

ENG 208: Dispelling the "Dark Ages": English Theatre in Late Medieval and Renaissance England

Formal Class Meeting: MWF—1:00 to 3:55 Dewey 4162

Instructor: Scott O'Neil **E-Mail:** soneil4@ur.rochester.edu

Office: Rush Rhees 327

Office Hours: Individual appointments available on request, in person and on Skype (ProfONeil)

Required Texts: Because of the wide scope and ranging focus of the course, I will provide reproductions of the dramatic texts we will study in class. There are no texts for you to purchase.

Course Description:

The theater of Shakespeare's lifetime was the first professional theater in England; dramatic performances prior to this time are often assumed to have been amateurish or theatrically primitive. This course will be focused on the theatrical work on both sides of that assumed divide between the late medieval and the Renaissance stage. Potential texts include Medwall, Shakespeare, the court comedies of John Lyly, plays written and performed at academic institutions, and a selection of Biblically inspired medieval cycle plays. Likely areas of inquiry include the stage fool and vice, issues of gender and staging, and representations of authority. Performance aspects will also be a focus of the course, with an emphasis on both viewing performances and creating performances of several key scenes. Course assignments may include short response papers, quizzes, and one culminating research paper.

Grading:

Your final grade for the course will be determined as follows:

Blackboard Reading Responses:	30%
Classroom Participation:	30%
Final Project:	40%

CALENDAR

Week One (May 16, 18, 20): Intros, Overview/Genre/Authorship

Monday- Mummings, Mysteries, Miracles, and Moralities

- Course overview/options
- Performance-based approach (subtext background)--"To Be" clip.
- Medieval Genre (origins, authorship and four key categories)

Break

- The *Quem Quaeritis* (discussion and performance blocking)

Wednesday- Comedies, Tragedies, Tragicomedies, etc.

- Renaissance Genre (Professionalization, purpose, venue, and authorship)
 - The Rude Mechanicals
- Performance-based approach (cutting a scene and clip comparison)

Break

- Lady of May* and the role of Entertainments

Friday- Critical Conversations

- Van Es, Smith, etc--Handout of excerpts on Blackboard.
- FILM:* Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* or the Rude's production of *Pericles*

Week Two (May 23, 25, 27): Clowns/Fools/Vices

Monday- *Mankind*

- The medieval fool/vice. Titivillus in *Mankind*.
- Performance-based approach--costume and wardrobe.

Break

- Excerpts from other medieval clown figures: *Everyman*, *Herod* (N-town), *Mak the Shepherd* (*Second Shepherd's Play*).

Wednesday- *King Lear*

- The Renaissance Fool/vice. Fool in *King Lear*.
- Costume and wardrobe.
- Textual issues/concerns/Tate/Booth/etc.

Break

- Excerpts from other Renaissance Clown/Fool figures: *Hamlet* (Kemp vs. Armin), *Antonio*, *Alchemist*.

Friday- Critical Conversations

- Welsford, Preiss, Leinwand, Prentki--Handout of excerpts on Blackboard.
- Armin's texts.
- FILM*: Mark Rylance and Stephen Fry--*Twelfth Night*.

Week Three (May 30, June 1 and 3): Villains/"The Other"

Monday- Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*

- Racial fear and the "other" in Croxton.
- Performance-based approach--Modern concepts for older texts.

Break

- Excerpts from other medieval "others": York Pilate, Digby Mary Magdalene.

Wednesday- *Tamburlaine*

- Atheism on the stage in *Tamburlaine*.
- Modern concepts (production in NYC recently)

Break

- Excerpts from other kinds of "Others"-- *Richard III*, *Othello*/*Titus*, etc.

Friday- Critical Conversations

- Shapiro, Charney, etc--Handout of excerpts on Blackboard.
- Problems of adaptation (Patrick Stewart's *Othello*, Cate Blanchett's *Elsewhere in Elsinore*, modern productions of *Taming of the Shrew*)
- FILM*: Eamonn Walker's *Othello* or Julie Taymor's *Titus*

Week Four (June 6, 8, 10): Gender and Sexuality

Monday- *Uxor Noah*

- The representation of women in *Uxor Noah*.
- Performance-based approach--Casting and actors/actresses.

Break

- Excerpts from other medieval texts--N-Town testing of Mary's virginity/Salome, French Marian intercessor plays.

Wednesday- *Gallathea*

- The representation of women on the Renaissance stage in *Gallathea*.
- Elizabethan cults, iconography, and the narrative of female rule.

-Casting and actors/actresses (modern examples of same--*Ten Things, She's the Man*, etc.)

Break

-Excerpts from other Renaissance texts--Induction to *Taming*, closing scene of *Measure*, etc.

Friday- Critical Conversations

-Jankowski, Kelly-Gadol, etc. Handout of excerpts on Blackboard.

-Phyllida Lloyd's recent projects on the London stage.

FILM: Several possibilities, including *King John*, *Silent Hamlet*, or something non-Shakespeare.

Week Five (June 13, 15, 17): Staging and Authority

Monday- *Castle of Perseverence*

-Structure, staging, and authority in medieval drama (*Castle of P.*)

-Performance-Based approach--Venue (Cycle wagons and place/space)

Break

-Excerpts from Lydgate's *Mummings and Cycle plays/Oberammergau*

Wednesday- *Play of Wit and Science*

-Place and authority in *Wit and Science*

-Authority and physical space in the Renaissance

-Performance-Based approach--Venue (indoor v. outdoor, etc)

Break

-Excerpts from *Merry Wives of Windsor, LLL*

Friday- Critical Conversations

-Bruce Smith, Shapiro, etc. Handout of excerpts on Blackboard.

-Revisiting previous texts with venue in mind.

-*The Alchemist* and the role of the two doors.

FILM: Clip comparisons--*Hamlet 2000* vs. *Hamlet at Elsinore*.

Week Six (June 20, 22, 24): Afterlives

Monday- *The Mysteries*

FILM: *The Mysteries*

Wednesday- Surviving Texts of Ephemeral Things

- Prompt Books
- Costume Designs
- Posters
- Dramaturgy notes
- Theodora's photographs

Break

- Time to work on final (either to work, rehearse, or review depending on final option selected).

Friday- Final, Evals, and Farewells---AKA *Exeunt All*

- The title there pretty much explains the goal of today's class. :)