

Elizabeth Williamson The Evergreen State College



Payback: Revenge Plots in Literature and Film

Course description

Revenge is everywhere in 21st-century America, most noticeably in popular films like *Kill Bill*. It also plays a subtler role, however, in our criminal justice system and in our leaders foreign policy decisions. This class encourages students to examine the variety of ways revenge plays into our culture by tracing its role as a literary device, from the bloodbaths of popular Renaissance tragedies to the more calculated revenge of Roger Chillingworth in *The Scarlet Letter*. As we move toward the present day, we will also ask ourselves whether revenge has any place in politics and whether catastrophic wrongs like slavery can be righted through retribution, or any other means. The course is structured around several short writing assignments and one long research paper. Participation in the process of revision, guided by peer reviews and by individual conferences, will be crucial to students success in the course.

Course texts

Webster, *The White Devil*
Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*
Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*
Lorca, *Blood Wedding*
Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*
Taymor, *Titus*
Coppola, *The Godfather, part 1*
Tarantino, *Kill Bill: vol. 1*