Shakespeare meant in his own culture. Instead, what we do when we read Shakespeare today is simply use these plays to advance opinions about contemporary issues. In this course, we want to look at the tragedies of Shakespeare and his contemporaries from a variety of different perspectives. I want to look at these plays in their historical context, but I also want to examine how arguments about them are recast in modern critical conversations. We will try to understand how a play like *Hamlet* might have resonated for Shakespeare’s audience and then look at what it’s taken to mean by readers, critics, directors, and audiences today. Finally, because we are so used to assuming that Shakespearean tragedy is the pinnacle of dramatic achievement, we’ll look at the plays of some of Shakespeare’s contemporaries to see how they differ and how they are the same. Looking at the tragedies of other Renaissance dramatists will also allow us to take the measure of Shakespeare’s plays from the perspective of his competitors.

**Required Texts** (available at the bookstore):
- Stephen Greenblatt, ed. *The Norton Shakespeare: Tragedies*. (If you have other copies of the plays—either a complete works or single plays—feel free to use them)
- Janette Dillon, *The Cambridge Introduction to Shakespeare’s Tragedies*.
- David Bevington, ed. *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*.
- A series of photocopied readings on reserve on Blackboard. I’ll post these over the course of the term.
Course Requirements: Your final grade will be based on a collaborative presentation (20%), participation and attendance (15%), a short paper (approximately 6 pages) due October 13 (25%), and a final term paper (8-10 pages) due at the end of the semester (40%). The two papers must be typed according to the style set forth in the MLA Handbook.

Attendance: This course assumes an interactive approach in its structure, which builds upon previous classes, and in its presentation, which requires engaged participation from all members of the class. Your presence is essential to the success of his course, and therefore to your success in it. Valid excuses for missing class include documented medical reasons, authorized university activities, and established religious holidays (see “Class Attendance Policies,” UTSA Handbook of Operating Procedures, http://www.utsa.edu/hop/chapter5/5-9.cfm). You must contact me about any such absences in advance, other than in extreme circumstances. You are responsible for making up any classwork missed, and must make up assignments within a reasonable time in consultation with me.

A Note on Papers: I want you to write two papers (one short, due halfway through the semester; the other longer, due at the end of the term). One of these papers should look at one of Shakespeare’s plays, the other at one of his contemporaries. Feel free to discuss these plays from any perspective you wish. I’m mainly looking at the strength of the argument and analysis—the precise content is secondary. In other words, feel free to disagree with me or prevailing critical wisdom.

Because the term paper is expected to be original and, in some cases, a research intensive, exercise, I encourage you to come see me about your topic and ideas well before the deadline. These papers are expected to be analytic, to have a coherent and narrow thesis derived from a more general topic (note the important differences between the two), and to offer a close reading of the plays. The key to a good paper is to have a good argument. I’ve found two things to be especially useful for students in constructing solid critical arguments: first, try to formulate your thesis as a question. If you have a good, interesting question that seems like it will take five to seven pages (or more) to answer, you’ll probably end up writing a good paper. Second, to help you construct a good argument, think of your task as similar to that of lawyer: your client is your thesis for which you need to construct a coherent, analytical argument and marshal evidence (from the text and potentially other sources) in order to defend. Remember, as in any scholarly argument, it’s always best to obey the “law of hermeneutic responsibility,” that is to put your opponent’s arguments in the best possible light before you comment on them. In short, it’s okay to challenge someone’s claims, but not caricature them.

Presentations: Like papers, I think that presentations are an important part of any seminar: they allow you to focus on a narrower topic, provide a different authoritative voice (besides mine!), and help build confidence in discussing the material and making your own contribution to scholarly debates. But because of the size of this class, we’ll have to have two a day. For this reason, I want the presentations to take the form of a collaborative debate on the play we’re looking at that day. We all know that there are multiple different perspectives on any literary work. I want to put this in practice in these presentations. I want two people to present on the same play, and I want the two to deliberately disagree on what the play means and suggest different—even opposed—ways of interpreting it. Perhaps the best way to do this is to begin with an article on the play (not the one on the syllabus), one person arguing for the author’s perspective, the other one against it. You should each take about ten minutes or so to explain your position, and then go on and debate it, and the rest of the class can join in later. The more interactive these debates are, the better. And of course I’ll talk more of what I’m looking for in these presentations in class.

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 collaborating with another person in constructing 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.

Plus / Minus Grading: As of Fall semester 2011, UTSA has shifted to plus /minus grading. This system is now mandatory in all classes in the Department of English. According to this system the highest grade of A (94 \% and above) translates to 4.0; A- (90-94\%) is 3.67; B+ (87-90\%) is 3.33; B (84-87\%) is 3.00; B- (80-84\%) is 2.67; C+ (77-80\%) is 2.33; C (74-77\%) is 2.00; C- (67-70\%) is 1.67; D+ (67-70\%) is 1.33; D (60-67\%) is 1.00. Anything below that is an F.

The University of Texas at San Antonio Academic Honor Code

Preamble
The University of Texas at San Antonio community of past, present and future students, faculty, staff, and administrators share a commitment to integrity and the ethical pursuit of knowledge. We honor the traditions of our university by conducting ourselves with a steadfast duty to honor, courage, and virtue in all matters both public and private. By choosing integrity and responsibility, we promote personal growth, success, and lifelong learning for the advancement of ourselves, our university, and our community.

Honor Pledge
In support of the ideals of integrity, the students of the University of Texas at San Antonio pledge:

“As a UTSA Roadrunner I live with honor and integrity.”

Shared responsibility
The University of Texas at San Antonio community shares the responsibility and commitment to integrity and the ethical pursuit of knowledge and adheres to the UTSA Honor Code.

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)

Wed, Jan. 18 - Introductory Remarks

Wed, Jan. 25: Introduction to Shakespeare’s London
READ: Andrew Gurr, from Playgoing in Shakespeare’s London
Paul Yachnin, “The Populuxe Theatre”
Jean Howard, from The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England

Wed, Feb. 1: What is Tragedy? Why Do We Like It? Different Theories
READ: Aristotle, from Poetics
Nietzsche, from The Birth of Tragedy
G.F.W. Hegel, from On Tragedy

Wed, Feb. 8: Thomas Kyd, The Spanish Tragedy
READ: Cambridge Introduction to Shakespeare’s Tragedies, Chapter One
Tanya Pollard, “Tragedy and Revenge”
Wed, Feb. 15: The Most Excellent and Lamentable Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet
READ: *Cambridge Introduction*, Chapter Three

Wed, Feb. 22: Christopher Marlowe, Dr. Faustus
READ: Stephen Greenblatt, from *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*

Wed, Feb. 29 – Wed, March 7: The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark
READ: *Cambridge Introduction*, Chapter Five
Samuel Taylor Coleridge on *Hamlet*
A.C. Bradley, from *Shakespearean Tragedy*
Michael Bristol, “The Pathos of Western Modernity”
Margreta De Grazia, from *Hamlet Without Hamlet*
***FIRST PAPER DUE on MARCH 7***

Wed, March 21: Anon, The Revenger’s Tragedy
READ: Peter Stallybrass, “Reading the Body and the Jacobean Theatre of Consumption”

Wed, March 28: The Tragedy of King Richard III
READ: from Phyllis Rackin, *Stages of History*

Wed, April 4: ***NO CLASS***

Wed, April 11: The Tragedy of Othello, The Moor of Venice
READ: *Cambridge Introduction*, Chapter Six
Emily Bartels, “Othello and the Moor”

Wed, April 18: The Tragedy of Macbeth
READ: *Cambridge Introduction*, Chapter Nine
Alan Sinfield, from *Faultlines*

READ: Gordan McMullan, “The Changeling and the Dynamics of Ugliness”

Wed, April 25: The Tragedy of King Lear
READ: *Cambridge Introduction*, Chapter Eight
Jonathan Dollimore, from *Radical Tragedy*

Wed, May 2: Printing and Editing the Text
READ: Peter Blayney, “The Publication of Playbooks”
David Kastan, from *Shakespeare and the Book*

Fri, May 4: ***FINAL PAPER DUE***