

English 3306 HYBRID Shakespeare's Major Works; "Worlds Elsewhere" Fall 2014

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I take my subtitle from a powerful leave-taking scene in one of Shakespeare's Roman tragedies. Just after the tribunes and citizens of Rome banish Coriolanus "as enemy to the people and his country," the hero shouts back:

You common cry of curs! whose breath I hate

As reek o' the rotten fens, whose loves I prize

As the dead carcasses of unburied men

That do corrupt my air, I banish you! (3.3)

Blaming the people for his new hatred of his city, he slams the door, as it were: "thus I turn my back: **There is a world elsewhere.**" He travels to enemy territory and tragedy ensues. In other plays, sojourners, fugitives, exiles, soldiers, wedding guests, and refugees cross the globe, the English Channel, or simply traipse from court to forest, but, whatever the case, crossings-over interest critics and audiences alike. We will take as our focus these "worlds" that Shakespeare imagined and characters hope for, escape to and from, trade with, invade, and colonize. These worlds have rulers and subjects (some with bad breath, as the aristocratic Coriolanus claims above), cultures, and natural resources that may entertain or upset us. In all, Shakespeare wrote at a time when England was expanding its boundaries, and his work is part of a larger culture that was trying to make sense of these "brave new worlds," which were, in fact, only new to them.

Organized around three units that attempt to theorize the motives, methods, contexts and consequences for travel, this course includes comedies, tragedies, English history plays and a romance. The syllabus might look like this (subject to slight change):

1. worlds within worlds: *1 and 2 Henry IV*
2. "another part of the forest": *A Midsummer Night's Dream and Antony and Cleopatra* (the former also performed by the at the Houston Ballet in early September)
3. rulers and the ruled: *The Tempest and Coriolanus*

requirements: As a hybrid class, 50% the work of teaching and learning takes place online. If this mode does not appeal to you, then do not register for this section. We watch films, take exams, post to the DB, etc. via blackboard; so you need regular access to the Internet.

- 2 papers, midterm exam, tests, discussion board, final project, attendance at Houston Shakespeare Festival productions (strongly recommended) + Houston Ballet
- *The Norton Shakespeare*, Stephen Greenblatt, ed. 2nd edition = textbook

Students may earn Honors and/ or WGSS credit. Contact the professor for more information and to discuss special requirements.