

Shakespeare and his Times

Code: 106303
ECTS Credits: 6

2025/2026

Degree	Type	Year
English Studies	OT	3
English Studies	OT	4

Contact

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Teaching groups languages

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Prerequisites

The course requires an initial level of English C2 (Proficiency) of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. With C2, students can understand almost everything they read or hear without effort; they can summarise information from different oral and written sources, reconstruct facts and arguments and present them in a coherent way; they can express themselves spontaneously, with fluency and precision, distinguishing subtle nuances of meaning even in the most complex situations.

Students should have completed the English Studies third year courses, specifically 'Literatura Anglesa del Renaixement i la Il·lustració'.

Objectives and Contextualisation

The overall purpose of this course will be to explore aspects of the evolution of Shakespearean drama by focussing on its main genres, namely, comedy and tragedy. Though we shall consider essential concepts such as 'mimesis', 'hamartia' or 'catharsis', the course will not seek to produce a theoretical discussion of the notions of 'comedy' and 'tragedy'. Rather, it will attempt to describe and contextualize an evolving practice, and will include the possibility of a critique of dramatic art. The examination of four masterpieces from different periods of Shakespeare's production will give students a sense of the playwright's creativity and of the rich variety of the early modern stage. A detailed reading of the texts will deepen their understanding of the complex ways in which drama, literature, culture, and society interacted at this crucial moment of European history. Finally, an analysis of some of the best-known productions of the plays will reveal the essentially performative nature of Shakespeare's work.

Competences

- English Studies
- Act with ethical responsibility and respect for fundamental rights and duties, diversity and democratic values.
- Apply scientific ethical principles to information processing.

- Apply the methodology of analysis and critical concepts to analysing the literature, culture and history of English-speaking countries.
- Critically evaluate linguistic, literary and cultural production in English.
- Demonstrate skills to work autonomously and in teams to fulfil the planned objectives.
- Identify and analyse the main currents, genres, works and authors in English and comparative literature.
- Students must be capable of communicating information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
- Understand and produce written and spoken academic texts in English at advanced higher-proficient-user level (C2).
- Use current philological methodologies to interpret literary texts in English and their cultural and historical context.
- Use digital tools and specific documentary sources for the collection and organisation of information.
- Use written and spoken English for academic and professional purposes, related to the study of linguistics, the philosophy of language, history, English culture and literature.

Learning Outcomes

1. Analyse the fundamental aspects of ethical conduct and the challenges this poses to a culturally diverse environment.
2. Apply the work-organisation methodologies acquired to individual and group-based professional tasks.
3. Contextualise the evolution of the intellectual debates in Early Modernity and their literary expression in contemporary literature.
4. Demonstrate autonomous critical ability in the elaboration of argumentative essays on topics that converge in a wide range of Early Modern and contemporary texts.
5. Distinguish principal from secondary concepts and develop advanced synthesis skills in literary texts of the Early Modern and contemporary period in English.
6. Elaborate an overall oral and written critique that integrates the stylistic and cultural elements from a literary text of the Early Modern and contemporary period in English.
7. Elaborate text commentaries and write argumentative essays (C1-C2) of medium length in English on concepts related to literary works of the Early Modern and contemporary period.
8. Express oneself in English orally and in writing in an academic register, using the terminology appropriate to the study of English language texts from the Early Modern and contemporary periods.
9. Identify the stylistic and cultural elements that shape and distinguish Early-Modern and contemporary literary production in English.
10. Integrate knowledge and information from academic sources consulted for written work, citing, referencing and paraphrasing correctly.
11. Integrate secondary sources related to Early Modern and contemporary literature into the production of advanced academic criticism.
12. Interpret an advanced level literary texts by Early Modern and contemporary authors in English.
13. Locate and organise relevant English-language information available on the internet, databases and libraries, and apply this to work and/or research environments.
14. Organise the autonomous component to the learning process in an effective manner.
15. Participate in face-to-face and virtual discussions in English on issues related to contemporary and Early Modern literary works.
16. Rigorously approach the values conveyed by the texts analysed, carrying out constructive criticism.
17. Understand at an advanced level the contextual and stylistic nuances of the main authors who characterise and define the literary production of Early Modernity and the contemporary period in English.
18. Understand specialised academic texts on research on Early Modern and contemporary works and cultural contexts.
19. Understand the fundamental aspects of the rights and duties that construct values in a democratic society.
20. Using digital technologies, conduct bibliographic searches of secondary sources related to Early Modern and contemporary literature in the English language.

Content

UNIT 1- The Shakespearean Stage

UNIT 2 - *Romeo and Juliet*

UNIT 3 - *Twelfth Night*

UNIT 4 - *Macbeth*

UNIT 5 - *The Tempest*

Students are advised to read the plays in the following editions, which will be used in class:

- *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Jill L. Levenson, The Oxford Shakespeare, Oxford University Press, 2008.
- *Twelfth Night* ed. Roger Warren and Stanley Wells, The Oxford Shakespeare, Oxford University Press, 2008.
- *Macbeth*, ed. Sandra Clark and Pamela Mason, The Arden Shakespeare, 2019.
- *The Tempest*, ed. Stephen Orgel, The Oxford Shakespeare, Oxford University Press, 2008.

Activities and Methodology

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Type: Directed			
Lectures	30	1.2	
Practice classes with text analysis and debate	20	0.8	
Type: Supervised			
Oral presentation preparation	25	1	
Type: Autonomous			
Reading	35	1.4	
Study	15	0.6	

Methodology includes the following activities:

Autonomous activities

Directed activities

Supervised activities

Annotation: Within the schedule set by the centre or degree programme, 15 minutes of one class will be reserved for students to evaluate their lecturers and their courses or modules through questionnaires.

Assessment

Continuous Assessment Activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Class participation	10%	2.5	0.1	19, 10
Class presentation (Shakespeare in Performance)	10%	2.5	0.1	19, 13
Exam ("The Shakespearean Stage", Plays I and II)	40%	10	0.4	16, 1, 19, 17, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14
In-class essay writing (Plays III and IV)	40%	10	0.4	16, 1, 2, 19, 18, 17, 3, 4, 5, 7, 6, 8, 20, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15

The practical dimension of the course will require students to take an active part in class. Group discussion will be normal practice and students will be requested to offer a presentation on specific aspects of the productions of the plays analysed in class.

PERCENTAGES will be as follows:

- Class presentation and group work: 10%
- Class attendance and participation: 10%
- Exam: 40%
- In-class essay: 40%

The minimum pass mark is 5 for all exams and activities.

- Continuous assessment applies to this subject. This means that all exercises are compulsory and submission of 30% or more of these exercises automatically excludes the possibility of obtaining "No available" as a final grade. The minimum mark for any exercise or exam to be considered for the average final mark is 5. The minimum average pass mark for the whole subject is 5.
- The student's command of English will be taken into account when marking all exercises and for the final mark. It will count as 25% of this mark for all the exercises and will be assessed on the basis of the following criteria:
 - Grammar (morphology and syntax)
 - Vocabulary (accuracy and variety)
 - Cohesion (among sentences and paragraphs)
 - Organization (sound argumentation of ideas)
 - Style (expression and register)
 - Spelling
- Reviewing procedure: Students have a right to review their exercises with the teacher in a personal tutorial, on the set dates, never later than 2 weeks after the marks have been made available. The student loses this right if s/he fails to collect the exercise/exam within the period announced by the teacher.

On carrying out each evaluation activity, lecturers will inform students (on Moodle) of the procedures to be followed for reviewing all grades awarded, and the date on which such a review will take place.

Students will obtain a "Not assessed/Not submitted" course grade unless they have submitted more than 30% of the assessment items.

NOT ASSESSED

Students will obtain a Not assessed/Not submitted course grade unless they have submitted more than 30% of the assessment items, that is to say, provided that they have taken none of the two midterm exams.

(ITEM-BY-ITEM) RE-ASSESSMENT:

a) Students who fail both exams are not eligible for re-assessment; those who have failed one of the two exams are eligible provided that its mark is higher than 3,5. Students who have failed one of the two exams must retake it even if the provisional average mark of the course were 5 or higher.

b) Students whose re-assessment is successful will get, in all cases, a final grade of 5. Students who have passed both exams cannot opt for re-assessment in order to upgrade their average mark.

c). Class presentations will not be re-assessed. Students are committed to offering their presentation on the date agreed with the rest of the class at the beginning of the semester.

SINGLE-ASSESSMENT OPTION: Students will be assessed on the basis of the following components:

(1) An in-class exam on "The Shakespearean Stage" unit plus plays I and II to be taken on the first day the rest of group writes their essay in class (50%)

(2) An essay on plays III and IV to be submitted on exam day (40%)

(3) Class attendance and participation (10%)

Re-evaluation: The same re-assessment method as continuous assessment will be used.

PLAGIARISM:

In the event of a student committing any irregularity that may lead to a significant variation in the grade awarded to an assessment activity, the student will be given a zero for this activity, regardless of any disciplinary process that may take place. In the event of several irregularities in assessment activities of the same subject, the student will be given a zero as the final grade for this subject.

Irregularities refer, for instance, to copying in an exam, copying from sources without indicating authorship, or a misuse of AI such as presenting work as original that has been generated by an AI tool or programme. These evaluation activities will not be re-assessed.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

This subject entirely prohibits the use of AI technologies in all of its activities. Any submitted work that contains content generated using AI will be considered academic dishonesty; the corresponding grade will be awarded a zero, without the possibility of reassessment. In cases of greater infringement, more serious action may be taken.

EXAMINATION DATES AND SUBMISSION DEADLINES

Requests to change examination dates or submission deadlines for personal reasons will not be granted unless they are illness-related and a doctor's certificate can be provided; Erasmus and exchange students who cannot take an exam or submit an essay for justifiable reasons will need to submit to their teacher(s) written proof of the latter issued by their home university.

Bibliography

1. Contexts

Susan Brigden, *New Worlds, Lost Worlds. The Rule of the Tudors 1485-1603*, Penguin Books. (A survey of the Tudor age incorporating the latest findings of sixteenth-century scholarship.)

Julia Briggs, *The Stage-Play World: English Literature and its Background, 1580-1625*. (A very sound and user-friendly introduction, full of interesting ideas and suggestions.)

Patrick Collinson, *The Reformation*, Weidenfeld & Nicholson. (A readable assessment of a major turning point in European history by a leading Reformation scholar.)

Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries*, Palgrave Macmillan (A famously controversial study of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. It approaches the plays from a cultural materialist perspective.)

Richard, Eldridge, *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Literature*, Oxford UP. (A useful examination of the major literary genres).

Northrop Frye, *Northrop Frye on Shakespeare*, Yale UP. (It includes brilliant chapters on several of the plays we shall look at)

Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning. From More to Shakespeare*, U of Chicago P. (A critical earthquake that shook Renaissance criticism to its foundations.)

Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642*, CUP. (An authoritative description of the theatrical conditions of Shakespearean drama.)

-----, *Studying Shakespeare. An Introduction*, Edward Arnold. (How to tackle the study of a Shakespearean play.)

Frank Kermode, *The Age of Shakespeare*, Weidenfeld & Nicholson. (An account of Shakespeare's career by one of England's most distinguished critics.)

Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England*, CUP. (A highly influential study of the complexities of the representation of gender in Shakespearean drama.)

Martin Wiggins, *Shakespeare and the Drama of his Time*, Oxford Shakespeare Topics, OUP. (A reliable introduction to the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramaturgical traditions.)

2. Criticism

Auden, W.H., *The Dyer's Hand*, Vintage, 1989.

Bradley, A.C., *Shakespearean Tragedy*, Penguin Books, 1991.

Davies, Oliver Ford, *Shakespeare's Fathers and Daughters*, Bloomsbury, 2017.

Dutton, Richard and Jean E. Howard (eds.), *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works: The Tragedies*, Blackwell, 2006.

-----, *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works: The Comedies*, Blackwell, 2006.

-----, *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works: Poems, Problem Comedies, Late Plays*, Blackwell, 2005.

Eisaman Maus, Katherine, *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance*, Chicago UP, 1995.

Everett, Barbara, *Young Hamlet. Essays on Shakespeare's Tragedies*, Clarendon Press, 1989.

Goddard, Harold C., *The Meaning of Shakespeare*, 2 vols., The University of Chicago Press, 1951.

Greenblatt, Stephen, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, The University of Chicago Press, 1980.

Jackson, Russell (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film*, CUP, 2007.

Kermode, Frank, *Shakespeare's Language*, Penguin Books, 2000.

Nuttall, A.D., *Shakespeare the Thinker*, Yale UP, 2007.

Poole, Adrian, *Tragedy: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford UP, 2005.

Rackin, Phyllis, *Shakespeare and Women*, Oxford UP, 2005.

Smith, Emma, *This is Shakespeare*, Random House, 2020.

Tanner, Tony, *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, Harvard UP, 2010.

Traub, Valerie, *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Embodiment: Gender, Sexuality, and Race*, Oxford UP, 2016.

Wells, Stanley (ed.), *Shakespeare: A Bibliographical Guide*, Clarendon Press, 1990.

Software

Not used in this subject.

Groups and Languages

Please note that this information is provisional until 30 November 2025. You can check it through this [link](#). To consult the language you will need to enter the CODE of the subject.

Name	Group	Language	Semester	Turn
(PAUL) Classroom practices	1	English	first semester	morning-mixed
(TE) Theory	1	English	first semester	morning-mixed