

Fall/Winter 2018-2019

AP/EN 4146 3.0A (F)

Shakespeare and Contemporary Drama

Course Director:

Professor Hersh Zeifman
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Delivery Format:

Seminar

Time:

Thursdays: 2:30-5:30pm

Description:

The texts of Shakespeare's plays have been deliberately meddled with, in one way or another, practically from the moment they were first performed. Most of these revisions have attempted either to "improve" Shakespeare on his own ground (writing the play Shakespeare should have written if only he'd known better) or else to alter that ground by modernizing it (updating the text by translating the Shakespearean plot and characters into a modern setting and idiom). By far the most fascinating of these "versions" of Shakespeare, however, are those contemporary plays which don't merely update the original but subvert it by engaging it in a debate--producing what the German playwright Bertolt Brecht termed a "counterplay." This abrasive rubbing of one sensibility against another totally opposed to it frequently creates sparks, resulting in the kind of "re-vision" defined by Adrienne Rich as "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction...."

This seminar will examine two Shakespearean texts (*Othello* and *King Lear*) and eight contemporary "re-visions" which interrogate the originals from the various perspectives of race, gender, sexuality, class and politics.

Category:

B

Historical Requirement:

Period 1 (pre 1700)

Requirements:

Film/novel review (15%); theatre review (15%); comparative essay (40%); test (15%); class participation (including four short response papers) (15%).

Reading List:**Tentative Reading List:**

Ayad Akhtar, *Disgraced* (Dramatists Play Service [hereafter DPS]); Edward Bond, *Lear* (Dramatic Publishing); Elaine Feinstein and the Women's Theatre Group, *Lear's Daughters*, in Fischlin and Fortier, eds., *Adaptations of Shakespeare* (Routledge); Young Jean Lee, *LEAR*, in *The Shipment/LEAR* (Theatre Communications Group); Ann-Marie MacDonald, *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* (Vintage); Djanet Sears, *Harlem Duet*, in Fischlin and Fortier; William Shakespeare, *Othello, King Lear* (any reasonably scholarly single edition-- e.g., Signet, Oxford, etc.); Paula Vogel, *Desdemona: A Play about a Handkerchief*, in Fischlin and Fortier; Wendy Wasserstein, *Third* (DPS).

Open To:

Yr 4 Honours