English 492: “Sweet Smoke of Rhetoric!”: Shakespearean Persuasion in Theory and Practice
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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 2:45–3:45 in Hagey Hall 256

Although humanism was closely associated with the rediscovery of key manuscripts of ancient rhetoric, Renaissance theorists and artists were not content with parroting classical authorities—they appropriated Greek and Latin rhetoric for their own purposes. The plays of William Shakespeare provide a dramatic example of this transfiguration of ancient rhetoric at work. Ranging over the tragedies, histories, comedies, and romances, this course investigates how Shakespeare “figured and disfigured” the classical rhetoric drubbed into him as a boy at the King’s New School. At the level of practice, it examines how Shakespeare retools classical rhetoric in the “quick forge” of his imagination, fashioning a new kind of vernacular English eloquence for the London commercial theatre stage. At the level of theory, it examines how Shakespeare rehearses the vexing ethical, political, and philosophical problems rhetoric posed for his culture. Over the course of the semester, we will see how Shakespeare dramatizes the arts of persuasion in all their comic and tragic ambivalence: rhetoric can be both intoxicating and toxic, “ravish like enchanting harmony” and poison the mind with “pestilent speeches.”

Texts
Love’s Labour’s Lost; King Richard III; As You Like It; King Lear; A Midsummer Night’s Dream; Othello; Macbeth; The Tempest; Much Ado About Nothing

Syllabus
September
5 Administration
10 Love’s Labour’s Lost
12 Love’s Labour’s Lost
17 No class
19 No class
24 King Richard III
26 King Richard III

October
1 A Midsummer Night’s Dream
3 A Midsummer Night’s Dream
8 Othello
10 Othello
15 Reading Week
17 Reading Week
22 As You Like It
24 As You Like It
29 King Lear
31 King Lear

November
5 Much Ado About Nothing; Essay 1 Due in Dropbox
7 Much Ado About Nothing
Assignments

Participation 10%
Reading Responses 20%
Essay 1 35%
Essay 2 35%

Participation (10%)
Students are expected to contribute to class discussion on a regular basis. In addition to discussing your reading responses, this involves raising ideas for discussion, responding to others, asking questions, etc.

Reading Responses (200 words) (20%)
For each play, students are required to write a reading response (200 words) that provides 1) three insights into the rhetorical aspects of the play, and 2) a quotation to support each reason. In addition to demonstrating that you have read and reflected on the plays, these responses serve as the basis for informed class discussion.

Due Date and Format
Responses are to be 1) submitted to the LEARN “Reading Responses” Dropbox and 2) pasted into the “Reading Responses” section (under the Connect/Discussion tab) of the LEARN website for colleagues to read and comment on. Responses are due by 4:00 PM each day of class.

Responses must be a minimum of 200 words; Times New Roman 12 pt.; double-spaced; Word doc. or docx. Please state the word count of your response at the top of the page. Please also print and bring a copy to each class for discussion purposes.

Late responses will not be accepted (the Dropbox closes). Responses are read but graded quantitatively, not qualitatively—credit is earned for completing the assignment.

Essay 1 (2250 words) (35%)
Write an essay in which you compare and/or contrast any two plays on the first half of the syllabus (up to and including Othello), focusing on some aspect of rhetoric. Do not summarize the action of the play. Instead, isolate a key issue, theme, or problem and offer an interpretation and supporting argument. Be sure to develop an argument over the course of the whole essay rather than simply conjoining two distinct essays. In addition, be sure to support your argument with relevant citations from the play.

Format
2250 words; double-spaced; 12 point; Times New Roman; 1” margins; MS Word doc or docx. Please state the word count of your essay at the top of the first page.
Essay 2 (2250 words) (35%)
Write an essay in which you compare and/or contrast any two plays on the second half of the syllabus (after Othello), focusing on some aspect of rhetoric. Do not summarize the action of the play. Instead, isolate a key issue, theme, or problem and offer an interpretation and supporting argument. Be sure to develop an argument over the course of the whole essay rather than simply conjoining two distinct essays. In addition, be sure to support your argument with relevant citations from the play.

Format
2250 words; double-spaced; 12 point; Times New Roman; 1” margins; MS Word doc or docx. Please state the word count of your essay at the top of the first page.

Grading
Essays will be graded according to the following criteria: 1) grammar; 2) style; 3) structure and coherence; 4) content; 5) argumentation, including use of evidence; and 6) originality. An “A” range essay will be excellent in most of these areas; a “B” range essay will be good in most of them; a “C” range essay will be adequate in most of them; and a “D” range essay will be inadequate in most of them.

Policies
Texts
Students are required to bring the play to every class.

Electronic Device Policy
Please turn off and put away laptop computers, PDAs, cellular phones, and other electronic devices in class. If you require a laptop for a legitimate reason (beyond preferring it for taking notes), please consult the professor.

Attendance
In keeping with the University of Waterloo’s 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 several classes without providing adequate documentation from a physician may, at the discretion of the professor, be penalized 2% of their final grade for each subsequent absence. Students who miss more than 6 classes will likely fail the class.

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.

Collegiality
Students are expected to be informed, attentive, and collegial in class. Gossiping, note-passing and other types of discourteous 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.

Food
Many students suffer from food allergies, sensitivity to smells, etc., so please do not bring food to class (though beverages are fine).

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)