COURSE DESCRIPTION

English 403 is an upper level course that is designed to expose students to close critical study of Shakespeare as dramatist. Selected plays are studied critically, analyzed and interpreted. The course also necessarily examines Shakespeare’s life and times, places him in the context of sixteenth century drama and theater, and shows his exploitation of the resources of early Modern English. Samples of the range of critical approaches to the interpretation of the plays will be reviewed as well as Shakespeare’s continued relevance today.

COURSE RATIONALE

English 403 is an introduction to Shakespeare which attempts to give students a good understanding of the dramatist and instruct them on how to approach his plays. An awareness of the reasons for Shakespeare’s enduring stature and relevance would be promoted in this course. Students will be sensitized to the possibilities of levels of interpretations in the study of Shakespeare at different stages in the educational system. Students will be made aware of the need to read and understand, interpret, and analyze the plays in the Elizabethan and Jacobean social and historical context.

COURSE COMPETENCIES

The desired competencies of this course include developing:

1. Some knowledge and understanding of Shakespeare’s life, times, career, and his extension of the possibilities of English dramatic/poetic diction.

2. An understanding of Shakespeare’s growth and development as a dramatist as reflected in the plays in the early phase of his career when compared with his middle and late plays.

3. A knowledge, understanding, and interpretation of Shakespeare’s romantic comedies.

4. An understanding of Shakespeare’s achievement in the history plays, the tragedies and last plays, their interpretation, and analysis.

5. An exposure to samples of recent critical approaches in the interpretation of Shakespeare’s plays.
EXPECTED MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

During the course and on its completion, the student should be able to:

1. Acquire a knowledge of the salient points of Shakespeare’s early life and career in relation to his times and his development as an actor and dramatist.

2. Understand and recognize those features of the plays of his early phase which show Shakespeare shaping new dramatic forms in comedy, the history play and tragedy.

3. Interpret, analyze, and talk/write intelligently about selected comedies, tragedies, history plays, and last plays with respect to themes, characters, and dramatic structure.

4. Show some awareness of his creative use of early modern English to shape the language of his plays.

5. Demonstrate an acquaintance with one recent critical approach to Shakespeare, e.g., feminist criticism, psychoanalytical approaches, etc.

OUTLINE OF COURSE CONTENT

1. Life and times of Shakespeare. Sixteenth century drama and theater.

2. The Early Shakespeare. Richard II, Romeo and Juliet.


4. The History Plays. Richard II. (time permitting)

5. The Tragedies. Julius Caesar, Othello, Mabeth.

6. The Last Plays. The Tempest or The Winter’s Tale.

LIBRARY ASSIGNMENT AND SPECIAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A Research Paper or Long Papers
Reading Shakespeare’s Plays
Reading Shakespeare Criticism
METHOD OF EVALUATION

Research Paper/Long Paper........................................ 20%
Analysis and Interpretation Papers................................. 25%
Class Participation....................................................... 5%
Tests........................................................................ 15%
Mid-Term Exam............................................................. 15%
Final Exam................................................................. 20%

100%

GRADING SCALE

A     90-100   B    80-89   C   70-79   D   60-69
F     59-0

BIBLIOGRAPHY

An extensive bibliography is in the textbook from pp. 2021 to 2034, and additional references will be provided by the professor.