

Elizabeth Williamson The Evergreen State College



Shakespeare: living history, performing culture

Course Description

This course provides an intensive introduction to some of Shakespeare's best-known works: a representative sample of tragedies, comedies, histories and tragicomedies. In addition to considerations of form and style, we will examine the plays in terms of their cultural context and their performance history. Shakespeare is rightfully famous for adapting dramatic conventions to suit his own goals as a writer, and for taking creative liberties with his classical and European source materials. This course treats his plays both as independent works and as innovative scripts that challenged generic boundaries and reshaped the medium of the public theater itself. In this sense it represents a break from approaches to Shakespeare that focus entirely on language and character development. We will also consider modern productions and interpretations of Shakespeare as we discuss the interplay between contemporary American culture and these 400 year-old scripts. Another important aspect of this course will be the evaluation of web resources related to the study of Shakespeare and his contemporaries.

Course Texts

Richard II
Henry V
Twelfth Night
Titus Andronicus
Measure for Measure
Much Ado About Nothing
The Winter's Tale
Othello
King Lear
Romeo and Juliet