

Shakespeare in an Unforgiving 2024

Syllabus

Instructor

Dr. Chris Jones

Quarter: Spring 2024

Start – end date: March 19 – May 21

Session day/time: Tuesday, 1:30 pm – 4:00 pm

Course Code and Section: HUAS80109, 24S1

Email

Cjones5@chicagotribune.com

Course Overview

Is it really over for William Shakespeare? Certainly, the Bard has seen better days when it comes to popularity and cultural centrality, battered as he now is by attacks on his so-called "universality" and his works being increasingly crowded out of educational curricula. This course with critic Chris Jones offers both a chance to read and explore a selection of William Shakespeare's most famous plays, including "Hamlet," "King Lear," "Othello," and "The Merchant of Venice," but to do so in the context of new writers who have either riffed on his works or undermined them. We'll read a variety of Shakespearean and contemporary works, as well as thinking about TV shows like "Succession," and we'll try and assess together Shakespeare's reputation in the here and now, and its implications for shared American values. The course will have an informal atmosphere and be dominated by informed discussion.

Modality

Remote learning

Required texts

- James iJames "Fat Ham" (Theatre Communications Group) 978-1636641850
- August Wilson "King Hedley II" (Theatre Communications Group) 978-1559362603
- Other texts will be available on Canvas as pdf files.

Books can be purchased online through the [University of Chicago Bookstore](#).

Course readings

Week	Topic	Reading Assignment
Week 1	Who was Shakespeare anyway and why should we care?	n/a

Week	Topic	Reading Assignment
Week 2	The Greek foundation for Shakespeare's centrality.	Read Part One of Aristotle's Poetics (it's short) and Book III and X (3 and 10) of Plato's Republic. An on-line text of the Poetics can be found at http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.html . An online text of the Republic can be found at http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.html . Read the Plato FIRST!
Week 3	Welcome to the Renaissance! Context and original performance conditions.	Read "The Spanish Tragedy" by Thomas Kyd.
Week 4	Was Shakespeare really the best in his class?	Read "Edward II" by Christopher Marlowe.
Week 5	Shakespeare and the G.P. O.A.T, allegedly.	Read/watch "Hamlet" and read "Fat Ham" by James iJames
Week 6	Did Shakespeare spawn American tragedy?	Read/watch "King Lear," "Macbeth" and August Wilson's "King Hedley III"
Week 7	Shakespeare: Historical Storytelling and Political History	Read/Watch Henry IV (1 and 2).
Week 8	Shakespeare and the modern history play.	Watch "The Lehman Trilogy" at the Broadway Playhouse.
Week 9	Shakespeare, controversy, and the plays that always cause trouble	Read "The Merchant of Venice," "The Taming of the Shrew" and "Othello"
Week 10	Shakespeare's reputation: A shifting target.	n/a

Accessing remote courses

Remote courses are taught through our Canvas platform. Approximately two weeks before your class begins, we will add you to your canvas site using the email address you provided at the time of registration. An invitation will then be sent to that email. Click the "Get Started" button in the email to begin the Canvas login process. For step-by-step instructions, please visit <https://grahamschool.uchicago.edu/academic-programs/online/learning-resources/liberal-arts>. Once you've created your Canvas account, you can access any Graham School canvas course for which you are registered at: <https://canvas.uchicago.edu>.

Accessibility information

Student Disability Services (SDS) works to provide resources, support and accommodations for all students with disabilities and works to remove physical and attitudinal barriers, which may prevent their full participation in the University community. Students that would like to request accommodations should contact SDS in advance of the first class session at 773.702.6000 or disabilities@uchicago.edu.

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For more information, please see [this handout for students](#) as well as the [University’s Policy on Harassment, Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct](#) and [Policy on Title IX Sexual Harassment](#). You can also reach out directly for services and support from the [Office for Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Support](#) by emailing titleix@uchicago.edu.

If you, or another student you know, wishes to speak to a confidential resource who does not have this reporting responsibility, please contact the Sexual Assault Dean on Call through the UChicago Safe App or at 773.834-HELP.

Questions? Contact Zoë Eisenman at zmel@uchicago.edu.