We’ve grown accustomed to the assertion that Shakespeare was the greatest English dramatist ever. Is this true? And, if it is, how did he get to be this way, both in his own theatrical milieu through to the present day? How, in other words, did Shakespeare become Shakespeare? English 3223 provides an introduction to Shakespearean drama through careful reading of representative plays from several different genres from the earlier part of his career. There are of course many similarities between the early and late plays suggesting that a sharp distinction between the two and the precise date of the transition is somewhat forced and imposed by scholars much later. There are, however, several features of the early plays, those written during or before 1600, which make them worthy of special consideration as a unit. We will notice, for instance, that Shakespeare during this period developed his dramatic techniques, focusing especially on a tumultuous period of English history known as the Wars of the Roses and festive comedies often set in exotic locales. In this course, we will pay special attention to the content and form of these texts but also to the original conditions under which they were performed as well as their social, economic, and political contexts, the networks of patronage, readership, and often collaborative authorship that led to their production, as well as their function in today’s literary and cultural marketplace. Because this is a highly compressed Maymester course, we’ll alleviate the monotony of three-hour lectures every day my watching three movies of the plays. These movies deserve attention in themselves and can often be crucial in your understanding of the plays, especially for students relatively unfamiliar with Shakespeare.

Required Text (available at the campus bookstore):
Stephen Greenblatt et. al., eds. The Norton Shakespeare. Second Edition. If you have or can obtain a copy of the First Edition (the red one), feel free to use that.

Course Requirements: Your final grade will be based on a series of short quizzes given on each play (15%); a midterm (20%) and final examination (30%); a short paper (25%) and attendance and class participation (10%). The midterm examination will consist of a variety of multiple-choice and short answer questions including the identification of key passages. The final will consist of more of the same but will also contain an essay question that requires you to synthesize some of the concepts we discuss over the semester and to compare these ideas in some of the plays that we’ll read. Punctual attendance and productive participation are essential not only because they count towards 10% of the course grade but also because discussion of these difficult texts is important in deciphering the interpretive and historical problems they pose. For this reason, attendance is mandatory and missing more than six classes may reduce your course grade by a full letter. Chronic lateness will be penalized similarly.

Paper: I believe that all literature classes should include some kind of writing component. Because of the brevity of this class, however, it will have to be a fairly short one (3-4 pages). The paper will primarily be concerned with developing your close reading abilities. I will give you a series of passages and you will choose one to explicate in detail, paying close attention to how the language works and how the speech you chose functions within the context of the larger play. The paper will be due on 1 November.
Quizzes: The primary function of the quizzes is to ensure that you’ve read the assigned play on the date we’re going to discuss it. There will typically be a quiz every day that we begin a new play (i.e. the quiz on Richard II will take place on 11 May, the quiz on Henry IV will be on 12 May, and so on. If you’ve read the play, you’ll find the quiz extremely easy; if not, you’re in trouble! NOTE: These quizzes will contain short answer and multiple choice questions. Only your five best quiz grades will count towards your grade, meaning that the lowest two will be dropped. For this reason, you will not be allowed to make up a quiz that you miss. I’ll announce each quiz well in advance.

Blackboard: Log on to Blackboard for the syllabus and copies of the multiple handouts that I’ll be distributing in class. I’ll hand out paper copies of these handouts once in class, but if you’re absent that day, just get it online. I’ll also post the outlines for each play. I’ll also use Blackboard for any urgent announcements or reminders and for discussion of the works and the class, so be sure to check periodically. You will also find your grades posted on Blackboard a few days after quizzes and exams. If you feel that your grade is incorrect, come and see me and I will change it if necessary. Any changes WILL NOT be reflected on Blackboard, but rest assured that they will be on my “master” spreadsheet where I keep your grades. Finally, DO NOT use the email feature of Blackboard to get in touch with me; please use my regular email address (mark.bayer@utsa.edu) to reach me.

A Note on Plagiarism: The University of Texas at San Antonio defines “scholastic dishonesty” as including but not limited to, “cheating on a test or other class work, plagiarism (the appropriation of another's work in one’s own written work offered for credit), and collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing course work offered for credit). Should a student be accused of scholastic dishonesty, the faculty member may initiate disciplinary proceedings” that could result in failure of the class or even expulsion from the university. The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers provides a detailed discussion of “Forms of Plagiarism” and “Other Issues,” including the impropriety of submitting the same paper to more than one instructor or in more than one class by the same instructor. If you have doubts as to what constitutes plagiarism, ask me. I am very good at catching cases of plagiarism, so don’t do it!

The Tomás Rivera Center for Student Success: The Tomás Rivera Center offers a variety of programs to meet students' individual learning assistance needs. The Tutoring Center provides tutoring for selected core curriculum courses. Academic Coaches are available for personal appointments. Information-packed Study Skills Workshops teach advanced techniques for studying, such as new ways to prepare for tests and how to remember information more effectively. All services are free to UTSA Students. They are located in UC 1.01.02.

Disability Services: Support services, including registration assistance and equipment, are available to students with documented disabilities through the Office of Disabled Student Services (DSS), MS 2.03.19. Students are encouraged to contact that office at 458-4157 prior to starting classes to make arrangements, though they can contact the office at any time.

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CLASS SCHEDULE

(Bear in mind that these dates are subject to change. Although I try to keep to the schedule as best as I can, there will inevitably be slight modifications here and there, for reasons unforeseen) Mon, May 9 - Tues, May 10: Introduction to Shakespeare’s London
READ: Andrew Gurr, “The Shakespearean Stage” (p. 79)
Wed, May 11: The Tragedy of King Richard II (p. 973)
Thurs, May 12: The History of Henry IV, Part I (p. 1321)
Fri, May 13 – Mon, May 16: The Tragedy of King Richard III (p. 539)

***PAPER DUE on Mon, May 16***
Thurs, May 19: ***MIDTERM EXAMINATION***
Fri, May 20 – Mon, May 23: The Comical History of the Merchant of Venice (p. 1111)

Tues, May 24: The Most Excellent and Lamentable Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet
(p. 897)
Wed, May 25 – Thurs, May 26: As You Like It (p. 1615)
Fri, May 27: Printing and Editing the Text and Final Review
READ: Stephen Greenblatt, “The Dream of the Master Text” (p. 67)

Sat, May 28: ***FINAL EXAMINATION***