

English 2203 / Government 2245. Shakespeare and Politics

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Summary: *Shakespeare and Politics* considers Shakespeare as a political thinker whose plays both absorb the tradition of political philosophy and respond to pressing political matters of his day (and beyond). Our team-taught course encourages open-ended debate and argumentation in order to foster informed and critical conversation between Shakespeare and Cicero, Plutarch, Machiavelli, and Montaigne, among others. Beginning with ancient and early modern philosophical reflection on human nature, the state, justice, the virtues of rulers, and citizenship, the course proceeds to take up Shakespeare's dramatization of these topics in the context of the English monarchy, the Roman Republic, the modern commercial republic of Venice, and finally the brave New World.

[Note: This course fulfills the pre-1800 literature requirement for English majors.]

Course Books (**not** available on Chegg, so please purchase online or from local bookstore)

- Machiavelli, *The Prince* (University of Chicago Press, 2d ed.)
- Folger paperback editions of all plays on syllabus (*Richard II*; *Henry IV, Part 1*; *Henry V*; *Julius Caesar*; *Coriolanus*; *The Merchant of Venice*; and *The Tempest*)
- Additional readings on Blackboard (marked with an asterisk [*] on syllabus)

Course Requirements

- Regular attendance and participation in classroom discussions and activities. You should practice active reading by taking notes on all plays and other readings as you go. Bring questions and comments to class with you.
- Three essays (6-8 pp. each)
- One midterm exam

Papers and Exams

Feb. 19	Essay #1 on <i>Richard II</i> and/or political philosophy due by noon
March 8	Midterm exam on <i>Henry IV</i> and <i>Henry V</i>
April 23	Essay #2 on <i>Julius Caesar</i> and/or <i>Coriolanus</i> due by noon
May 14	Essay #3 on <i>Merchant of Venice</i> and/or <i>The Tempest</i> due by 4:30 PM

Grading: Participation: 10%
Essay #2: 20%

Midterm exam: 25%
Essay #3: 25%

Essay#1: 20%

Attendance policy: More than two unexcused absences over the semester will lower your final grade considerably.

Classroom decorum: Please be on time and ready to join class discussion. No food or drinks in the classroom (water bottles and cups with lids excepted). No laptops or cell phones without permission. No extensions without prior permission and/or notification from your Dean.

Academic Honesty: All written work for this course must be your own. You should be very careful to give full credit to words and/or ideas of others. Violations of the College honor code will be taken very seriously; those students suspected of academic dishonesty will be referred to the office of the Dean of Student Affairs. For more information about finding and citing sources, please see the course homepage.

Readings:

Jan 23	Introduction
Jan 25	*Cicero, from <i>On Duties</i>
Jan 30	Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i> , chapters 1-9
Feb. 1	Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i> , chapters 15-19, 24-26
Feb. 6	<i>Richard II</i> , Acts 1 & 2
Feb. 8	<i>Richard II</i> , Acts 3 & 4
Feb. 13	<i>Richard II</i> , Act 5
Feb 15	<i>1 Henry IV</i> , Acts 1 & 2
Feb. 20	<i>1 Henry IV</i> , Acts 3 & 4
Feb. 22	<i>1 Henry IV</i> , Act 5
Feb. 27	*excerpt from <i>2 Henry IV</i> ; <i>Henry V</i> , Acts 1 & 2
March 1	<i>Henry V</i> , Acts 3 & 4
March 6	<i>Henry V</i> , Act 5
March 8	Midterm Exam

Spring Break

March 27	*Machiavelli, from <i>Discourses on Livy</i> ; *Plutarch, "Brutus"
March 29	<i>Julius Caesar</i> , Acts 1 & 2
April 3	<i>Julius Caesar</i> , Act 3
April 5	<i>Julius Caesar</i> , Acts 4 & 5
April 10	*Plutarch, "Coriolanus"; <i>Coriolanus</i> , Act 1
April 12	<i>Coriolanus</i> , Acts 2 & 3
April 17	<i>Coriolanus</i> , Acts 4 & 5
April 19	*Stephen Greenblatt, "If you Prick Us"; <i>Merchant of Venice</i> , Acts 1 & 2
April 24	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i> , Acts 3 & 4
April 26	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i> , Act 5
	*James Shapiro, from <i>Shakespeare and the Jews</i>

May 1	*Montaigne, “On Cannibals”; <i>The Tempest</i> , Acts 1 & 2
May 3	<i>The Tempest</i> , Acts 3 & 4
May 8	<i>The Tempest</i> , Act 5; *Paul Brown, “This Thing of Darkness...”
May 10	Conclusion