

THT 352: Complex Character Study

Spring 2008 MWF 10:20 - 11:15 Lab Theatre, Tyler Hall

Instructor: Mark Cole

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Office Hours: by appointment

BOOKS: (required)

Shakespeare's Bawdy by Eric Partridge

A Shakespeare Glossary by C. T. Onions

The Riverside Shakespeare

Recommended Reading

Freeing Shakespeare's Voice by Kristen Linklater

Actions: The Actors' Thesaurus by Marina Caldarone & Maggie Lloyd-Williams

Course Description: THT 352. Every acting class is a basic acting class. The stakes are higher as the work progresses but we must bring the principles of spontaneity, letting go, who, what, where and when to each work session. We must demand more of ourselves as we move from class to class. The texts we engage ask more of us: greater resonance and depth of feeling, greater physical, intellectual and emotional awareness and insight as well as an increased ability in the area of craft. Language and the demands of heightened text also feature in the advanced acting work. This class will apply the skills you've acquired so far, to the plays of Shakespeare. New skills will be explored and developed. Attention will be given to understanding and evoking character and action through the vital, rich sound and sense of Shakespeare's language.

Course Objectives: By the completion of the course the student should be able to demonstrate

- a basic understanding of blank verse and Shakespearean prose.
- an intellectual and imaginative grasp of the various rhetorical devices Shakespeare uses in the plays.
- an ability to analyze and deliver Shakespearean text through scene work.
- the physical and vocal prowess necessary to embody the complex thoughts and feelings of Shakespearean text in performance.
- a knowledge of the philosophic and cultural milieu that surrounded and influenced Shakespeare's writing.

COURSE OUTLINE

WEEK ONE: Jan. 25

Introduction to the course; resources for study

WEEK TWO: Jan. 28 – Feb. 1

Unlocking the language

Scansion; the line; the caesura

Rhetorical Devices: metaphor & simile; antithesis; alliteration; assonance and onomatopoeia; paradox, puns, hyperbole, personification

WEEK THREE: Feb. 4 - 8

Putting it together in a first scene

WEEK FOUR: Feb. 11 - 15

Work on first scene continued

WEEK FIVE: Feb. 18 - 22

Scene-work continued

WEEK SIX: Feb. 25 - 29

Presentation of first scene

WEEK SEVEN: Mar. 3 – 7

Begin work on second scene

WEEK EIGHT: Mar. 10 - 14

Continue work on second scene

Oral reports

WEEK NINE: Mar. 17 – Mar. 19

Work on second scene

Spring Break: Mar. 20 - Mar. 30 – classes resume on Monday, March 31

WEEK TEN: Mar. 31 – April 4

Presentation of second scene

WEEK ELEVEN: April 7 -11

Begin work on third scene

WEEK TWELVE: April 14 - 18

Continue work on third scene

WEEK THIRTEEN: April 21 – 25
Continue work on third scene
Wednesday: QUEST DAY - from 8am - 5 pm
Continue work on third scene

WEEK FOURTEEN: April 28 - May 2
Continue work on third scene
No class on Friday, May 2: day of the High School Drama Festival.

WEEK FIFTEEN: May 5 - 9
Continue work on third scene

Note: final exam time is Monday, May 12 from 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Attendance required.

Evaluation:

- Average of first two scenes (performance & written analysis) = 1/3 of final grade
- Attendance & Participation (includes oral report and written reports on the two required events) = 1/3 of course grade
- Final (performance & written analysis of the third scene) = 1/3 of final grade
- plus and minus grading will be used
- Attendance will be taken each class. For every unexcused absence, the attendance/participation grade will be lowered by a quarter of a letter grade. Since this is a performance class, it will be very difficult, if not impossible to make up work missed if you are absent. **And remember rehearsals & performances must not keep you from attending class.**

Note well: no eating, drinking or gum chewing in class; also, turn off cell phones and beepers. And please remove hats in class.

Clothing: women should have rehearsal skirts and character shoes. Men should have slacks and character shoes. Come to each class in clothing that you can move comfortably in; clothing that does not restrict movement in any way. Street shoes/boots aren't allowed on the dance floor in the Lab, so always have footwear that is flexible. No flip-flops. If you have long hair, be sure to have it tied back and out of the face for each class.

Please be ON TIME to class. Class will begin promptly at 10:20. It is rude and disruptive to come in late. It is expected that you will come to class warmed up for the work.

You are required to attend both Blackfriars/Theatre Department shows this semester.

Please hand in a two-page (minimum) paper (typed) on each of the two required events, due the Monday after the closing performance at the latest. If you are in the production address issues of process, character development and progress of the work through rehearsals and performances. Discuss how you addressed such things as language/vocal work, physical engagement, ensemble playing, action/objective work and preparation. If you work crew for the production, deal with observations regarding your specific role (crew position) and how it integrated into the entire production; also, analyze the directorial/design approach to the production, the play's theme and how this was realized in the production, and effectiveness of performances. If you view the show from out front, use the standard critical analysis approach: what was the production trying to do? (theme, visual/stylistic approach). How well was it done? (evaluation of the aesthetic aspects of the production); and was it worth doing? (how does the production contribute to the cultural programming, affect the audience and engage the participants in meaningful creative work?)

If you see more than the required two events, extra credit will be given if you turn in a paper for additional events attended (either on or off campus), due on the last day of class.

Please keep a journal and start writing every day. It will be of use as you rehearse and analyze scene-work. It can also offer you a record of your progress. Use the journal writing to record observations and reactions to the work, readings, plays and discussions as well as ideas for scenes and rehearsals. This definitely should be a journal in which you write primarily about the THT 352 class, rather than a personal diary, or a notebook for class notes. Although those things may be a part of this writing. I won't need to read the journal. However, use the journal to record your process of working on the scenes so that when you put together the written analysis of each scene and monologue you have the background material. For the analysis be sure to use at least one outside source – and make note of it in a bibliography. The source should be a critical commentary on some aspect of Shakspearean performance. It might have to do with text analysis, character, acting choices, historical background for a scene or voice work, to name just a few possibilities. You should aim to write at least **five** pages a week in the journal. Bring the journal to every class in case we do some in-class writing or if you wish to jot down reflections. The written analysis of the scene (due on the day of the presentation of the piece) should include: a copy of the scene as used in rehearsals; a record of historical research that went in to the preparation; notation of all words, phrases, allusions, metaphors etc. that are a part of the language of the scene; analysis of the character in terms of class, relation to other characters, physicality and how the character uses language; the dynamic of the scene in relation to the character's journey, actions and goals.

Course schedule is subject to change

Topics for Oral Reports:

Elizabethan religious beliefs

Elizabethan manners & customs

Shakespeare's contemporaries: poetry and plays of the Elizabethan Age

The courts of Elizabeth I & James I

Forms of entertainment in Elizabethan England

Elizabethan Exploration

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Ashley, Leonard R. N. Elizabethan popular culture. 1988

Bates, Catherine. The rhetoric of courtship in Elizabethan language and literature. 1991

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Comensoli, Viviana: Enacting gender on the English Renaissance stage. 1999

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