

ENG296Y0 / Summer Abroad 2026
Topics in English Literature: Shakespeare
Professor Urvashi Chakravarty

Course Description

This course explores selected works by Shakespeare in the social and theatrical context of his time – and of our own. We will read several plays, covering some major dramatic genres (comedy, history, tragedy, romance), and we will watch several theatrical productions to explore the contexts of theatrical interpretation and adaptation and the material conditions of staging and performance. We will undertake field trips to engage and complicate our understanding of Shakespeare's time and Shakespeare's legacy, and we will explore how Shakespeare's plays both reflect early modern social and political considerations and speak to the most urgent and pressing issues of our current moment, attending to questions of gender and sexuality; race and colonialism; and the early modern global world.

Required Course Texts

Four plays by Shakespeare; the final selection will be determined by UK theatre offerings in Summer 2026 and will be confirmed as soon as programming information is finalised for these theatres (likely late January/February 2026). You will need a scholarly critical edition of each play (i.e. one with glosses, footnotes, and a strong introduction, such as the Cambridge, Oxford, or Pelican editions). If you already have Shakespeare's works in a collected edition (e.g. *The Norton Shakespeare*), please feel free to use that.

Course Requirements

Performance Reviews and Reflections (2 pages each; 2 x 15% = 30%)

You will write two performance reviews and reflections in response to the productions we visit, attending carefully and specifically to the interpretive implications of the performance decisions they undertake.

In Class Participation (20%)

Class participation is an essential component of this class and consists of having read and thought carefully about the reading for the day; coming to class prepared to make observations about your insights; and participating in discussion. Perfect attendance is expected. There will also be regular, unannounced reading quizzes which cannot be made up if you miss class.

Discussion Leadership (10%)

You will lead discussion on one occasion, alongside one of your classmates. Discussion leadership consists of selecting a series of passages from the day's readings and unpacking them for the class. You should aim to close read your passages and draw conceptual and thematic connections across the play as a whole.

In Class Essay: 20%

You will write a substantive essay in class in which you develop a strong critical argument based on careful and specific textual analysis.

Final In-Class Test: 20%

You will have a final in-class exam, consisting of shorter responses glossing a choice of textual passages and an essay based on a textual prompt.