

Margo Kolenda-Mason

kolendam@umich.edu

Fall 2020

Office # 3154 Tisch Hall

Office hours: M, W, 12:30-1:30

ENG 3xx: Medieval Shakespeare

In his eulogy on William Shakespeare, fellow poet Ben Jonson claimed that the bard was “not of an age, but for all time.” This has certainly held true: Shakespeare continues to be prominent in our classrooms, on our stages, in the literary canon, and in our culture. In fact, he may not have only been “of all time,” but “ahead of his time,” his universal themes are somehow more modern than their date of composition suggests. And yet, many of Shakespeare’s stories are not original but are adaptations of other texts.

Together, we will explore the ways in which Shakespeare is a “medieval author,” adapting and re-telling narratives from the Middle Ages. We will read four Shakespeare plays—*Pericles*, *Two Noble Kinsmen*, *King Lear*, *Hamlet*—as well as his poem *Lucrece* alongside Chaucer, Gower, and other medieval writers in order to better understand how Shakespeare engaged with his most immediate history. We will ask how Shakespeare adapted pre-existing narratives into new versions, and how his methods of adaptation change the stories being told. Along the way, we will contextualize Shakespeare’s text in his own age, as well as in the literary tradition.

No previous experience with Middle English or Shakespeare is required—we will work together to develop familiarity and comfort reading older language. This course features a flexible assignment sequence with creative and performance-based options.

Through taking “Medieval Shakespeare,” you will

- Articulate and analyze the stylistic and formal features of a text
- Construct comparative arguments between two or more objects of study
- Describe the historical, social, and ideological contexts of various works of literature
- Discuss the critical trends in secondary literature toward Shakespeare’s relationship to the Middle Ages
- Break down and interpret writing in Middle English

Course Materials

- William Shakespeare, *Pericles* (Norton or Folger edition fine)
- William Shakespeare, *Two Noble Kinsmen* (Norton or Folger edition fine)
- William Shakespeare, *King Lear* (Norton edition preferred)
- William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (Norton edition preferred)
- William Shakespeare, “Lucrece”
- Geoffrey Chaucer, “The Canterbury Tales” (Riverside edition preferred)
- *The Norse Hamlet*. Ed. Soren Fiipksi (Hythloday Press, 2013)

The following texts will be available on the course website:

- Geoffrey Chaucer, excerpt from *The Legends of Good Women*.
- Helen Cooper, excerpt from *Shakespeare and the Medieval World*

- John Gower, "Appolonius of Tyre" excerpt from *Confesio Amantis*
- Rory Loughnane, "The Medeival Inheritance"
- Geoffrey Monmouth, excerpt form "History of the Kings of Britain"
- Kurt Shreyer, excerpt from *Shakespeare's Medieval Craft*

Course Assignments:

In this course, you will have the opportunity to set your own assignment sequence-- you choose how you will demonstrate the knowledge and skills you gain in this course. Please choose your assignment options and **email the attached [and linked] assignment contract to me by [end of first week of class]**.

You may change your mind as the semester progresses, but for the in-class presentations must be on the google doc [include link] at least **one week** before your presentation. No more than 2 presentations may occur on any one day, so sign up early!

20 points will come from attendance and participation (10 pts each)—the other **80** will come from any combination of the following assignments

- Ten Canvas Posts (or substantive responses to classmates' posts): 10 pts
- Group in-class performance of a Shakespeare Scene (please sign up for the day we discuss this scene in class: 10 pts
- Short close reading essay on about 50 lines of text or less (3 pages; can be done twice): 15 pts
- Essay review presentation (in class): 15pts
- Annotated Bibliography of at least 5 secondary sources: 15pts
- Visualization (chart, graph, timeline, concept map) of one change between Shakespeare and source: 20 pts
- Keyword essay (this can work across texts; 3-4 pages): 20pts
- Creative Adaptation of any text we've read in class (submitted with 1-2 page informal cover letter explaining your choices): 30 pts.
- Comparative Analysis essay putting any two text in conversation that *are not directly related through adaptation* (7-8 pages): 30pts

You may complete up to 110 points total—any points earned beyond the minimum will replace an equivalent amount of your lowest graded assignment.

Daily Schedule

Day 1: Introduction

UNIT ONE: Adapting Romance

Day 2: Helen Cooper, excerpt from *Shakespeare and the Medieval World*

Day 3: Gower, "Appolonius of Tyre" lines 271-701

Day 4: Gower, "Appolonius of Tyre" lines 702-1132

Day 5: Gower, "Appolonius of Tyre" lines 1133-1563

Day 6: Gower, "Appolonius of Tyre" lines 1564-2008

Day 7: Shakespeare, *Pericles* Act 1

Day 8: Shakespeare, *Pericles* Acts 2-3

Day 9: Shakespeare, *Pericles* Acts 4-5

Day 10: Chaucer. "The General Prologue," lines 1-78 and "The Knight's Tale" lines 859-1500

Day 11: Chaucer, "The Knight's Tale," lines 1501-2250

Day 12: Chaucer, "The Knight's Tale" lines 2251-3108

Day 13: Shakespeare, *Two Noble Kinsmen* Acts 1-3

Day 14: Shakespeare, *Two Noble Kinsmen* Acts 4-5

UNIT TWO: Adapting the Classical Tradition

Day 15: Rory Loughnane, "The Medieval Inheritance"

Day 16: ***content warning: rape, suicide***

Chaucer, Introduction to "The Legends of Good Women" and "The Legend of Lucrece"

Day 17: ***content warning: rape, suicide***

Shakespeare, "Lucrece" lines 1-1036

Day 18: ***content warning: rape, suicide***

Shakespeare, "Lucrece" lines 1037-end

UNIT THREE: Adapting History

Day 19: Kurt Shreyer, excerpt from *Shakespeare's Medieval Craft*

Day 20: Geoffrey Monmouth, excerpt from "History of the Kings of Britain."

Day 21: William Shakespeare, *King Lear* Acts 1-2

Day 22: William Shakespeare, *King Lear* Act 3

Day 23: William Shakespeare, *King Lear* Acts 4-5

Day 24: Saxo Grammaticus, "The Revenge of Amleth"

Day 25: Shakespeare, *Hamlet* Acts 1-3

Day 26: Shakespeare, *Hamlet* Acts 4-5

Day 27: Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, excerpts from the "Bad Quarto"

Day 28:

Attendance Policy

- As this is a discussion based course, it is crucial that you are present to participate in the conversation.
- You may miss two classes without an excuse and receive no penalty. After 2 absences, you will lose one point from your final grade for each additional absence. Please let me know as soon as you know that you will miss class and we can determine if it qualifies as an excused absence (the ideal is to have a doctor's note or some sort of documentation).
- Out of respect for your time, we will begin class punctually; I will count three late arrivals (more than 5 minutes) as one absence. If you are coming from another class and getting here on time is an issue, please let me know.

Late Policy

Any late work will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade for each day that it is late unless you talk with me BEFORE the assignment is due. Late forum posts will not be accepted.

Participation

We learn best when we are actively engaged in a classroom, when we are not just listening, but speaking. This class will be a space where we can try out new ideas and think through issues *together*. For this to be the most effective, I expect everyone to contribute to our conversation. Active participation can take many forms, including:

- reading a section of the text out loud
- offering a comment or reflection about the readings during class
- posing a question or responding to others' questions
- identifying a passage or section that you find difficult to understand
- sharing an insight from your writing assignment
- making links between our discussions and events in the wider world

Effective participation comes from engaged reading: mark up your text and take notes as you read.

Office Hours

No appointment necessary: I am always in my office (3154 Tisch Hall) during my office hours (M W 12:30-1:30). Come and chat with me at any point: I am happy to talk through ideas, troubleshoot writing issues, and go over past assignments. If you cannot make it into my office hours, just shoot me an email and I am happy to set up a time that works for you.

Computer Policy

- I would prefer that you use a print copy for all reading. Research shows that we absorb material better in print and I want you to be able to take notes and mark up your readings. If, for financial or accessibility reasons, an e-book is better, please let me know.
- Be prepared to take handwritten notes in class.
- There may be a few days that are an exception to the “no computer” policy, where we will use computers in class for special projects. I will alert you of those days ahead of time so that you may prepare. I can provide access to a laptop if you do not have one.
- Cell phones provide a large distraction, both for you and your peers. As such, there will be a no cell phone policy in our space. If I see you using a phone, I will count you as absence for the day. Of course, if there is an emergency situation, just let me know that something is happening and you will be excused.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism is defined by the University of Michigan as “taking credit of someone else’s work or ideas, stealing others’ results or methods, copying the writing of others without proper acknowledgement, or otherwise falsely taking credit for the work or ideas of another.” Academic dishonesty may be understood as any action or attempted action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage for oneself or an unfair academic advantage or disadvantage for any other member or members of the academic community. For some helpful tips on how to avoid plagiarism, check out <https://www.beyondplagiarism.sweetland.lsa.umich.edu/>

At a first offense, if it is minor, I will ask you to fix the issue immediately in order to receive a grade (improper formatting of citation). Any major offense (not citing a source, directly copying another’s words) or a repeated offense will be treated as a plagiarism case. You will be subject to one of the following consequences:

- You will fail the assignment and may fail the course.
- I will report the incident to the Director of the English Department Undergraduate Program.
- I will also forward your case, with an explanatory letter and all pertinent materials, to the LSA Assistant Dean of Student Affairs.
- The Dean will determine an appropriate penalty, which may involve academic probation and/or community service.
- If you commit plagiarism while you are already on probation for plagiarism, you may be asked to leave the University.

Writing Resources

- The Sweetland Center for Writing—located at 1310 North Quad—is an amazing, free resource! If you would like additional feedback or assistance as you’re planning, drafting, or revising your writing assignments, you can schedule an individual appointment with a Sweetland faculty member, drop in for a peer-tutoring session, correspond online with a peer tutor, or submit your work online to receive feedback within 72 hours.
- For more information, please visit <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/sweetland/undergraduate>

Accommodations

- If you have a disability and need an accommodation to participate in this class or to complete course requirements, please ask Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to provide documentation of the accommodations that you need. Then, please share this documentation with me as soon as possible, preferably within the first few weeks of class. I will treat as private and confidential any information that you share.
- If you suspect that you may have a disability and would like to be tested, Services for Students with Disabilities can provide free screenings and referrals to low-cost diagnostic services. Here is the contact information for Services for Students with Disabilities:
 - location: G-664 Haven Hall
 - 734-763-3000
 - <http://ssd.umich.edu/>
- If you do not have a documented disability but feel like you would benefit from further educational support for other reasons, please contact me. I greatly value inclusivity within the classroom and will work with you to find strategies and resources to ensure that you get the most out of this class.

Diversity Resources

- This classroom constitutes a community, and in order to have a successful community, it is essential that *all* members of the community feel respected. I'll do my best to run class in a way that allows all voices to equally participate and feel comfortable in our space. If there is ever an instance where you do not feel comfortable or welcome for any reason, I urge you to talk with me about it.
- Here is the contact information for the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:
 - location: Fleming Administration Building/ 503 Thompson St
 - <https://odei.umich.edu/>
 - odei-info@umich.edu
 - (734)-764-3982

Mental Health Resources

- If you experience challenges that negatively affect your learning, such as anxiety, depression, interpersonal or sexual violence, difficulty with eating or sleeping, grief/loss, and alcohol or drug problems, the following several confidential services might be helpful:
 - Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): 734-764-8312
 - Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center (SAPAC) 24-Hour Crisis Line: 734-936-3333
 - Psychiatric Emergency Services: 734-996-4747.