

Political Science 4313: Politics & Literature
Shakespeare's Politics
Instructor: Mary P. Nichols

Required texts (Pelican Shakespeare, published by Penguin):

Julius Caesar

Antony and Cleopatra

Richard II

Henry IV, Part I

Henry V

Henry VIII

Merry Wives of Windsor

As You Like It

Much Ado About Nothing

Goals and Objectives:

The course will explore the extent to which Shakespeare's plays, including tragedies, and histories, and comedies, present a comprehensive understanding of political life. How did Shakespeare view the potential and limits of different political orders, and of politics more generally? What do his plays show us about the grounds of authority, justifications for rule, the relation between law and discretion, the goals and manner of statesmanship, the relation between the sexes, authority within families, monarchy, and freedom? In particular, to what extent do Shakespeare's plays explore the advantages and limits of more liberal political orders, based on self-government, consent, and individual choice? Are such orders more or less conducive to tragedy? What are the causes of tragedy, and how do different political orders direct the tragic conflicts of human life? What is the relation between civil society and the natural state? And how does drama educate us about ourselves and our political orders in ways that treatises do not?

We will begin with Shakespeare's Rome (*Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*), the meaning of Julius Caesar for Roman politics, the eclipse of nobility under imperial rule, and the attractions of love and private life over political ambition. We shall then turn to Shakespeare's view of the English monarchy, and the problems it poses for politics. We shall study three rather different English kings, Richard II, who understood his legitimate title as sacrosanct, the usurper Bolingbroke, who was crowned Henry IV, and his son Hal, who gains a new legitimacy as Henry V (*Richard II*, *Henry IV, Part I*, and *Henry V*). After contrasting Richard and Henry IV, we shall explore Hal's "political education," the effect of his tavern life on his education, the kind of ruler he becomes, and the extent to which his Christianity contributes to or complicates his successful rule. To what extent does Hal become a "democratic" king? Or is he simply "Machiavellian"?

Even more "modern" regimes than Henry V's rule are represented in Shakespeare's latest history play *Henry VIII*, the even more contemporary settings in his comedies, in England (*Merry Wives of Windsor*), in the French countryside (*As You Like It*) and in the declining patriarchy in Messina (*Much Ado About Nothing*), where comedies culminate in the marriages of the protagonists. How do these plays treat "modern" marriages, and the question of both tragedy and statesmanship in these more liberal political settings?

The principal aims of this course are

1. to appreciate how literary masterpieces do not simply entertain but also treat fundamental questions of human and political life and why political theorists might benefit from studying

literature

2. to develop the ability to read, analyze, and write about drama from such a perspective
3. to appreciate the differences between political orders and the ways in which they encourage different virtues and ways of life
4. to foster a love for Shakespeare through an appreciation of his greatness

Course requirements:

1. A midterm (30%) and final exam (40%). Essay questions will be handed out before each exam to help you prepare.
2. (20%). Quizzes, announced and unannounced, will help you to stay prepared for class and to read consistently and well.
3. (10%) Participation and attendance: As the fruits of this course will come largely by way of classroom lecture and discussion—for which you must come thoroughly familiar with the assignments, and with questions and observations that will aid class discussion, attendance is crucial, and will be factored in to a student’s grade for participation.

Requirements for Graduate Credit:

1. A midterm paper of 7-8 pages (35%) and a final paper of 10-12 pages (45%)
2. Participation and attendance, and quizzes (20%)

Attendance:

In accordance with Baylor’s attendance policy, a student who misses more than 25% of the scheduled classes, will fail the course. Moreover, students who accumulate more than three absences can expect to see their grade substantially affected.

Grade Scale for undergraduates:

100-91% = A	90-86% = B+	85-81% = B	
80-76% = C+	75-70% = C	69-60% = D	59-0% = F

Grade Scale for graduates:

100-96% = A	95-91% = A-	90-87% = B+	86-84% = B
83-81% = B-	80-77% = C+	76-74% = C+	73-70% = C
69-60% = D	59-0% = F		

Assignments: (Class will spend approximately a week and a half on each play (three class periods))

1. Introduction: Political Settings and Ways of Life in Shakespeare’s Dramas
Rome: Its Nobility and Dangers
Julius Caesar

2. The Limits of Rome and Attractions of Egypt
Antony and Cleopatra

3. English Monarchy, the Foundations of Rule, and Statesmanship
Richard II
Henry IV, Part I
Henry V
Henry VIII

6. Individual Choice, Marriage, and Democratic Participation
As You Like It
Merry Wives of Windsor
Much Ado About Nothing