

Shakespearean Tragedy

In his great book *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904), A.C. Bradley writes that, when we experience one of Shakespeare's tragic plays, "We seem to have before us a type of the mystery of the whole world, the tragic fact which extends far beyond the limits of tragedy. Everywhere, from the crushed rocks beneath our feet to the soul of man, we see power, intelligence, life and glory, which astound us and seem to call for our worship. And everywhere we see them perishing, devouring one another and destroying themselves, often with dreadful pain, as though they came into being for no other end." In this course we will look at several of Shakespeare's tragedies in order both to see how they work as individual plays and to relate them to ideas about the nature of tragedy from Aristotle to the present.

We'll want both to understand Shakespeare's sense of the tragic as a response to his time and to see how Shakespeare's tragedies might help us to see something larger and still true about the experience of the tragic in life and literature.

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Week 1

5/26: Introduction

5/28: *Romeo and Juliet*

Week 2

6/1: *Romeo and Juliet* (keyword 1)

6/2: *Romeo and Juliet*

6/4: *Hamlet*

Week 3

6/8: *Hamlet* (keyword 2)

6/9: *Hamlet*

6/11: *Othello*

Week 4

6/15: *Othello* (keyword 3)

6/16: *Othello*

6/18: *King Lear*

Week 5

6/22 *King Lear* (keyword 4)

6/23 *King Lear*

6/25 *Macbeth*

Week 6

6/29 *Macbeth*

6/30 *Macbeth*

7/2: Final meeting and final essay due

Requirements, etc.:

We're going to spend our time this summer reading Shakespeare and reading him closely. We'll follow the same reading schedule with each play, looking at the first two acts for Thursday, the second two acts for Monday, and the last act for Tuesday. While I'll refer to a number of secondary and critical texts, we'll focus as a group, in our reading, and in class on the plays themselves.

1. I'll expect everyone to come to class ready to discuss the plays in detail. As you read, please make note of interesting or bewildering passages, lines, words, etc. I'm likely to call on students whether or not they've raised their hands, so having a passage that you'd like to discuss ready to hand will be helpful for everyone.
2. Over the course of the semester, you'll turn in four short "keyword" responses (500-650 words, hard copy please). In each case, I'll ask you to pick a word from our reading, to provide a definition that draws at least on the *Oxford English Dictionary*, and then to go on to explain what you think its significance is for the play as a whole. Think "love" in *Romeo and Juliet*, "revenge" in *Hamlet*, "father" in *King Lear*, etc. You might look at Raymond Williams' *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* or William Empson's *The Structure of Complex Words* as examples.
3. For your final essay, I'll ask you to expand one of your keyword assignments into a 5-7 page essay. It can be more or less based on one of the words you've chosen. Just make sure to discuss it with me as you go.

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Grading:

Each keyword assignment will constitute 10% of the final grade, the final essay 35%, and participation 25%.

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English Department Statement on Plagiarism:

All written work submitted in this course, except for acknowledged quotations, is to be expressed in your own words. It should also be constructed upon a plan of your own devising. The Berkeley Campus Code of Student Conduct defines plagiarism as "the use of intellectual material produced by another person without acknowledging its source" and stipulates that plagiarism includes:

- 1.) Copying from the writings or works of others into one's academic assignment without attribution, or submitting such work as if it were one's own;
- 2.) Using the views, opinions, or insights of another without acknowledgment; or
- 3.) Paraphrasing the characteristic or original phraseology, metaphor, or other literary device of another without proper attribution.

Unacknowledged use of the words or ideas of others from any medium (print, digital, or otherwise) is plagiarism. The submission of plagiarized work will, under University rules, render the offending student subject to an F grade for the work in question or for the whole course, and will also make him/her liable for referral to the Student Judicial Affairs Office for further disciplinary action.