“Strenuous Magic”: *Shakespeare and the Art of Rhetoric*

According to C.S. Lewis, an “invisible wall” separates modern culture from the world of Renaissance humanism: the obsession with the art of rhetoric. One of the inaugural events of the Renaissance, after all, was the rediscovery of the lost rhetorical treatises of Cicero (1464) and Quintilian (1416). Any attempt to appreciate the plays of Shakespeare – among the greatest achievements of Renaissance rhetorical culture – must therefore begin by breaking down this “invisible wall” and grasping the central role played by rhetoric in Shakespearean theatre. This course will therefore focus on the rhetorical dimensions of the comedies, histories and tragedies. As we shall see over the course of the semester, Shakespeare understood rhetoric not merely as an art of style or persuasion but as an “infinite science” (Cicero) with the power to dominate human affairs, both for better (comedy) and for worse (tragedy). “Slaying is the word,” observes Brutus in *Julius Caesar*, “it is a deed in fashion…”

**January**

5  Administration
7  No Class
12 *King Richard III*, Acts I, II, III
14 *King Richard III*, Acts IV, V
19 *Othello*, I, II, III
21 *Othello*, IV, V
26 *As You Like It*, I, II, III
28 *As You Like It*, IV, V

**February**

2 *Henry IV*, Part One, Acts I, II, III
4 *Henry IV*, Part One, Acts IV, V
9 *King Lear*, I, II, III
11 *King Lear*, IV, V; **essay 1 due in class**
16 Break
18 Break
23 *A Winter’s Tale*, I, II, III
25 *A Winter’s Tale*, IV, V

**March**

2 *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, I, II, III
4 *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, IV, V
9 No class
11 No class
16 *Hamlet*, I, II, III
18 *Hamlet*, IV, V
23 *The Tempest*, I, II, III
25 *The Tempest*, IV, V
Quiz

April
1 Essay 2 due in HH 256 by 5 pm.

Requirements

10% Daily Written Responses
For each class you must write a 150 word (1/2 page) response that offers three insights into the sections of the plays under discussion for the day, along with three supporting quotations from the text. These insights may focus on any literary or rhetorical dimension of the plays: plot, theme, setting, character, imagery, prosody, symbolism, structure, rhetoric, genre, and so forth. Your response need not be a unified paragraph. These reading responses demonstrate that you have analyzed the text closely; they will also serve as excellent resources for composing your two essays. Responses are to be submitted at the end of each class in which they are due: under no circumstances – except a note from a physician explaining your absence from class – will late or emailed responses be accepted. Responses will be read but not graded or returned – you receive credit for completing the assignments. Format: 150 words; double-spaced; 1” margins; 12 point Times New Roman font.

10% Class Participation
As is customary in a humanities class, students are expected to contribute to class discussion on a regular basis. As part of their participation grade, students will also be asked (in advance) to use their responses to lead class discussion of specific scenes (for approximately 5 minutes).

10% Quiz
This quiz will ask you to define key concepts, identify important passages, and answer questions about topics covered in lecture and class discussion. It is therefore important to take copious, careful notes.

30% Midterm Essay (6 pp.)
Write an essay in which you compare and/or contrast any two plays on the first half of the syllabus (up to and including King Lear). Be sure to support your interpretation with an argument and relevant citations from the text. Format: 12 point; Times New Roman; 1” margins; MLA style.

40% Final essay (8 pp.)
Write an essay in which you compare and/or contrast any two plays on the second half of the syllabus (after King Lear). Be sure to support your interpretation with an argument and “relevant citations from the text. Format: 12 point; Times New Roman; 1” margins.

Policies

Attendance
In keeping with the University of Waterloo’s undergraduate attendance policy, students are “expected to attend all meets” of the course and may be required to “present documentation proving the reasons for non-attendance” (UG Calendar). Students who miss more than three classes without providing adequate documentation from a physician may, at the discretion of the professor, be penalized 1% per subsequent absence on their final grade. Attendance is taken at the beginning of class, so do not be late. Chronic tardiness will count against participation grades.
Late Penalties

Unless an extension has been requested and granted in advance, the professor reserves the right to subtract 5% (per day) from the assignment grade.

Texts

Rhetoric involves the close scrutiny of texts, images and other artifacts. Students are therefore required to purchase and bring the texts to every class.

Civility

Students are expected to be informed, attentive and courteous in class. Gossiping, note-passing and other types of uncivil behaviour will be discouraged. For the sake of the class as a whole, the professor reserves the right to ask disruptive students to leave the classroom.

Laptops

Please turn off PDAs, cellular phones, and laptop computers in class.

University of Waterloo Policy on Academic Offences (including plagiarism)

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline, [http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm)

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, [http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm)

Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals, [http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm)

Academic Integrity website (Arts): [http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html](http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html)