 Course: ENGL 175, Shakespeare

1. Date of Application: 10/28/12
2. Name, Department of Proposer: Hilda Ma, English
3. Name of department housing course: English
4. Name of chair: Carol Beran
5. How often is course taught: semesterly
6. Course prerequisites: none
7. Unit value of course: 1
8. Normal class size: 23
9. Number of sections expected to be taught in Fall 2013: 1
10. Number of sections expected to be taught in Spring 2013: 1
11. Is the course appropriate for first-year students: no
12. Relevant Learning Goals: Artistic Understanding
13. Chair will oversee submission of student work: yes
14. Chair will oversee instructor participation in norming & assessment exercises: yes

Teaching:
How the course will guide students toward achieving the learning outcomes:

1a. Look at or read works of art:
In English 175: Shakespeare, students read an assortment of Shakespeare’s dramatic works and sonnets. We read and analyze approximately one play each week and a half, selected from the genres of comedy, tragedy, history, and romance. Other typical reading assignments include a series of sonnets, and supplementary materials such as contemporaneous texts (from the English Renaissance) or critical essays on the work at hand.

1b. Analyze/ interpret form and meaning:
When studying Shakespeare’s plays, students learn to read, analyze, and discuss with special attention paid to features such as: dramatic form, rising and falling action, character development, genre-specific tropes, and stage-worthiness. Through dramatic literature and poetry, students also learn close-reading skills, which are essential to unpacking the Bard’s poetic language. For instance, they learn to look up words in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) and apply the various ways in which such words were used in early modern England. This allows them to draw well-informed interpretations of the text, and consider the fluid, evolving nature of the English language. Students also learn about extracting meaning from film adaptations and live performances of the plays they have read, critiquing these productions and analyzing them as specific interpretations offered by directors and performers. Such exercises serve to emphasize the performative contingency of Shakespeare’s work.

1c. Apply discipline-based vocabulary:
When discussing and writing about Shakespeare’s texts, students are expected to apply vocabulary and concepts specific to Shakespeare studies, such as: dramatic structure, rising and falling action, character arcs, soliloquies, monologues, the blazon, and iambic pentameter, to name a few.
In applying these terms and concepts, students develop their analyses and refine their interpretations. For example, after learning about iambic pentameter as the main metrical pattern found in Shakespeare’s work, students can distinguish the moments when Hamlet switches between speaking in verse and prose. Moreover, they learn to interpret the effects of these shifts in language as they explore questions, such as whether Hamlet descends into madness, or is merely feigning. Students may also learn about the blazon, a poetic convention found in sonnets that catalogue a woman’s features through comparisons (metaphors and similes). Many scholars today read the blazon as an objectification of women and, furthermore, a type of literary violence wherein the beloved is “dismembered” through the lines that catalogue her body parts. When applying their understanding of the blazon to say, Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*, students might see that the female character’s use of the blazon may actually be a parody and critique of this male, poetic convention.

1d. **Explore the artistic piece’s significance within appropriate contexts:**
In addition to the aesthetic context of Shakespeare’s work (see above discussion on application of terms and concepts), we also focus on reading from the point of view of culture, race, performance, and depending on the instructor, gender, history, politics, and religion. For example, we read Shakespeare’s depiction of African blackness in *Titus Andronicus* and *Othello* within the context of England’s role in expansion, colonization, and conquest. We focus on the Puritan presence in Shakespeare’s time when it is referenced in *Measure for Measure*, and the political climate under the reign of Queen Elizabeth I when we see her reflected in the Faerie Queene of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. One of the joys of teaching Shakespeare is that his work overlaps with such variety of contexts from which the instructor can choose.

**Learning**

*How coursework will be used to measure student achievement of the outcomes:*

1a. **Look at and read works of art:**
Since the course is discussion based, students are expected to demonstrate in discussion that they have read carefully and with an eye to the terms, concepts, and contexts that the course has covered so far. Instructors assign various writing assignments in order to assess students’ comprehension and to prepare them for the in-class discussions; these assignments that are collected daily or weekly may include written reflections on the reading, prepared discussion questions, or a paraphrase and analysis of a chosen passage. Other forms of assessment used by instructors include asking groups of students to act out scenes in class, assigning words from the plays for students to look up in the OED, and administering quizzes. (See the attached syllabi from myself and Barry Horwitz.)

1b. **Analyze and interpret form and meaning:**
Students are expected to address form and meaning in class discussions. Instructors also require that formal essays demonstrate a comprehension of the elements of form and meaning when they offer support to prove their argument. For example, when thinking about the form of the revenge tragedy, students might explore in their essay how an avenger seems to depart from the genre and what Shakespeare could be saying through this departure.
1c. **Apply discipline-based vocabulary:**
Discipline-based terms and concepts are to be used by students in class discussions, in their homework assignments, and formal essays since they are key to strong analysis. Instructors who administer exams in their Shakespeare courses pose questions that require students to demonstrate their understanding of the terms and concepts by applying them in an analysis of a given passage.

1d. **Explore the artistic piece’s significance within appropriate contexts:**
Daily discussions and written assignments ask students to explore the text in relation to some particular contexts; the preferred contexts (see Teaching, 1d) are often highlighted in a lecture when students begin a new play, or discovered together through the process of shared inquiry. In addition to discussion and written work, student staging of scenes allow instructors to assess the ways in which students can offer their interpretations in the context of performance. A well-written research paper for the course would draw on appropriate context(s) and contribute to the current scholarly discussion within such context(s), which students inform themselves of through the research process.

Attachments:
Barry Horwitz syllabus
Hilda Ma syllabus