

## SHAKESPEARE

**Dr. Devon Madon**

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**Office:** A111A

**Office Hours:**

Drop in Mod 4 daily or email/chat with me/sign up for an appointment.

If my door is open, come on in. If not, email me and we will find a time to meet.

**Meeting Days/Times:**

Mod 2: usually 9:00-9:55  
“A,” “C” and “D” Day  
(room A119)

Mod 5: usually 12:20-1:15  
“A,” “B” and “D” Day  
(room A119)

**Course Description:**

In this course, we just learn to interpret, analyze, and perform the works of William Shakespeare. We will be critical thinkers and close readers. We will examine the conventions of tragedies, comedies, histories, romances, and problem plays. Research-based student presentations on literary criticism and literary theory will complement our readings. As we read, we will historicize the texts, learning about the cultural, political, economic, and social realities of Early Modern England. Because we are a community of learners, everyone's full participation in regular collaborative work is integral to the course.

**Text(s) / Materials:** (Plays may vary by book availability or teacher discretion)

*Selected Sonnets*

*Hamlet*

*Julius Caesar*

*A Midsummer's Night Dream*

*The Twelfth Night*

*The Merchant of Venice*

**Essential Questions we will attempt to answer this semester:**

- How is literature a cultural construct that produces competing interpretations?
- How does a literary canon become constructed? Who constructs it? Why is Shakespeare in this literary canon?
- What are the thematic content, image patterns, and structures of Shakespeare's plays?

**Student Expectations:**

***What I will require from you –***

Consistent attendance.

Whether or not you are present in class, you are responsible for class activities, presentations, and assignments. You may need to get the class notes from one of your classmates, and I would recommend emailing me as soon as possible after the absence to find out exactly what you missed.

### Participation

My expectation is that, at least once per class, you voluntarily respond to a question or comment from your teacher or another student. I want this class to be based on your questions and discussions about them. We will also be performing Shakespeare's plays in the class and reading poems. Sometimes performances will be impromptu; sometimes you will have time to prepare. Either way, always come to class ready to jump into character.

Respectful behavior. The success of this class relies upon students treating their peers and their ideas with courtesy and respect. You should challenge each other, argue points, and of course be willing to challenge me, but remember to do so in a way that reflects your own dignity and intelligence.

Timeliness. All assignments should be turned in on time. Late essays (final drafts) will be penalized with the paper losing a letter grade (10% of the grade) for EACH day it is late. The best thing you can do to control your grade is to turn in finished work on time. If you struggle with deadlines, please let me know and I can help you manage your larger projects and papers. Computer glitches are no excuse for late work, so be sure to save your work OFTEN (I would recommend every 5 to 10 minutes) and save it in several places (the student server *and* a flash drive!).

Academic Honesty. Please refer to the Academic Behavior Code on page 11 of the Student/Parent Handbook. Cite your sources. Do your own work. Seek out help when you need it. Not sure if you are plagiarizing? Come ask me!

Laptops/cell phones. The default position for your laptop in this class is closed. This means, from the moment class starts, unless I ask you to use it, I don't expect to see it open. We will use the laptops frequently for in-class work and research and even for online readings, but to the greatest extent possible, this will be a laptop-free class so that your attention can be on in-class discussion and performances.

### **Assignments:**

(note: as is the English Department policy, I do not "round" grades)

#### **20% Presentations (one per quarter)**

In the first quarter, you will memorize and explicate either a monologue or a sonnet.

In the second quarter, you will perform a scene (or several shorter scenes) from a play that we have studied in class.

#### **20% In-Class Writing, Homework, Class Participation, and Reading Quizzes**

Frequently, we will open with a writing exercise asking you to critically engage with a passage from the assigned reading. You will also have several *unannounced* reading quizzes during the semester. Each quiz will cover that day's assigned reading, so it is essential that students come to each class having thoroughly read the required pages. Quizzes will be short-answer questions

about characters and significant events in the plays and vocabulary terms defined and discussed in our reading. If students read the required material thoroughly, they will do well on the quizzes.

The course is a collaborative endeavor and we will work as a team to develop insightful and relevant readings of Shakespeare's work. Students will come to class prepared to discuss and actively participate in debates about interpretations of our assigned reading. We will all be required to read Shakespeare's language aloud. We will also all occasionally act out scenes for our classmates which will culminate in the scene performances.

### 60% **Essays**

You will be assigned 4 essays this semester. 3 of the 4 will be revisable.

**Essay Revision Policy:** You may revise most major essays (the exception being essays at the end of the grading period). **Your grade will improve only when you revise, not if you proofread or simply edit.** Proofreading corrects casual mistakes, mechanical errors or other such "polishing". To revise you must reconsider and improve the argument of your paper; substantial rewriting of content, style, focus and organization need to be undertaken.

Most Essay Revisions will be due between 1 and 2 weeks after you receive your graded first draft. **You must complete a "Revision Log" for each revision.** I will discuss requirements for revision in more detail.

At times, if the criteria for the essay is not met, students may receive a grade of "MUST BE REVISED," which means you will receive a grade of "60" in PowerSchool until you have met with me (within a week of receiving your essay back from me). Once we have met, you will have one week to revise the essay. Failure to meet with me and revise will result in a permanent "60" (not passing) grade for the essay.

When you revise an essay I will average together the point value of the original grade and the subsequent revision grade for your recorded grade.

Remember to use all the resources IMSA makes available to help you do the best job you can when you first start writing. The Writing Center can provide one-on-one tutoring sessions, from brainstorming through proofreading; in addition to daytime hours in the Writing Center, Writing Center tutors will also be available in the IRC and one res hall during most evenings. Peer tutors will work with you on a one-to-one basis on a variety of activities and projects. These activities might include narrowing a topic, focusing a thesis, deciding on strategies, and revising.

## **Proposed Sequence of Topics and Activities (Subject to Change)**

*Selected Sonnets*

*Hamlet*

*A Midsummer's Night Dream*

*Julius Caesar*

*The Twelfth Night*

*The Merchant of Venice*

Week 1: Introduction to Early Modern England and sonnets

Weeks 2-3: *Hamlet*

Week 4: *Hamlet* Literary criticism, focus on editorial choices and textual studies

Weeks 5-6: *Midsummer's Night Dream*, focus on performance history

Weeks 7-8: *Julius Caesar*

Week 9: *Julius Caesar* in- class performance, focus on rhetoric

Week 10-12: *Twelfth Night* focus on gender and feminist criticism

Weeks 13-14: *Midsummer's Night Dream*, (focus on genre of comedy, watch IMSA performance)

Weeks 15-16: *Merchant of Venice* (focus on the definition of problem paly)

Weeks 17-18: Student performances