

E. 321 (34652). Shakespeare. Comedies and Romances.
Spring '10. TTh 2-3:30 p.m. PAR 301
Prerequisite: Nine semester hours of coursework in English
or rhetoric and writing.

Instructor: Jim Ayres, Professor Emeritus, English. CAL 20
Conference hours: TTh 10:30-12:00. jayres@cvctx.com.

Texts: S. Greenblatt (ed.) ***Norton Shakespeare: Comedies.***

Norton Shakespeare: Romances and
Poems.

Plays: ***A Midsummer Night's Dream, Love's Labor's Lost, As You Like It, The Merchant of Venice, Twelfth Night, Pericles, Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale, The Tempest.***

Course: An appropriate sub-title for the course might be "Let wonder seem familiar" (*Ado*, 5.4.70), for Sh's comedies and romances take us on journeys through strange, marvelous, "topsy-turvy" worlds where fools are wise, gods are frequent visitors, language is playful, magic and visions are fairly common, and lovers never seem to have an easy time. The plays do indeed challenge, disturb, and dislocate, ask us to look at things in a different way, questioning conventional assumptions which legitimate patriarchy and sexual stereotyping, disturbing even the stability of words through dialectics which explore alternative possibilities of living and thinking.

All of this is not to say that "all's well that ends well."
Quite often, we wonder about the extent of suffering, the sense of injustice, the unanswered questions. Those comprise the mystery, the "wonder."

In more specific terms, the plays offer divergent views of father-daughter relationships and variations on themes love, loss, dislocation, alienation, jealousy, anxiety, suffering, redemption, forgiveness, and self-discovery, and as well, the opportunity to study belief systems: how the plays engage both the personae and the audience in "things monstrous to human reason" (WT.5.1.40).

To experience all of the above requires close, critical, reading of the play-texts, special attention to the rhetorical uses of language and Sh's polyphonic structure, and a strong desire to exchange ideas in class, in conference, and through essays.

Classwork: Most of our sessions will take the form of lecture/discussion. Students should be prepared for active participation in both class and small group discussions. Students are **required** to have texts for every class period.

Reading: I expect students to have read in **entirety (unless otherwise notes on the assignment schedule)** the plays by the dates assigned on the attached assignment sheet. I will periodically give brief quizzes to check on reading requirements. And I expect students to re-read the plays for all sessions dedicated to those plays. The "position papers," of course will require that. Students who have difficulty with critical (analytical) reading of the texts should schedule conferences with me.

Note: We will not discuss ***As You Like It*** in class, although perhaps refer to it obliquely. Students should read and re-read **AYL** in preparation for the final exam. **AYL is required** reading.

Writing: Required: Five (5) brief (2-3 pp) "position papers."
Optional: Extra "position papers." Revisions of papers.

Reports: Periodically, I will invite group reports on topics in the plays. Students will prepare for those through in-class discussions. As well, I will invite individual students to present reports to the class. These performances enhance understanding as well as grade.

Film. Students will be required to view film interpretations of ***Twelfth Night***, either one directed by Trevor Nunn or one directed by Kenneth Branagh, write papers on the filmic interpretation of the text and give in-class reports on observations.

Examinations: One mid-term examination. Final Examination: May 15, 9:00-12:00.

Note: “Position papers” are brief essays in which students state and defend through textual analysis “stances” or “positions” on a specific topics. I will be available in conference or through e-mail to discuss approaches and writing as students begin. I will be delighted to read drafts as well.

All writings are to be original work, not research papers or borrowings from internet sources. Students should read the University statement on Plagiarism.

Out-of-class papers should be computer generated, covered with a page with the student’s name, the name of the play in question, and the date. Please staple pages. Papers are due at the beginning of the class hour on the date assigned. Late papers receive penalties: if the essay is one day late, I reduce the grade one letter; if submitted later, I grade the essay F. Failure to submit an essay results in failure in the course. The only exceptions I make to this policy are through conference agreements wherein I find cause for extension. Please keep copies of all of your papers.

Note: Revisions. I will be available in conference to discuss both the original essay and suggestions about revision. I expect students to initiate the revision process. The grade on the revision replaces the original grade. Revisions of papers are due within one week of our conference meeting on that paper. I do not accept revisions during the final week of class.

Conferences: My conference hours are listed at the top of page 1 of this information sheet. Students reserve conference times by signing up on the “Conference Time Sheet” posted outside my office, CAL 20. When planning revisions, students should bring the original essay and a clean copy to the conference. I do not schedule conference times on line. But I am available for on-line conferences and suggestions about developing and revising essays.

On-line Communication: On-line communication is a requirement in this course. I will be sending observations, comments, suggestions, etc., to the class at least once a week. Students should check their e-mails often, especially the days

before classes (Mondays and Wednesdays). My e-mail address is jayres@cvctx.com.

Attendance: I circulate attendance sheets at the beginning of each class. Three absences reduce the course grade one letter. Four absences result in an F in the course. It is the student's responsibility to report tardiness to me at the end of class. Otherwise, I record an absence. Students confronting situations which might result in several absences should contact me when those situations begin, not when they have ended.

Academic Courtesy: I expect students to be on time. I expect the attention of all students when I am talking. I will give you mine when you are. I do not approve of idle conversation, the passing of notes, or any other social activity. Please note that I dismiss the class. The bell does not.

Disability: Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259.

Evaluation: I do not average grades. I do not "curve" grades. I value improvement in every phase of the course: in reading, writing, discussion. I do assign plusses (+) and minuses (-) to work during the term. I will not assign a plus or minus final grade.

Class participation	20%
Papers	40%
Hour exam.....	15%
Final exam.....	25%

Final notes: Students must satisfy all of the requirements of the course to qualify for a passing grade. In my final evaluation, I will drop the lowest position paper grade from consideration. I will give extra credit to students who give reports and write optional essays. I do not hold conferences during the final week. Final grades are final grades.

Schedule of Assignments

Jan

- 19 Introduction to course, to Shakespeare's comedies and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (MND).
- 21 MND. The polyphonic structure of MND.
- 26 MND. The courses of true love.
- 28 MND. The craftsmen and *Pyramus and Thisbe*.

Feb

- 2 Introduction to *Love's Labor's Lost* (LLL). Read LLL, I-3.4. What is the end of study? **Paper # 1 due:** topics on MND.
- 4 LLL. Complete reading of LLL. The "civil war of wits": word play and deception in LLL.
- 9 LLL. Resolution. Death, separation, isolation.
- 11 LLL. Reports on LLL. **Paper # 2 due.** Topics on LLL.
- 16 Introduction to *Twelfth Night* (12th N)
18. "What country, friend, is this?" The parageography of 12thN.
- 23 *Twelfth Night* (12thN). Fools. The subversive element in comedy: Nick Bottom, Costard, Feste.
- 25 12thN. No class. Film day. Students will view either of two film productions of 12th N, one directed by Trevor Nunn, the other by Kenneth Branagh.

Mar

- 2 12thN. Reports on films. **Paper # 3 due:** Filmic interpretations of 12th N.
- 4 Introduction to *The Merchant of Venice* (MV). Read 1-3.1.
- 9 MV. Complete reading of MV. Shylock.
- 11 MV. The trial scene.
- 16 Spring Break
- 18 Spring Break
- 23 MV. Interpreting MV. Guest speaker.
- 25 **Hour Examination** on Comedy.

- 30 Introduction to Shakespeare's Romances and to *Pericles* (Per). Separation, initiation, return.

Apr

1 **Per.** The episodic journeys of Pericles and Marina, fathers and daughters.

6 Introduction to *Cymbeline* (**Cym**).

8 **Cym.** Reports on special topics in **Cym**.

13 Introduction to *The Winter's Tale* (**WT**): Sicilia and Bohemia.

15 **WT.** Sinning, penance, forgiveness.

20 **WT.** Belief systems in **WT**.

22 Reports on **WT** topics. **Paper # 4 due.**

27 Introduction to *The Tempest* (**Tem**). Dissolving society.

29 **Tem.** Creating a new social order.

May

4 **Tem.** The rarer action.

6 Preparing for Final Examination.*

15 **Final Examination.** 9:00-12:00 a.m. **Paper #5 due.**

*Students are required to read **As You Like It** (**AYL**) for the Final Examination. See p. 2 of Syllabus.