

# Shakespeare & The Invention of the Human

## Course Syllabus

HONORS 201 | MWF 12-12:50pm | SPRING 2020 | COOK 137  
Instructor: Dr. Brian Carroll, Department of Communication

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“They have been at a great feast of learning, and stolen the scraps.”  
--Love’s Labour’s Lost

## Course Description

This course looks to Shakespeare and his vivid characters to explain us as humans, because no one has come closer to capturing human nature in its widest variety as has the Bard. When Shakespeare began to write, there was little systematic study of the human mind and emotions. Shakespeare can be considered to have created the human if we credit the playwright with pioneering the psychological fields in literature and for so utterly altering human consciousness that, after him, the world was a different place and we were different creatures. Of special interest are Shakespeare’s explorations of existence and being (Hamlet), life and personality (Falstaff), love and loss (Romeo & Juliet), family and death (King Lear), and legacy (The Tempest).



## Student Learning Outcomes

Students participating in this learning community will:

- develop and hone critical thinking and analytical skills, and they will demonstrate the ability to summarize, evaluate, and integrate ideas they encounter in the readings and in discussion;
- demonstrate an understanding of thematic, character, and plot elements within the plays;
- acquire a degree of understanding of the ways in which artistic creations add to the human experience and the understanding of the human experience (and, if we are really good, what it means to be human);
- become better writers (and, therefore, better thinkers, for writing *is* thinking), and in all phases of the writing project, from ideation to outlining to drafting to revision and incorporating feedback;

- develop a more expansive imaginative capacity that can be brought to bear on complex problems by allowing those problems to be seen in different contexts, enabling the consideration of potential consequences and contingencies, and, therefore, choosing well.

In short, it is the instructor's goal that as a result of this course experience, students will be better able to think well, to write well, and to choose well.

Assessment of progress toward these learning outcomes will occur in the conversation that is discussing, responding, writing, submitting, receiving feedback, revising, and further discussing the themes and questions of the course. In empirical or numeric terms, this assessment will become manifest in the grading of submitted work by applying the rubrics appended to this syllabus. The minimum threshold or standard for all submitted work for the course is 70%.

### **Some organizing questions**

The aptly named Richard Scholar said of Shakespeare's stage that it is "no lecture hall in which the playwright transmits his opinions through the voices of actors; it is, rather, a controlled environment in which he experiments with the stuff of human lives." It is this "stuff" that we will be interested in. Thus, some of our organizing questions will be:

- What does it mean to be human? Can one choose one's own being? One's own fate? How can one create his or her life? To what end(s)? Why?
- What is a good life? What makes a life "good" (or not good)?
- What is or should be the "meaning" of our lives?
- What is love? What is it NOT? What is goodness? What is evil?
- What is the role of drama, fiction, literature, and the arts in seeking, making, determining a good life? Are there truths only fiction can tell?
- What is "nation"? What are other ways of organizing as a people?
- Can we think beyond the limits of the regime or government under which we live, as Shakespeare was able to do?
- Can we imagine a world beyond the horizons of our own historical moment, as Shakespeare was able to do?
- Can we use Shakespeare's arts to reflect and comment on life, humanity, and the good life for our improvement?

### **Stuff you need to know**

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Office phone: 706.368.6944

Email: bc@berry.edu | Twitter: @tarheelblue  
Course calendar: <http://cubanxgiants.berry.edu/shakes>  
Blog: [wanderingrocks.wordpress.com](http://wanderingrocks.wordpress.com)  
Office hours: MWF 1-4 pm; Tue 2-4 pm | or stop in any time

### **What you need (required)**

- *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, in any form. They are available online for free here: <http://shakespeare.mit.edu>.
- A real, physical notebook.
- Access to a stable internet connection capable of streaming video.
- Access to a webcam with microphone.
- Internet browser able to access websites with HTML5 videos.

>>If you cannot meet these requirements, contact IT through email ([computing@berry.edu](mailto:computing@berry.edu)) and the instructor to determine potential solutions.

### **What you may want (not required, but recommended)**

- Harold Bloom's *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, available in all book forms and as a PDF here: [https://www.district205.net/cms/lib/IL01001003/Centricity/Domain/118/ku.pdf.net\\_shakespeare-the-invention-of-the-human-harold-bloompdf.pdf](https://www.district205.net/cms/lib/IL01001003/Centricity/Domain/118/ku.pdf.net_shakespeare-the-invention-of-the-human-harold-bloompdf.pdf)

### **Class format**

We will rely on each other, especially in discussion, and there will be a lot of discussion. So, come to class with an attitude, mindset and disposition to discuss, debate, participate, and interact. In other words, lean in to the course, not back. Do NOT come to class in passive mode, as a lurker or mere observer. This course is a verb. The basic format: Read (or view or both), discuss, write, repeat. We will spend Mondays introducing the week's themes, questions, and play(s). On Wednesdays and Fridays, we typically will discuss the questions. We will also use Fridays to discuss our assignments, projects, and activities.

### **Covid/technology caveats**

We will attempt to meet face-to-face as much or as often as we possibly and safely can. The classroom is outfitted with a webcam, so authorized remote attendance will be possible, if authorized. Authorization can come either from the instructor, provost, dean of students, or Academic Success Center. Non-authorized remote "attendance" will not count as attendance; you will be recorded as having been absent. Attendance will be recorded and archived on

Canvas, which is the primary learning platform for the course. The course is over-filled, so, depending on distancing requirements, it is possible that the group will be divided into two sections, with each section alternating between in-class attendance and remote attendance via Zoom.

Data show that wearing a mask in public can help prevent the spread of Covid. In accordance with Georgia Department of Public Health regulations and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Berry College has determined that everyone will be required to wear a face covering in college buildings, including classrooms. You **MUST** wear a face covering appropriately (i.e., covering both your mouth and nose) in the building if you are attending class in person.

Students should be mindful of the distancing guidelines for this course and be sure they are situated in a seat that is designated to ensure that distance. Anyone attending class in person without a face covering will be asked either to put one on or leave. Students who refuse to wear face coverings appropriately or adhere to other stated requirements may face disciplinary action for Viking Code Conduct violations. Students who believe they cannot wear a face covering for health reasons should consult with Accessibility Resources regarding possible accommodations. Students who are experiencing Covid-related symptoms should not attend class in person.

### **Dr. Carroll's Course Policies**

- Attendance: Be here every class day on time, just as you would for a job, surgery, or even a haircut. Everyone gets one unexcused absence or late arrival, maybe two, with no questions asked. Stuff happens. After that, unexcused and/or unexplained absences (and/or lateness) will result in point deductions from the "professionalism and participation" portion of your grade – one point per instance. What is excused is at the instructor's discretion, so you are best served by discussing situations and extraordinary circumstances prior to their occurrence whenever possible. Chronic tardiness and/or absenteeism will result in whole letter grade deductions for the course, with "chronic" defined as five or more (lates and/or absences). If a student misses six or more class and/or lab sessions, that student might be administratively dropped from the course.
- Professionalism in the classroom: The instructor needs your attention and your respect, as do your peers. And this instructor is easily distracted. This means zero unauthorized device use, including Apple watches for texts. Put your phones away, and make sure they are silent. Do homework for other classes somewhere else. If your phone goes off on class, or if you are seen texting or reading texts, etc., you will be treated as absent, with appropriate point deductions. This is about respect.

- Academic integrity: Because academic integrity is the foundation of college life at Berry, academic dishonesty will result in automatic failure on the assignment in question and possibly the course. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following: cheating, unauthorized collaboration, plagiarism, fabrication, submitting the same work in multiple courses, and aiding and abetting anyone else in these activities.

### **How your course grade will be computed**

Proof of preparation (reading quizzes, writing responses, and the like)	35%
Final project (think piece, script, videography -- other ideas welcome)	40%
Professionalism & citizenship, participation, attendance	<u>25%</u>
	100%

To compute your final grade, add up your point totals, apply the appropriate percentages, then refer to the Berry College Communication Department suggested grading system, summarized here:

A = 93-100	A-= 90-92	B+=88-89	B=83-87
B- = 80-82	C+= 78-79	C=73-77	C-=70-72
D= 60-69	F=59 and below		

Definitions of the grades can be found in the Berry College Catalog. “A” students will demonstrate an outstanding mastery of course material and will perform far above that required for credit in the course and far above that usually seen in the course. The “A” grade should be awarded sparingly and should identify student performance that is relatively unusual in the course and that demonstrates mastery.

A theory about human nature with respect to grades: Most human beings turn out average work most of the time. Many can do superior work. Of that “many,” most can and sometimes do excellent work. The factors involved are obvious: native intellect, gifts from the Creator, interest, desire to succeed, desire to learn, discipline, and sheer hard work. The first two are beyond anyone’s control. The others, however, are entirely within our control.

### **Assignments**

A. Proof of preparation: The vast majority of these assignments will involve writing. Components to grades, therefore, include demonstrated engagement with the reading or viewing (or both), creativity, quality of insights and questions, and writing quality. Writing counts a lot, so spend time revising and editing, and consider taking your work to the

Writing Center. First drafts are just that – a first attempt to get something on paper.

- B. Final or cumulative project: We will discuss the possibilities for this in class, but the instructor will take a liberal view on this. Whether the project is a traditional paper, a short film, a script for a play, or some other creative expression, the goal will be to demonstrate fulfillment of the course SLOs. Each student's final project must be approved or authorized by the instructor before beginning the work.
- C. Note that professionalism is a significant portion of your grade. On-time attendance, active participation, demonstrated preparation and overall professionalism are aspects of this. Please see the policies section for details on how points are won and lost.

Late submissions: Get the assigned work in on time. Missing a deadline means losing points. Quizzes cannot be made up. Allowances for medical situations require documentation. If your work is going to be late, let the professor know or risk that work not being accepted and, therefore, receiving zero points for the assignment.

### **Academic Success Resources**

The Academic Success Center provides free peer tutoring and individual academic consultations to all Berry College students in both in The Commons (located on the first floor of Memorial Library) and online. ASC Sessions (drop in question-and-answer sessions with our student staff) are available. The schedule is posted on the ASC website: [berry.edu/asc](http://berry.edu/asc). Individual academic consultations are an opportunity for students to meet one-on-one with an Academic Consultant to work on study skills and strategies. The goal of these meetings is to help students study smarter, not harder. Students can sign up for an individual academic consultation at the same URL. Questions about these resources can be directed to Kinsey Farmer, coordinator for peer-to-peer programs, [kgfarmer@berry.edu](mailto:kgfarmer@berry.edu).

### **Students with special needs**

The Academic Success Center provides accessibility resources, including academic accommodations, to students with diagnosed differences and/or disabilities. If you need accommodations for this or other classes, please visit [berry.edu/asc](http://berry.edu/asc) for information and instructions. You may also visit the ASC offices in Evans Hall 106 or reach out at 706-233-4080.

### **And a final note from the instructor**

This is a one-time, one-off course, so it is very much a work-in-progress. Unlike the instructor's other courses, not every aspect of this one is clean and

shiny and bolted to the floor. We will rely on each other to make the course work. Having said this, the course does grow out of a lifelong love affair with Shakespeare, so trust the big picture, the overall plan, the project, and the experience. To put it another way, we are setting off on a journey, and the ship captain knows where we are going and basically how we are going to get there, but we will be using a compass and the sun, not a GPS. We won't always know exactly where we are. So, we all row.

If we meaningfully, thoughtfully work together as partners in this, the guarantee is that this course will be one of only the handful of courses you will remember and continue to have a conversation with for the rest of your life. If, on the other hand, you are mainly interested in or pre-occupied with your grade, or polishing your resume for medical school, or something other than engaging with the organizing questions of the course, please drop it from your schedule. No hard feelings. Similarly, if you believe that as a writer you are an expert, already the writer you wish to be, please drop. This learning community will comprise writers who believe they can become yet better, and who are willing to do the work to do it.

Also implied in a course journey like this one is the necessity of an open mind. As an honors course in the liberal arts, it is transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary. We engage with the fields and disciplines of philosophy, literature and poetry, politics, history, drama, rhetoric, and even law. We will think about race, gender, class, and culture. We will ask questions in all sorts of modes - theologically, romantically, spiritually, hedonistically, politically. It's so crazy it just might work! The Bard abides!

**“O this learning, what a thing it is!”**  
**--*The Taming of the Shrew***

## Course Calendar

The calendar is an educated guess. Changes will be announced in class, via email, and via Canvas, but keeping up with these changes is ultimately the student's responsibility.

	TOPICS	READINGS/VIEWINGS
Week 1	Introduction and setting up the themes	Czishkivili Hamlet (excerpts)
Week 2	Hamlet: What is the meaning of life?	James Baldwin
Week 3	Hamlet: What is the meaning of death?	
Week 4	Juliet: What is love? Romeo & Juliet	Romeo & Juliet (excerpts)
Week 5	Rosalind: What is the value of education? As You Like It	Plato & Booth As You Like It (excerpts)
Week 6	Falstaff: What does it mean to be alive? Henry IV, parts I & II	Dr. Carroll's article on Henry IV Henry IV, parts I & II (excerpts)
Week 7	Shylock: What is the (proper) role of law? Religion? Merchant of Venice	Merchant of Venice (excerpts) What is the law?
Week 8	Iago: What is evil? Othello	Othello (excerpts)
Week 9	MacBeth: What if there is nothing else? Nihilism	MacBeth (excerpts)
Week 10	Cleopatra: What is woman? Anthony & Cleopatra	Anthony & Cleopatra (excerpts)
Week 11	Malvolio & Feste: What is wisdom? Twelfth Night	Twelfth Night (excerpts)
Week 12	Henry V: What is nation?	Dr. Carroll's articles on nationalism and Henry V Henry V (excerpts)
Week 13	King Lear? What is a good life? What makes it good?	King Lear (excerpts)
Week 14	The faeries and sprites of Midsummer: What is art? What is its value? Midsummer Night's Dream	Henry V chorus A Winter's Tale dialogue Midsummer excerpts
	The wheel of all our lives	



## Rubrics

What follow are the grading rubrics the instructor will use to evaluate your submitted work. They are provided here to help you plan your work.

### Proof of preparation assignments

W*A*R: What's it good for?	Shakespearean (A)	Marlovian (B)	Community theater (C)	Woe (D)
<b>Writing: The ingredients</b> Spelling, grammar, syntax, punctuation, clarity, precision 30 points				
<b>Analysis: The cooking</b> Engagement with course themes and questions, synthesis, interpretation, intellectual firepower 40 points				
<b>Result: The finished dish</b> Just how satisfying is it, overall? How "finished" is it? Does it lead us to better questions? 30 points				

## Final projects

	Woke (A)	Pretty good (B)	Sufficient (C)	Doh! (D)	Shade (F)
<b>Sources</b> Quality, quantity, diversity, adequate citation					
<b>Organization</b> Architecture and flow					
<b>Writing</b> Spelling, syntax, grammar, punctuation, word choice, clarity, precision					
<b>Thinking (most important)</b> Analysis, synthesis and interpretation, creativity & originality					