

ENGL 4881 - Shakespeare and His World

Fall 2026 Syllabus, Section 01, CRN 41194,

Credit hours: 3

Instructor

Timothy Francisco

Email: tfrancisco@ysu.edu

Public Instructor Information

Instructor Title: Dr. Timothy Francisco

Instructor Professional Qualifications: PH.D English Literature, U of Alabama, MA English, Western Connecticut State, Hudson Strode and Mellon fellowships, Critical Theory, Current Trustee Shakespeare Association of America

Instructor Office Location: DeBartolo Hall 245

Instructor Office Phone: 330-941-3425

Course Description

4881. Shakespeare and His World. Study of Shakespeare's works along with an exploration of the artistic and social forces that shaped his writing.

Prereq.: ENGL 3700 with a grade of "C" or higher. 3 s.h.

Course Readings

Group	Title	Author	ISBN
Required	Shakespeare (texts in bookstore) : Sonnets and Poems, A Midsummer Night's Dream, As You Like It, Richard III, Titus Andronicus, Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, King Lear, Antony and Cleopatra.		

Shakespeare (texts in bookstore) : Sonnets and Poems, A Midsummer Night's Dream, As You Like It, Richard III, Titus Andronicus, Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, King Lear, Antony and Cleopatra.

The course readings are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances, research developments, current events, and/or to ensure better learning.

Schedule of Topics and Assignments

Week of	Reading(s)	Proposed Topic	Due/To Prepare for Class
8/24	Intro to course and discussion --share your Shax stories	Why Shakespeare? Seriously, why Shakespeare?	Google the question, filter your results and come to class with your favorite answer -- read, listen to materials and podcast
8/31	Shakespeare's England (BB) Greenblatt, Will In The Word, Chapter 1 (PDF in BB)	Placing Shakespeare, religion, technology, and political upheaval	
9/7	Shakespeare's sonnets (section in BB) Sidney Defense of Poesy (section in BB) Plato, sections from The Republic and Newstok Imitation and Invention	Imitation and Invention--Shakespeare the poet	
9/14	Narrative poem: Venus and Adonis and Ovid, Venus and Adonis,	Transformation, poesy, and the pastoral sonnet comparison	
9/21	Shakespeare's Comedy: As You Like It	Pastoral comedy, boy actors, and the city/court binary	



9/28	A Midsummer Night's Dream, revisit Sidney's neoplatonism (handout)	Folklore, fantasy, and Shakespeare's modal pastoral
10/5	Richard III, Holinshed's Chronicles	History, Tragedy, and Mythmaking
10/12	Lucrece, No Class on Thursday	Roman death and tragic metamorphoses
10/19	Titus Andronicus	Roman death and the revenge tradition
10/26	Hamlet	Revenge refined and the psychological drama
11/2	Macbeth	Placating the patron: Shakespeare, James I and Witchcraft
11/9	Much Ado About Nothing	What comedy can tell us about tragedy: Shakespeare's confirmation bias.
11/16	Othello	Tragic confirmation bias and Shakespeare's "American play" All materials in blackboard (PDFs and film link)
11/23	Toni Morrison, Desdemona, Keith Hamilton Cobb, American Moor	Re-forming the American Pplay
11/30	King Lear	Generational tragedy and the family as microcosm
12/7	Antony and Cleopatra	Tragedy and the ends of empire

The course schedule, policies, procedures, and assignments in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances, by mutual agreement, and/or to ensure better learning.