

Course Objectives/Course Outline
Spokane Community College

Course Title: Introduction to Shakespeare
Prefix and Course Number: ENGL& 220

Course Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, a student should be able to:

- Develop and employ appropriate strategies for understanding Shakespeare's language, including the identification of blank verse and other relevant poetic forms
- Identify relevant formal and thematic patterns in Shakespeare's poetry and prose
- Identify dramatic conventions that obtained in Elizabethan theatre, including details of theatre architecture and theatrical practice
- Articulate significant details of the Elizabethan era, including the political, social, and artistic milieu in which Shakespeare wrote, as well as cultural contexts to which his writings respond
- Identify both universal and historically contingent aspects of Shakespeare's writings; articulate connections between Shakespeare's world and ours
- Articulate original critical positions and interpretations of Shakespeare's poetry and prose
- Locate, and demonstrate an understanding of, relevant critical or scholarly findings about works by Shakespeare

Course Outline:

(Note: Authors and titles are meant to be illustrative, not exhaustive.)

I. Reading Shakespeare

- A. Historical Context: Early Modern/Elizabethan English
- B. Social and Political Context(s)
- C. Close Reading: Accessing Shakespeare's Language

II. Shakespeare's Sonnets

- A. Organization
- B. Form
- C. Themes
- D. Personae

III. Elizabethan Drama

- A. The Stage/Theater
- B. The Structure of the Play
- C. The Actors

IV. Genres of Shakespeare's Plays

- A. Histories

(Possible Reading Selections: Richard II, Richard III, Henry IV, Henry V, Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra)

B. Comedies

(Possible Reading Selections: Twelfth Night; A Midsummer Night's Dream; The Merchant of Venice, The Taming of the Shrew)

C. Tragedies

(Possible Reading Selections: Hamlet; King Lear; Coriolanus; Macbeth; Othello)

V. Shakespearean Scholarship

A. Aesthetic Appraisal

B. Textual Issues

C. Issues of Authorship

1. Who was Shakespeare? Does it matter?

2. How do Shakespeare studies reflect and challenge contemporary theories of authorship?

D. Issues of History and Interpretation

1. The New Critics and Universal Values

2. The New Historicists and Cultural Contingency