

# ENGL 484: Shakespeare's Language

## Course Information

400-level Special Topics courses are advanced undergraduate courses, designed as seminars rather than lectures. When the course is offered on campus, class discussion is central (and all members of the class, including the instructor, sit together at a seminar table). This online version of the course, adapted to the realities of remote teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic, will necessarily shift toward self-directed study. However, some discussion elements will be retained through discussion forums on our LEARN site. In other words, this version of the course is something of an experiment (and an imperfect one at that) but I hope we can make the most of it, even given current constraints.

## Calendar Description

A special study of a selected topic, author, genre, or period in Medieval to Romantic literatures.

## Detailed Description

In her landmark work *Shakespeare From the Margins* (1996), Patricia Parker observes that while popular and scholarly interest in Shakespeare endures, the details of his language – context, history, artistry – are subject to a curious critical ennui. Shakespeare's language, Parker argues, is victim to a sense of "inconsequentiality... not only by the influence of neoclassicism but by continuing critical assumptions about the transparency (or unimportance) of the language of the plays" (13). In the decades following Parker's assertion, the concerns that she raises have begun to be redressed. Recent years have featured a renewed interest in formal, stylistic, and linguistic approaches Shakespeare. This course builds on recent innovative work, and borrows tools from the fields of discourse analysis and linguistics, while also drawing on Renaissance ideas about language – the rich rhetorical context of the culture in which Shakespeare came of age – to explore what a new engagement with the complex language of Shakespeare's plays and poetry might look like.

## Learning Objectives

- To foster a critical appreciation of selected plays by a foundational English writer and to provide some specific vocabulary and tools for close analysis of these texts

- To develop reading practices which situate Shakespeare's texts and their reception within various social, political, and cultural contexts in which they were produced and in which they are performed and read
- To practice thinking, speaking, and writing critically about language, literature, and critical theory

## Announcements

I will use the **Announcements** widget on the Course Home page during the term to communicate new or changing information regarding due dates, readings, etc., as needed. You are expected to read the announcements on a regular basis.

To ensure you are viewing the complete list of announcements, you may need to click Show All Announcements.

## Discussion Forums

We will use the **General Discussion** and **Weekly Reflections** forums for class-wide discussions and **Ask the Instructor** for questions that may benefit the whole class. Also, check this forum to see if your question has already been answered before reaching out to your instructor.

Say hello to the class by posting in the **Introduce Yourself** discussion forum. Discussions can be accessed from the Course Home page by clicking Connect and then Discussions on the course navigation bar.

## Contact Information

**Post your course-related questions** to the **Ask the Instructor** discussion topic. This allows other students to benefit from your question as well.

**Questions of a personal nature** can be directed to your instructor.

**Instructor:** Alysia Kolentsis (amkolentsis@uwaterloo.ca)

I will check email and the **Ask the Instructor** discussion topic frequently and will make every effort to reply to your questions within 24 hours, Monday to Friday. When emailing me, please indicate the course code in the subject line.

## Weekly Schedule

You are expected to have the week's readings completed by Monday (reflections are due by 11:55PM each Monday). Lessons will be posted each week on Tuesday morning (on LEARN under **Content**).

Lessons will typically look like this:

- A short video introduction summarizing the week's topic/theme
- Notes (and/or slides) to be read after watching the video
- Please be sure to watch the video and read the notes each week to ensure that you are getting the complete lesson
- If you have questions or thoughts about the week's lessons, you may post them on **Ask the Instructor** (for specific questions or clarifications) or on **General Discussion** (for more general questions or observations that you'd like to share with the class).

I am also happy to meet with you individually by Zoom or Google meet. Please email me to arrange this.

## Grade Breakdown

Weekly reflections	$(2\% \times 8) = 16\%$	Mondays 11:55pm
Weekly responses to classmates' reflections	$(0.5\% \times 8) = 4\%$	Thursdays 11:55pm
Short essay	20%	Feb 7
Final essay proposal	10%	March 21
Write-at-home exam	20%	April 1
Final essay	30%	April 11

### Weekly reflections (2% x 8 responses)

Due: **11:55pm on Mondays**, Weeks 2-11 (Discussion forum on LEARN)

On LEARN, submit reflections/responses/questions regarding our readings for the week. Please don't think of these reflections/responses/questions simply as summaries of the readings; instead, treat them as forums for further queries or quibbles. The most effective reflections/responses/questions are those that identify areas for further

thought and discussion – and don't be afraid to raise problems or areas of disagreement! There is no required word count, but detailed and effective reflections/responses/questions are typically at least 250 words.

Because this assignment is for the benefit not just of your own personal learning but for the learning of our class as a group, it is evaluated based on timely completion, so late submissions will not be accepted (at least not without appropriate documentation).

You get two “freebie” weeks when you need not submit reflections. In other words, by Week 11, you should have submitted a total of 8 reflections.

## **Weekly responses to classmates' reflections (0.5% x 8 responses)**

Due: **11:55pm on Thursdays**, Weeks 2-11 (Discussion forum on LEARN)

On LEARN, submit a response to one of your classmates' posts for the week. An effective response will go beyond a simple reaction (e.g. “Great idea! I hadn't thought of that”) to explore and explain what you found interesting or illuminating. You may also build on ideas raised by your classmates, gently challenge their perspective, or offer a complementary or alternative reading.

The goal of these responses is to create a sense of discussion that is vital to a fourth-year seminar course (it's an imperfect medium, but we have to work with what we've got during these pandemic times!)

Like the weekly reflections, these responses are evaluated based on timely completion, so late submissions will not be accepted (at least not without appropriate documentation).

You get two “freebie” weeks when you need not submit responses. In other words, by Week 11, you should have submitted a total of 8 responses.

## **Short essay**

Length: 1,200 -1,500 words

Due: **Monday February 7 11:55 PM** (Dropbox on LEARN)

The short essay should take one of the following formats:

Option #1: Close reading of an excerpt from any work by Shakespeare, focusing on the effects of language. You should incorporate one or two secondary sources (or approaches/methods). The critical readings on our syllabus may be used as secondary sources.

Option #2: Critical review of an approach to Shakespeare's language. The essay will take as its focus one approach to Shakespeare's language as developed in a critical reading (one on our syllabus, or from another academic source). The paper will describe the approach, and offer a review of its benefits and drawbacks in its potential to illuminate Shakespeare's language.

## Proposal for final essay

Length: 200-300 words

Due: **Monday March 21 11:55 PM** (Dropbox on LEARN)

The essay proposal should reflect careful planning and thought. It will outline your provisional thesis, methodological approach, main points, and potential secondary sources.

## Final essay

Length: 2,500- 3,000 words

Due: **Monday April 11 11:55 PM** (Dropbox on LEARN)

The term essay will explore a topic provided by the instructor, or one agreed upon through consultation with the instructor. Feedback and assistance is available at several stages of the planning and writing process. Essay details will be made available on LEARN in October. Please use MLA documentation style (details about MLA formatting will be available on LEARN).

Late essays will be penalized 2% per day late (including weekends). In case of extenuating circumstances, students must notify the instructor in advance of the due date, and provide official documentation.

## Write-at-home exam

Due: **Friday April 1 11:55 PM** (Dropbox on LEARN)

This will be an open-book, essay-style exam. Detailed information about the exam will

be provided in March. Extensions cannot be granted on the exam, and late submissions will not be accepted.

## Required Texts

We will be studying the following plays:

*As You Like It; Coriolanus; Love's Labour's Lost; The Winter's Tale*

Any good edition of the play (i.e. one with a comprehensive introduction and footnotes) is acceptable. Please use a hard copy of the play (i.e. not an online source).

**For textbook ordering information, please contact the W Store | Course Materials + Supplies.**

## Course Reserves

Other weekly readings can be found in **Course Reserves**.

Course Reserves can be accessed using the **Library Resources** widget on the **Course Home** page.

**NB:** consult the Course Schedule carefully to ensure that you are reading the correct text from Course Reserves. There are extra language-related readings on reserve that are not required, but that may be helpful as you write your final essay.

## About me

I'm an Associate Professor of English, and I've been teaching at St. Jerome's University and the University of Waterloo for seven years. Shakespeare is my area of interest, and Shakespeare's language is my area of particular interest, so I truly love teaching this course! My recent publications include a book called [Shakespeare's Common Language](#), and a volume of essays (edited with my UW colleague Ken Graham) called [Shakespeare On Stage and Off](#).

More information about my research interests can be found [here](#).

## Territorial Acknowledgement

The University of Waterloo is situated on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (Neutral), Anishinaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples. It sits on the Haldimand Tract,

land promised to the Six Nations, that includes ten kilometres on each side of the Grand River.

## University Policies

**Academic integrity:** In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. [Check the [Office of Academic Integrity](#) for more information.]

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read [Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances](#), Section 4. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department's administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. [Check the [Office of Academic Integrity](#) for more information.] A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the St. Jerome's University associate dean. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to [Policy 71, Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties, check [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

**Appeals:** A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or Policy 71, Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72, Student Appeals.

**Note for students with disabilities:** [AccessAbility Services](#), located in Needles Hall, Room 1401, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term.

## Mental Health Support

All of us need a support system. We encourage you to seek out mental health supports when they are needed. Please reach out to [Campus Wellness and Counselling Services](#).

We understand that these circumstances can be troubling, and you may need to speak with someone for emotional support. [Good2Talk](#) is a post-secondary student helpline based in Ontario that is available to all students.