Sample Syllabus: Advanced Shakespeare Course

Logistics and Overview

Objective: Combining all of the modules into one course, this syllabus introduces advanced students to five different methodologies for approaching King Lear. After spending three weeks close reading the play, students work through each module for a week at a time. Students then work in groups to complete a capstone assignment linked to one module before sharing their insights through a service-learning activity and an in-class presentation. This syllabus offers a model for integrating all of the modules into a dynamic course for juniors and seniors who are prepared for rigorous study of the play and interested in engaging with the local community.

Creator: Jaime Goodrich

Level: Advanced; mixed audience of English majors, Education majors, and Theatre majors

Suggested Digital Texts and Tools: Quarto, Fourth Folio, Holinshed, Sidney, Spenser, and Tate via eText Reader, Mirador, and/or Readux Beta

Dividing the Kingdoms: Shakespeare's King Lear

Description: This course will analyze one of Shakespeare’s masterworks—King Lear—from five different scholarly perspectives: textual criticism, performance, cultural studies, philosophy, and adaptation. Each of these lenses will offer new insights into this notoriously difficult text, allowing students to gain a multifaceted appreciation of the play and its reception over the years. Students will also become conversant with basic aspects of the digital humanities by exploring digitized versions of Shakespeare’s play, its sources, and a later adaptation. After working in groups to complete a capstone assignment that offers even deeper engagement with one module, students will share their insights into this methodology through a service-learning activity at a local middle or high school. At the end of the semester, students will have gained a new appreciation for the interpretive complexities of King Lear as well as a better understanding of why this play has served as a cultural touchstone for over four centuries.

Objectives: By the end of the course, successful students should be able to:
1. Demonstrate in-depth knowledge of King Lear
2. Develop an understanding of the five theoretical lenses used in the modules (adaptation, cultural studies, performance, philosophy, text)
3. Analyze print and digital editions of King Lear in relation to one or more theoretical lenses from the modules
4. Articulate similarities and differences between the theoretical lenses used in the modules
5. Identify the relevance of Shakespeare’s work to modern culture and share that knowledge with local communities
6. Write with fluency, clarity, and style
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**Texts:** We will be using the following two texts:

All other secondary texts will be posted online. We will also use digital versions of *Lear*, its sources, and its adaptations found here: [http://guides.lib.wayne.edu/folgerkinglear/digitaltexts](http://guides.lib.wayne.edu/folgerkinglear/digitaltexts).

**Grading:**
- Text Assignment 10%
- Performance Assignment 10%
- Cultural Studies Assignment 10%
- Philosophy Assignment 10%
- Adaptation Assignment 10%
- Capstone Assignment 15%
- Service Learning Assignment 10%
- Presentation 5%
- Reflective Paper 5%
- Participation 15%

**Assignments:** Students will complete five short assignments of 3 pages, one for each module. During Weeks 10 through 12, students will work in one of five groups on a capstone assignment linked to one of the modules. In Week 13, students will complete a service-learning activity by sharing this approach with local middle or high school students. In Week 14 each group will give a presentation to the rest of the class in order to share their capstone assignments and experiences during the service-learning activity. Finally, students will write a 3-page reflective paper discussing their experiences throughout the class, with a special focus on the capstone assignment and service-learning activity.

**Schedule**

*Interpreting King Lear*

**Week 1:** Introduction and Group Discussion of Act 1
- **Day One:** Introduction to “Dividing the Kingdoms”
  - Discussion of 1.1.1-32 (pp. 3-4)
- **Day Two:** Discussion of Act 1 (pp. 3-37)

**Week 2:** Group Discussion of Acts 2 and 3
- **Day One:** Discussion of Act 2 (pp. 38-64)
- **Day Two:** Discussion of Act 3 (pp. 65-91)

**Week 3:** Group Discussion of Acts 4 and 5
- **Day One:** Discussion of Act 4 (pp. 91-122)
- **Day Two:** Discussion of Act 5 (pp. 122-142)
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Week 4: Text Module
- *Day One*: Activity 1: Performing the Quarto and Folio
  - For class, **watch** the **Text** video introduction and **read** R. A. Foakes, “The Reshaping of King Lear” in Kahan, pp. 104-23
- *Day Two*: Activity 2: Reading the Quarto; Activity 3: Choosing a Lear
  - For class, **read** Richard Knowles, “The Evolution of the Texts of Lear,” in Kahan, pp. 124-54

Week 5: Performance Module
- *Day One*: Activity 1: Analyzing Blank Verse; Activity 2: Identifying Operative Words
  - For class, **watch** the **Performance** video introduction and **read** Barry Edelstein, Thinking Shakespeare, pp. 49-70
- *Day Two*: Activity 3: Performing Paraphrase; Activity 4: Merging Text Analysis into Performance
  - For class, **watch** Larry Yando’s Lear and at least one of Yando’s coaching sessions; **read** John Barton, Playing Shakespeare, pp. 6-24
- **Due this week**: Characterization Comparison (Text Assignment 1)

Week 6: Cultural Studies Module
- *Day One*: Activity 1: Reading Shakespeare’s Sources; Activity 2: Adapting Lear into a Ballad
  - For class, **watch** Cultural Studies video introduction and **read** Jean R. Brink, “What does Shakespeare leave out of King Lear?” in Kahan, pp. 208-30
- *Day Two*: Activity 3: Applying the Bechdel Test; Activity 4: Identifying Metaphorical and Literal Disability
  - For class, **read** Edward L. Rocklin, “The Smell of Mortality: Performing Torture in King Lear 3.7” in Kahan, pp. 297-325
- **Due this week**: From Scansion to Paraphrase (Performance Assignment 1)

Week 7: Philosophy Module
- Day One: Activity 1: Introducing Philosophical Concepts
  - For class, **watch** the **Philosophy** video introduction and **read** Stanley Stewart, “Lear in Kierkegaard,” in Kahan, pp. 278-96
- Day Two: Activity 2: Reading Adaptation Philosophically; Activity 3: Identifying Essential and Social Selves
  - For class, **read** Jonathan Dollimore, “King Lear (c. 1605-6) and Essentialist Humanism,” in Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries
- **Due this week**: Argumentative Paper (Cultural Studies Assignment 2)

Week 8: Adaptation Module
- *Day One*: Activity 1: Adapting Lear

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- For class, watch the Adaptation video introduction and read Linda Hutcheon, “Beginning to Theorize Adaptation,” in A Theory of Adaptation
- Day Two: Activity 2: Changing Lear for the Times; Activity 3: Moving Lear off the Stage
  - For class, view Benjamin West’s King Lear (c. 1788) and read Christy Desmet, “Some Lears of Private Life, from Tate to Shaw” in Kahan, pp. 326-50
- Due this week: Compare and Contrast Paper (Philosophy Assignment 1)

Week 9: Digital Humanities Module
- Day One: Activity 1: Reading Digital Texts; Activity 2: Comparing Digital Texts
  - For class, read Nahum Tate’s Lear in the Digital Texts
- Day Two: Activity 3: Analyzing Digital Texts; Activity 4: Annotating Digital Texts
  - For class, read anonymous Leir in the Digital Texts
- Due this week: Short Paper (Adaptation Assignment 1)

Capstone Assignment and Service Learning

Week 10: In-class Group Work
- In-class group work on Capstone Assignments:
  - Text Group—Edit a scene (Text Module, Assignment 2)
  - Performance Group—Perform a scene (Performance Module, Assignment 2)
  - Cultural Studies Group—Write a ballad (Cultural Studies Module, Assignment 1)
  - Philosophy Group—Compose a new Lear (Philosophy Module, Assignment 2)
  - Adaptation Group—Create Lear fan fiction (Adaptation, Assignment 2)

Week 11: In-class Group Work
- Continue in-class group work on Capstone Assignments
- Begin in-class group work on Service Learning Assignments:
  - Text Group—Lear and Text
  - Performance Group—Lear and Performance
  - Cultural Studies Group—Lear and Cultural Studies
  - Philosophy Group—Lear and Philosophy
  - Adaptation Group—Lear and Adaptation

Week 12: In-class Group Work
- Continue in-class group work on Capstone Assignments and Service Learning Assignments

Week 13: Service Learning Assignments
- No class—groups visit middle or high schools for Service Learning Assignments

Week 14: Conclusions
- Group presentations of Capstone Assignments and Service Learning Assignments
- Final discussion and summation of course
- Due this week: Reflective paper

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