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Mon. & Wed. 1:00-2:30 (drop-in),
Tue. 11:00-12:00 (by appt. only)
and by appointment

Engl 546 | Reading Historically: Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism

Course Goals

Jyotsna Singh isn't the first observer to point out that over the past thirty years or so, the "discursive field" of Shakespeare has "fractured." That's largely because of critical interventions by feminists, new historicists, critical race theorists, and postcolonialists, all of whom have advocated approaches to Shakespeare that are "cognizant of larger historical narratives about nationhood, race, slavery, foreign trade, class and gender." In Shakespeare's day—an era of European history marked by travel, exploration, mercantilism, a growing slave trade, and a nascent colonialism—issues of race and difference were indeed central. But they were also very much unsettled. Contemporary theory has taught us that ideologies are most visible when they're cracking, under stress. Often with great insight, Shakespeare dramatizes the anxieties of an England trying to imagine how to think about those who stand in the way of its overseas expansion—and who trouble the budding imperial nation's sense of self. But he also participates in that complex and contradictory project of imagining, himself.

That paradox is what we'll strive to understand this semester.

Required Materials/Resources

First and foremost, you need regular access to the course web site (accessible through the "Courses" page of my website, whose URL is listed above). A good deal of the required reading will be available on the course website *only*, on the password-protected "Course Reader" page (*not* Moodle or ONCORES). When prompted, enter the username **engl546** and the password **pcshakespeare** (note that both are case-sensitive). You'll need Adobe Reader or its equivalent to read the .pdf files. If you don't have convenient access to the web at home, make plans to spend some time each week in a campus computer lab, reading, downloading, and/or printing out copies of the readings for the coming week.

Over the course of the semester, we'll be reading nearly all of the following critical work:

- Ania Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism* (Oxford, \$29.95)

Not surprisingly, there are also several Shakespeare plays (and one by Aimé Césaire) that you should procure at the university bookstore or anywhere else you can find them. You will need the specific editions I've ordered for the supplemental materials they include:

- *Titus Andronicus* (Oxford World's Classics, \$10.95)
- *The Merchant of Venice* (Norton Critical Edition, \$14.75)
- *Othello* (Bedford Shakespeare, \$14.75)
- *Antony and Cleopatra* (Norton Critical Edition, \$11.50)
- *The Tempest* (Norton Critical Edition, \$15.50)
- *A Tempest* (Theatre Communications Group [2002 ed.], \$13.95)

We'll also be reading selected Shakespeare sonnets and Ruth Praver Jhabvala's screenplay for the film *Shakespeare Wallah*; I will make those texts available to you.

Finally, students who are unusually devoted to the subject and/or who have exceptionally fat wallets may wish to snag this recommended text:

- Bill Ashcroft, et al., *Post-Colonial Studies: Key Concepts* (Routledge, \$26.95)

Course Requirements/Major Assignments

Regular monitoring of the course updates page: Any assignment for the next class session will be posted on the “updates” page of the class web site, normally by 8:00 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays. If you have to miss a class, you’re expected to be prepared for the next one, just the same. I’ll post announcements and schedule changes to the updates page, too, though I will also make any such announcements in class (and I’ll certainly consult with you before making any *radical* changes). The takeaway: check the updates page regularly.

Attendance/Preparation/Participation: While I can blow hot air with the best of them, monologue is not my preferred pedagogical mode, and we’ll do our best to follow the seminar model, where the object is not to receive The Word from the mouth of an Authority, but to learn from one another by working through texts *together*. You shouldn’t feel as though you’re under continual pressure to demonstrate your brilliance and eloquence, but you should diligently hold up your end of the conversation, just the same. To that end, you’ll need to (1) do all the assigned reading, carefully and on time, (2) think about—and write down—your responses to the things you read, asking yourself questions that will help you form and develop ideas about them, and (3) help start class discussions and keep them going by airing your ideas, your problems and your questions along with everyone else.

It should go without saying that to contribute to a good discussion and to get anything out of one, you’ve got to *be here*. At the graduate level, your absence is conspicuous, especially in a small class. The contingencies of life may well require you to miss a class or two over the course of a semester, but you should strive to keep such occasions to a minimum. The more you’re gone, the less you can demonstrate your preparedness, your engagement, your professionalism, and your all-around good citizenship; excessive ditching can only count against you.

More formal assignments:

- Mostly because I have a weakness for them, there will be eight (8) reading quizzes.
- More important—and more consequential: a series of regular short reading responses (500 to 1000 words) plus discussion questions.
- A 30ish-minute presentation of research and criticism on selected texts and topics.
- Your choice of a 15- to 20-page seminar paper or take-home midterm and final essays.

Grading

Here’s where the oppressive substructure of my seemingly benign classroom shows through. I try to grade by the book, which was written before the days of rampant grade inflation: “A” is reserved for truly stunning, outstanding work; “B” work goes solidly beyond minimal expectations for basic competency; and “C” is merely “standard” and “normal”—i.e., it meets the basic course requirements in every way. “D” is technically worthy of credit, but barely, and I guess we all know what “F” means. I don’t expect to give any Incompletes. Here’s how your final course grade will break down:

- Reading Quizzes (cumulative): 10%
- Reading Responses/Discussion Questions: 35%
- In-Class Presentation: 15%
- Seminar Paper (or Exams): 30%
- Attendance/Participation/Etc.: 10%

Miscellany

Disabilities: Please let me know of any documented disabilities and recommended accommodations that would promote your success in this class.

Plagiarism: I take academic dishonesty very seriously. Passing off part or all of someone else's words or ideas as your own will result—at the very least—in a failing grade for the course. The university definition of and policies regarding academic dishonesty can be found in the HSU catalog. Please be aware that plagiarism and other forms of dishonesty can result in expulsion from the University.

Communicating: I'll read and respond to everything you hand in and put a grade on your formal written work, and I'll happily meet with you at any time to talk about your progress and prospects. If a personal disaster befalls you in the course of the semester—your home burns down, your computer crashes, a marauding horde carries off your livestock—please don't be embarrassed, and don't just disappear: let me know, and as soon as humanly possible. At the very least, I can direct you to campus resources that may help, and together we may be able to devise a plan to get you through the semester in one piece. I don't guarantee that I can accommodate every unexpected turn of events; you should also be prepared to withdraw from one or more courses, or from the university entirely, if the situation is dire. But there are sometimes contingency plans that can be put into effect if students alert their faculty promptly of personal crises that will interfere with their academic performance.

As for more routine problems: if you're falling behind in the class, feeling as though you're not "getting" something, or just having an intangible problem either mild or severe, then please, please, please: *don't sit around fretting and cowering—come and talk to me without delay.*

If your schedule absolutely cannot be changed to make my regular office hours, then I will try to accommodate requests for appointments at other mutually agreeable times—just stop me after class or email me so that we can talk one-on-one.

FOR ADDITIONAL COURSE POLICIES AND OTHER MORE GENERAL INFORMATION (ON CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE, MINIMUM OUTSIDE PREPARATION REQUIRED FOR THIS COURSE, PLAGIARISM & ACADEMIC DISHONESTY, DETAILED DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION, SEXUAL HARASSMENT & DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR, SAFETY INFORMATION, ETC.), ALL LAID OUT IN EVEN MORE EXCRUCIATING DETAIL, SEE THE UNABRIDGED SYLLABUS ONLINE AT [HTTP://USERS.HUMBOLDT.EDU/MSELDRIAGE/ENGL342/546POLICIES.HTM](http://users.humboldt.edu/mseldrige/ENGL342/546POLICIES.HTM) IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL STUDENTS TO READ AND UNDERSTAND THIS INFORMATION.

Calendar

(Danger! All quantities approximate! Contents may settle with shipping!)

Week 1 Aug. 28	Introduction: Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism Assigned reading in online Course Reader.
Week 2 Sep. 2 & 4	Race, Empire, Barbarism: <i>Titus Andronicus</i> Additional assigned reading in online Course Reader.
Weeks 3/4 Sep. 9 & 11 Sep. 16 & 18	"The condition of a saint, the complexion of a devil": Race and Religion in <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> Additional assigned reading in the Norton Critical edition and in the online Course Reader.

- Weeks 5/6**
Sep. 23 & 25
Sep. 30/Oct. 2 **“Wash the Ethiop white”: *Othello, The Moor of Venice***
Additional assigned reading in the Bedford “Texts & Contexts” edition and in the online Course Reader. Presentations (specific dates to be determined).
- Week 7**
Oct. 7 & 9 **Imperial Bedroom: Exoticism and Emasculation in *Antony and Cleopatra***
Additional assigned reading in the Norton Critical edition and in the online Course Reader.
- Week 8**
Oct. 14 & 16 **“In the old age, black was not counted fair”: Race and Gender in the “Dark Lady” Sonnets**
Assigned reading in online Course Reader.
- Weeks 9/10**
Oct. 21 & 23
Oct. 28 & 30 **Colonial Encounters, Things of Darkness: *The Tempest***
Additional assigned reading in the Norton Critical edition and in the online Course Reader. Presentations (specific dates to be determined).
- Weeks 11/12**
Nov. 4 & 6
Nov. 13 **Shakespeare “Goes Native”: *Shakespeare Wallah***
Screening of the film; assigned reading in online Course Reader. Presentations (specific dates to be determined).
- Weeks 13/14**
Nov. 18 & 20
Dec. 2 & 4 **The Empire Writes Back: *A Tempest***
Additional assigned reading in online Course Reader. Presentations (specific dates to be determined).
- Week 15**
Dec. 9 & 11 **(Catch-up)**
I’m taking it for granted that we will need to adjust our calendar over the course of the semester. By the time we get here, we should have no trouble filling up this week.

Seminar papers due during final exam period, 8:00 – 9:50, Tuesday, December 16th.