

History 302: Shakespeare's Kings

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Univ. Hall 219

MWF, 9:30-10:20

Course Description:

This course is an investigation of Shakespeare's representations of kingship in medieval England. It is particularly concerned with the dynastic conflicts that Shakespeare himself so gallantly styled, "the Wars of the Roses." Over the course of the semester, we will examine the reigns of five kings (Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V, Henry VI and Richard III) as well as Shakespeare's portrayals of them. In addition, we also explore Shakespeare's sources and the politics and culture of the Tudor era that shaped his vision. Finally, we also discuss various film interpretations of Shakespeare's kings. Our ultimate goal is to understand how much Shakespeare's history plays accurately represent the reigns of these kings as well as how much Shakespeare has influenced our modern notions of medieval English kingship.

Required Texts:

1) The Arden Shakespeare paperback editions of the following plays:

Richard II

Henry IV, part 1

Henry V

Henry VI, part I

Richard III

2) Michael Hicks, *Edward IV*

3) Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare & Renaissance Politics*

Recommended Texts:

4) John Gillingham and Ralph Griffiths, *Medieval Britain: A Very Short Introduction*

Other source material (provided by the Professor Zook)

Christopher Fletcher, "The Language of Manhood: Strength, Violence and Honor," in *Richard II: Manhood, Youth, and Politics, 1377-99*

Course Requirements:

- a) **Discussion:** This course is concentrated around reading and discussion. Students need to keep up with the reading and are asked to come to class prepared and eager to engage with texts as well as with each other. **It is vital that students bring the book we are discussing to class.**
- b) **Writing:** Because the task of reading is so important there will be no outside writing assignments and very little research required. Instead, there will be five in-class essay exams. These exams will focus around the five history plays we will read and discuss. They will ask students to think critically about Shakespeare's presentation of medieval kingship as presented in his plays.
- c) **Class Presentations:** Each student will present a sequence from a Shakespeare film (from one of the five plays discussed) and lead a discussion about the interpretation presented in the sequence.
- d) **Attendance to all classes is mandatory.** Students who miss class without prior permission will lose a half-grade off their final grade for each class missed.

Grades will be calculated as follows:

Five in-class Essay Exams	20% each (60% total)
Discussion	15%
Student Presentations	25%

Rules of the Game:

Never walk into class late. Turn off all cell-phones and pagers once you enter the class room. If you use a laptop during class, you may only use a word processing program (absolutely no internet).

Use proper email etiquette (an email should begin with a salutation such as "Dear Professor X;" and end with a proper closing, such as "Sincerely" or "Yours.").

Students who plagiarize any portion of their written assignments will be removed from this course and the incident will be reported to the Dean of Students.

Also, keep in mind: In the event of a major campus emergency, the above requirements, deadlines, and grading policies are subject to changes that may require a revised semester calendar.

Schedule of Readings, Lectures & Discussions

Monday, Aug. 23	Introduction to the Course
Wed-Fri, Aug. 25-27	Shakespeare & the Elizabethan World View Read "Shakespeare & the Varieties of Early Modern Political Culture," in Hadfield, Shakespeare & Renaissance Politics
Mon-Wed Aug. 30-Sept 1	Medieval Kingship & the King's Two Bodies Read "True & False Sovereigns in the English History Play," in Hadfield.
Friday, Sept. 3	Edward III and His Sons Recommended Reading, Medieval Britain , chaps. 5. 6.
Monday, Sept. 6	Labor Day (no classes)
Wednesday, Sept. 8	Richard II: A Study in Failure
Wednesday, Sept. 8	Poor Richard Discussion of Christopher Fletcher, "The Language of Manhood: Strength, Violence and Honor," in <i>Richard II: Manhood, Youth, and Politics, 1377-99</i>
Friday, Sept. 10	Discussion Richard II
Mon-Wed, Sept. 13-15	Discussion Richard II
Friday, Sept. 17	Student Presentations: RII

Monday, Sept. 20

In-class Essay Exam 1

Wednesday, Sept. 22

Henry IV: The Usurper
Recommended Reading, **Medieval Britain**, chap. 7

Friday, Sept. 24

Discussion: **Henry IV, part 1**

Mon-Wed, Sept. 27-29

Discussion: **Henry IV, part 1**

Friday, October 1

Student Presentations: H IV, 1

Monday, October 4

In-class Essay Exam 2

Wednesday, Oct. 6

Henry V: the Hero, then & now

Friday, Oct. 8

Library Day (No Class)

October 11-12

October Break (No classes)

Wednesday, Oct. 13

Victory at Agincourt

Friday, Oct. 15

Discussion **Henry V**

Mon-Wed, Oct. 18-20

Discussion **Henry V**

Friday, Oct. 22

Student Presentations: HV

Monday, Oct. 25

In-class Essay Exam 3

Wed-Fri, Oct. 27-29

The Wars of the Roses
Recommended Reading, **Medieval Britain**, chap. 7

Mon-Wed-Fri Nov. 1-3-5

Discussion: **Henry VI, part 1**

Monday, Nov. 8

Student Presentations: HVI, 1

Wednesday, Nov. 10

Students Presentations: HVI, 1

Friday, Nov. 12

In-class Essay Exam 4

Monday, Nov. 15

Again with the Wars of the Roses

Wednesday, Nov. 17

Read and Discuss: Hicks, **Edward IV**

Friday, Nov. 19

Who's Afraid of Richard III?

Monday Nov. 22

Discussion **Richard III**

Nov. 24-26

Thanksgiving Break (no classes)

Monday, Nov. 29

Discussion **Richard III**

Wednesday, Dec. 1

Discussion: **Richard III**

Friday, Dec. 3

Student Presentations: RIII

Monday, Dec. 6

Student Presentations: RIII

Wednesday, Dec. 8

In-class Final Essay Exam

Friday, Dec. 10

Last Class for Final Thoughts

Shakespeare on Film

Here are some film versions of the plays we are reading. There are probably others and you may wish to conduct your own search. Our library has most of these titles, including the BBC/Lifetime series. Others are available on Amazon. If you have trouble finding the film you want, please consult with me, as I own some of these titles.

Richard II

The BBC/Lifetime Series (1978)

David Birney version (1982)

John Farrell version (2001)

Henry IV, part 1

The BBC/Lifetime Series (1979)

John Caird TV version (1995)

**My Own Private Idaho* (1991)

Henry V

The BBC/Lifetime Series (1980)

The Sir Laurence Olivier version (1945)

The Kenneth Brannagh version (1989)

Henry VI, part 1

BBC/Lifetime Series (1982)

Richard III

BBC/Lifetime Series (1982)

Sir Laurence Olivier version (1955)

Ian McKellen version (1995)

Also see:

In 1960 the BBC produced a TV mini-series entitled, *An Age of Kings*, which included Shakespeare's *Richard II*, *Henry IV*, parts 1 & 2, *Henry V*, *Henry VI*, all 3 parts, and *Richard III*.

Al Pacino's *Looking for Richard III* (1996) discusses the role of Richard III and popular reaction.

Orson Welles, *The Chimes at Midnight* (1965) is based on a combination of *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, *Henry VI*, and *Richard III*.

**My Own Private Idaho* (1991) with Keanu Reeves and River Phoenix is a modern take on parts of *Henry IV*, part 1.