Class Meeting: Wednesday, 2-4.30pm

Professor: Rebecca Lemon, English Department, THH 429
Email: rlemon@usc.edu; phone: 213.740.3732
Office Hours: Wednesday 1-2pm, Friday 9.30-11am, or by appointment

Course Description

The triumph! again, put money after the effect has been fully produced.--The last Speech, the motive-hunting of motiveless Malignity--how awful! In itself fiendish--while yet he was allowed to bear the divine image, too fiendish for his own steady View.--A being next to Devil--only not quite Devil--& this Shakespeare has attempted--executed--without disgust, without Scandal! (Samuel Taylor Coleridge, note in his copy of Shakespeare as he prepares his 1818-19 lectures. In Lectures 1808-1819 On Literature 2: 315)

Why do we enjoy tragedy? What are the ethical implications of watching a tragedy unfold from the comfort of a cinema or theatre seat? Are we cold-hearted in paying to see tragic events onstage or onscreen? Or, alternately, are we ostrich-like when we ignore tragedy in favor of sitcoms and rom-coms? This class takes up questions posed by the art of tragedy. We do so by reading classic theories of tragedy by Aristotle, Freud, and Nietzsche; and by encountering Shakespearean tragedy in its various forms. In addition to studying Shakespeare’s four great tragedies (Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth and King Lear) we will also read plays – such as Measure for Measure and The Winter’s Tale – that follow a tragic trajectory, only to take a radical and arguably problematic turn in the end.

Course Requirements

- A short, written response (1 pg) to TWO events – the event might be an EMSI lecture, a departmental lecture, a Visions and Voices event, a dramatic performance (esp. Shakespeare) or whatever else takes your fancy. You are free to choose the two events you would like to attend –options include EMSI (including the Renaissance Literature seminar, the British History seminar, and the Distinguished Lecture series) see (http://dornsife.usc.edu/emsi); The Center for Law, History and Culture (http://law.usc.edu/centers/clhc/home.htm), Visions and Voices (http://www.usc.edu/dept/pubrel/visionsandvoices). You might also consider attending a Shakespeare performance. You MUST hand in one of your written responses by week 8. The second response is due by the last day of class.
- Presentation/leading class discussion. Please select one week (any week, from 2-14, is fair game) when you would like to lead discussion for the first hour of class. Here, you might choose to offer discussion questions, circulated ahead of time; or you might like to draw out some of the themes in the text(s) to help provoke discussion – you can approach the presentation-class discussion however you like, but this is not meant to be a formal presentation, but instead a proper discussion which helps spark comments from everyone.
- An article-length final paper (20 pages).
  - An abstract and working bibliography due week 10.
• Draft due week 12.
• Final paper due week 15.
• OR two short papers (10-12 pages), due week 11 and week 15.

Grading Breakdown

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Presentation; and participation, including thoughtful contributions to class discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Responses to events</td>
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<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Abstract/working biblio of final paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Draft of final paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Final paper</td>
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[OR if you are writing two papers, the first paper counts for 30%, the second for 40%]

Late papers will be docked 1/3 a grade for each day, beyond the due date and time. You are responsible for getting the paper to me in a form I can read.

Seminar Schedule, Fall 2014

Introductory frame: Tragedy’s origins, theory and practice

Week 1:
Wed Jan 14 Aristotle, Poetics

Week 2:
Wed Jan 22 Sophocles, Oedipus Rex
Sigmund Freud, Interpretation of Dreams, tr. A.A. Brill (1911), pp. 220-225. (HO)

Week 3:
Wed Jan 28 Euripides, Bacchae
Nietzsche, Birth of Tragedy

Shakespearean tragedy: pleasures and horrors

Week 4:
Wed Feb 4 Hamlet and theories of tragedy
Aristotle, Poetics
Nietzsche, Birth of Tragedy, selections on Hamlet

Week 5:
Wed Feb 11 Hamlet and the pleasures of recognition

Week 6:  
Wed Feb 18  Richard III and the pleasures of morality  

Week 7:  
Wed Feb 25  Macbeth and the pleasure of the plot  

Week 8:  
Wed Mar 4  Romeo and Juliet and the pleasure of the text  

Week 9:  
Wed Mar 11  Othello and motiveless malignancy  

SPRING BREAK

Week 10:  
Wed Mar 25  GUEST SPEAKER

Week 11:  
Wed Apr 1  Winter’s Tale and the tragedy of redemption

Week 12:  
Wed Apr 8  King Lear and the horror of tragedy

Week 13:
Wed Apr 15  Merchant of Venice and the tragedy of comedy


David Hillman, “Freud’s Shylock,” American Imago 70.1: 1-50. [HO]


Week 14:
Wed Apr 22  Writing Day, individual meetings

Week 15:
Wed Apr 29  Measure for Measure and the tragedy of law

Required Reading

The articles listed above will be available via dropbox. I will send you a link to our class folder so you can download the materials.

I have ordered copies of these books into the bookstore at USC. You are also welcome to purchase the books online. Please use the editions (or at least the translations) of the classical materials listed here. I selected the Shakespeare texts for convenience sake (with the exception of the Merchant of Venice in the Arden edition, which is a spurge) – you are welcome to purchase any edition of all of these plays, such as the Folger, Signet, Bedford, etc. The advantage of having the precise course texts is that our line numbers will correspond; this will be especially true in the case of Hamlet, and King Lear as editions can really vary as there are multiple versions of the plays.


ISBN-10: 0226768686  

ISBN-10: 0140433392  

ISBN-10: 0393931404  

ISBN-10: 1903436818  

William Shakespeare. *Measure for Measure* (Folger Shakespeare Library) 2005  
ISBN-10: 0743484908  

William Shakespeare. *The Winter’s Tale* (Folger Shakespeare Library) 2005  
ISBN-10: 0743484894  

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**University Policies**

**Statement for Students with Disabilities**
Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Wedday through Friday. Website and contact information for DSP: http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html, (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

**Statement on Academic Integrity**
USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. SCampus, the Student Guidebook, (www.usc.edu/scampus or http://scampus.usc.edu) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

**Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis**
In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will
announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.

**Student Behavior** that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students’ ability to learn and an instructor’s ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action. These strictures may extend to behaviors outside the classroom that are related to the course.