” (Orgel)  
“Liminal Geography…” (Relihan) | Commentary 300-350 words  
Group B  
Sonnet Presentations |
| **M 6/14** | *The Winter's Tale*  
Concentrate on sonnets 55-72, | Norton Introduction to *The Winter's Tale*  
“Confounded by Winter…” (Callaghan) | Commentary 300-350 words  
Group B  
Sonnet Presentations |
| **W 6/16** | *The Winter's Tale*  
Concentrate on sonnets 73-90 | “Masculine Authority and the Maternal Body” (Adelman)  
“…Manuscript Circulation…” (Marotti) | Commentary 300-350 words  
Group A  
Sonnet Presentations |
| **M 6/21** | *Cymbeline, King of Britain*  
Concentrate on sonnets 91-108 | Norton introduction to *Cymbeline*  
“The Masculine Romance…” (Makalachki) | Commentary 300-350 words  
Groups A and B  
Sonnet Presentation |
| **W 6/23** | *Cymbeline, King of Britain*  
Concentrate on sonnets 109-126 | “*Cymbeline*: The Rescue of the King” (Nevo) | Sonnet Presentation  
Abstract (300 words) and annotated Bibliography due (10 secondary sources)  
If you are taking the exam, please write a 300 word commentary on what has interested you thematically in the course |
| **M 6/28** | *The Tempest*  
Concentrate on sonnets 126-143 | Norton Introduction to *The Tempest*  
“Rethinking Shakespeare’s Dark Lady” (Bell) | If you have drafts at this point, I will be happy to look at them and comment on them. If you want comments on the draft, you |
Commentaries: We will divide seminar members into two groups: Group A and Group B. Each group will be responsible for writing a 300-350 word critical commentary paper once a week, until June 23th when you will be busy writing your abstract, bibliography and then the final paper or preparing for the final exam. So each of you will write in total 3 commentaries. You will email it to me at altigner@gmail.com by 9 a.m. of the day that it is due. Make sure that your last name appears on the document name and that you send it as a .doc nor a .docx. You will want to be sure to have a brief but cogent thesis that argues one or two significant points about the primary material. Part of the day's discussion will naturally evolve from your own commentaries.

Close Reading of a Sonnet and Sonnet Presentation: Each student will give a 20-minute presentation on two sonnets on which we are focusing that day. Your presentation day will coincide with the close reading of the sonnet that you have written for the day. You will sign up for a particular class to give your presentation and turn in your sonnet reading (via email).

Leading the discussion: Each student will lead a discussion for a portion of one class concerning the play we are reading. Students will sign up for discussion leading on the first day of class. Your job will be writing up discussion questions and keeping the discussion going for approximately 30-40 minutes.

Final Paper or Final Exam: As many of the students in this course are non-thesis masters students or Ph.D students, both of whom will have to take written exam, and because graduate students have few if any opportunities to hone their exam-taking skills, I am offering the choice of either writing a final exam on Monday June 30 or writing a final paper due at 10 am on June 30. If you are a non-thesis masters student, I highly suggest that you take the exam rather than write the paper. You will be expected to produce approximately the same amount of written text (10-12 pages) whether you take the exam or write the paper. The exam will be administered by email, and you will be able to take the exam at home. However, you should not consult any text or the internet, while you are taking the exam. Otherwise, you might as well write the paper.

Short Written Assignments:
3 critical commentaries  300-350 words
1 close reading of a sonnet  500-550 words

Longer Written Assignment:
Exam or Final paper (10-12 pages) due on July 7

Text: The Norton Shakespeare

