

The Joy of Carnage: Tragedy in the English Renaissance

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Course Designation

This course fulfills the Pre- and Early- Modern Literature distribution requirement, and the English and Pre- and Early modern concentration requirements.

Course Description

This course introduces students to classics of English Renaissance Tragedy and familiarizes them with some of the major ideas of tragic theory while reading plays by Shakespeare, Marlowe and Webster. Special attention will be paid to 1) blood and violence as a form of entertainment; 2) race, anti-semitism, and homosexuality on the English stage; and 3) Renaissance understandings and adaptations of classical tragedy. In some cases, we will also look at the performance histories and film adaptations of these plays. Class meetings will combine lecture, student discussion, and screenings.

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation (10%)

Take-Home Midterm (45%)

In-Class Final (45%)

The take-home midterm will consist of two 5-page responses to specific prompts, and will require detailed citation of and engagement with specific texts. The final exam will consist of three short answer questions (1-2 paragraph) and a longer essay (on one of five possible prompts) that students will have about an hour to write on the last day of class. Additionally, students will have the option of writing an extra-credit report on one of the optional theoretical texts found in the reader.

Required Texts

Marlowe, Christopher. *Edward II*.

Marlowe, Christopher. *The Jew of Malta*.

Shakespeare, William. *King Lear*.

Shakespeare, William. *Richard II*.

Webster, John. *The Duchess of Malfi*.

Course Reader (Available at Bay Tree Bookstore; texts from course reader are marked with an asterisk* and optional readings have been placed [in brackets])

Attendance Policy

Regular attendance is mandatory and represents a crucial portion of your grade. You are expected to be an active and engaged participant in class, which is dependent upon your presence. If you have 3 or more unexcused absences, you may be asked to leave the class.

Weekly Reading and Assignment Schedule

This is based upon meeting Tuesday/Thursday in 3 1/2 hour blocks during the UCSC Summer Session.

Week 1. Tragedy: Theory & Practice

Class 1. Introduction: Going to the Theatre in Early Modern London

Watch Julie Taymour's *Titus* in class.

Class 2. What is Tragedy? (Major Theories: Aristotle v. Nietzsche)

Aristotle. From *Poetics*.*

Nietzsche. From *The Birth of Tragedy*.*

[Hegel. From *Hegel on Tragedy*.]*

Week 2. Nothing Sells Like Violence

Class 1. Theatrical Violence in the English Renaissance

John Webster. *The Duchess of Malfi*.

Class 2. The Tragic Super-Villain

Christopher Marlowe. *The Jew of Malta*. (Acts I-III)

Watch Clips from *Scarface*.

Week 3. Marlowe

Class 1. Anti-Semitism & Homosexuality in Marlowe

Christopher Marlowe. *The Jew of Malta*. (Acts IV-V)

Christopher Marlowe. *Edward II*. (Acts I-III)

Watch Clips from *Braveheart*.

[Take-Home Midterm Handed Out at End of Class]

Class 2. Imitatio: Marlowe & Shakespeare

Christopher Marlowe. *Edward II*. (Acts IV-V)

William Shakespeare. *Richard II*. (Act I)

Week 4. Shakespeare

[Take-Home Midterm Due at Beginning of Class]

Class 1. History and/as Tragedy

[Walter Benjamin. From *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*.]*

William Shakespeare. *Richard II*. (Acts II-V)

Class 2. Shakespeare: The Big Four

William Shakespeare. *King Lear* (Act I)

Watch Clips from film and opera versions of *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*.

Week 5. The Changing Faces of Tragedy

Class 1. *King Lear*: Changing Views

[Bertolt Brecht. From *Notes on Epic Theatre*.]*

William Shakespeare. *King Lear*. (Acts II-V)

Watch clips from Peter Brooks' *King Lear* in Class.

Class 2. Conclusions: Tragedy in Modernity (and Beyond)

[Walter Benjamin. From *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*.]*

Jan Kott. "*King Lear*, or *Endgame*."*

Watch ending of Peter Brooks' *King Lear* in Class.

[90-Minute In-Class Final]