

Shakespeare and the Pips: Early Modern English Drama from Kyd to Heminges
400-level
Meets 3x week for 50 minutes

Sara B.T. Thiel

Office Hours and Location

Contact Email

This course in early modern drama examines plays by Shakespeare and his contemporaries. By reading Shakespeare's plays against those of his fellow Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights, this course aims to contextualize "the Bard" as a participant and collaborator in the theatrical marketplace rather than an exceptional genius. Students will read plays spanning from the 1580s to the beginning of the English Civil War in 1642—from Thomas Kyd to William Heminges, and many stops in between. The course is divided into three discrete units: Revenge Tragedies, Pregnancy Plays, and Cosmetic Dramas. These terms will be defined in class.

While we will perform close readings of these plays, we will also consider implications of historical performance practices along with the theatrical materials that shaped those very practices. The class will be conducted as a seminar-discussion. Evaluation will be based on participation, including a willingness to read lines out loud and block scenes in class. It is recommended (but not necessary) that you take this class already having some familiarity with Shakespeare, drama, or Renaissance literature and culture.

Course Objectives

In this class students will:

- 1.) Come to understand theatre as part of a lucrative entertainment industry
- 2.) Become familiar with early modern staging methodology or "original practices"
- 3.) Gain an awareness of the fact that the city of London, the physical spaces of the early modern playhouses, and any number of material and cultural factors—props, music, special effects, audience expectations—shaped the plays written in this period and, by extension, inform the printed play editions that we now read
- 4.) Gain an understanding of the actor's body as centrally important to early modern drama
- 5.) Develop a facility with script analysis and the reading of play-texts for their embedded stage directions

Required Texts:

Womack, Peter. *English Renaissance Drama*.

Maus, Katharine (Editor) *Four Revenge Tragedies*

Copies of the following plays (any unabridged or anthology version – please bring hard copies to class)

Ford, John. *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*.

Heminges, William. *The Fatal Contract*.

Jonson, Ben. *The Magnetic Lady*.

Middleton, *More Dissemblers Besides Women*.

Middleton. *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*.

Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*

Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*.

Further contextual and historical readings will be made available to you during the semester.

Other plays, essays, and films will be made available to you.

Grading

2-3 short papers	40%
Attendance and Participation	15%
Playwrighting/Adaptation Project	15%
Group Performance Project and Analysis	30%

Total: 100%

A=90-100%; B = 80-89%; C=70-79%; D=60-69%; F=0-59%

ASSIGNMENTS

Attendance and Participation (10%)

You are required to attend and participate in class. Please bring the assigned reading with you to every class as we will be working directly from it. Classroom discussions require alertness, constructive engagement with, and respectful attendance to your instructors and fellow students. Please do not text, check e-mail, or engage in extraneous talking during class. Evaluation evaluation will be based on participation, including a willingness to read lines out loud and block scenes in class. Students are permitted 3 unexcused absence before their grade is negatively affected.

Adaptation Project (10%)

Each student will have the opportunity to choose one of the plays discussed in class to adapt into your own 5 minute (contemporary English language) play. Your play does not have to follow the exact plot of the one you're adapting, but it should be "in the style of," so to speak. For example, for the student adapting Middleton's *Revenge's Tragedy*, you'll want to consider not just the elements of a revenge tragedy, but the way that "camp" factors into Middleton's work and how to incorporate a similar "feel" into your own work. We will read these plays aloud, having our own in-class play reading festival.

2-3 Short Papers (40%)

Over the course of the semester students will be assigned 2-3 prompts, to which they will respond in a formal 5-7 page analytical and interpretive essay. These prompts will align with class readings, lecture, and in-class discussions. More details will follow at a later date.

Group Project and Performance (25%)

Students will work together in groups to choose, analyze, and stage a scene from one of the plays read in class implementing what we have learned about early modern staging practices. Students will utilize found costumes, props, cosmetics, and prosthetics as required by the text. In addition to their performance, each student will submit a 5-7 page paper analyzing the scene through the lens of early modern original practices. Students will pay particular attention to analyzing the scene's necessary theatrical materials (i.e. cosmetics, prosthetics, props, blood, etc.) and what complications that might involve considering the given circumstances of the early modern English stage (e.g. the homogeneity of the all-male cast, universal lighting, limited company size, etc.).

Course Calendar

This calendar is subject to change due to course developments

<u>Week 1</u>	<u>In-Class</u>	<u>What's Due?</u>
M	Introduction to Course	
W	What does "Original Practices" Mean?	
F	contd.	
<u>UNIT 1: Revenge Tragedy</u>		
<u>Week 2</u>		
M	Revenge Tragedy & Early Modern Blockbusters	<i>The Spanish Tragedy</i> , Kyd
W	<i>Spanish Tragedy</i> , contd.	
F	<i>Spanish Tragedy</i> in performance: establishing meta-drama	
<u>Week 3</u>		
M	Kyd-like Revenge: Establishing Tropes	<i>Titus Andronicus</i> , Shakespeare
W	<i>Titus</i> , contd.	
F	<i>Titus</i> in performance	
<u>Week 4</u>		
M	Satire and Camp	<i>Revenger's Tragedy</i> , Middleton
W	Ghosts of Hamlet	
F	<i>The Revenge Tragedy</i> in performance	
<u>Week 5</u>		
M	One-on-one paper meetings	
W	One-on-one paper meetings	
F	One-on-one paper meetings	
<u>Week 6</u>		
M	Ford and his influences	<i>'Tis Pity She's a Whore</i> , Ford
W	<i>'Tis Pity She's a Whore</i> : Revenge Tragedy & Pregnancy Play	
F	<i>'Tis Pity</i> in performance	PAPER 1 DUE

UNIT 2: Pregnancy Plays

Week 7

M	Pregnancy on stage	<i>The Masque of Blackness</i> , Jonson
W	Pregnancy Prosthetics	Selections from <i>The Heir</i> , May and <i>The Golden Age</i> , Heywood
F	Performing Pregnancy	

Week 8

M	Staging Pregnancy: Signs and Symptoms	<i>The Magnetic Lady</i> , Jonson
W	<i>Magnetic Lady</i> , contd.	
F	<i>The Magnetic Lady</i> in performance	

Week 9

M	Pregnancy and Gender Disguise	<i>More Dissemblers Besides Women</i> , Middleton
W	<i>More Dissemblers</i> , contd.	
F	Great Bellies and Boy Actors	

Week 10

M	Playing Pregnant: Pregnancy and Sexuality	<i>The Winter's Tale</i> , Shakespeare
W	<i>The Winter's Tale</i> , contd.	
F	Whiteface and Cosmetics	

UNIT 3: Cosmetic Drama

Week 11

M	Painting Faces	<i>Second Maiden's Tragedy</i> , Middleton
W	<i>Second Maiden's Tragedy</i> , contd.	
F	<i>Second Maiden's Tragedy</i> , contd.	

Week 12

M	Blackface and Other Gender Prosthetics	<i>The Fatal Contract</i> , Hemingues
---	--	--

W	<i>The Fatal Contract</i> , contd.	
---	------------------------------------	--

F	<i>The Fatal Contract</i> in Performance: Is't possible?	
---	--	--

Week 13

M	In-Class Play Reading Festival	
---	--------------------------------	--

**PLAY
ADAPTATIONS
DUE**

W	In-Class Play Reading Festival	
---	--------------------------------	--

F	In-Class Play Reading Festival	
---	--------------------------------	--

Week 14

No Classes – Fall Break

Week 15

M	Group work & individual meetings	
---	----------------------------------	--

W	Group work & individual meetings	
---	----------------------------------	--

F	Group work & individual meetings	
---	----------------------------------	--

Week 16

M	In-Class Performances	
---	-----------------------	--

W	In-Class Performances	
---	-----------------------	--

F	In-Class Performances	
---	-----------------------	--

Finals Week

Debrief