

## Course description

## Descriptif du cours

**Department : Department of English**

**Instructor (s): Dorra Touzri**

**Academic year: 2020-2021**

**Level: Master 2**

**Course title: Elizabethan Drama: *Macbeth***

**Course outline:** This course is centered on the close reading of *Macbeth*, a major Shakespearean tragedy. Though the shortest of Shakespeare's tragedies, the play is considered as the most compelling study of the nature of evil and its ramifications, and an acute exploration of corruptible human nature. Insight into Renaissance philosophy will certainly guide students to a richer understanding and appreciation of Shakespeare's plays. Thus, a clear account of both Elizabethan and Jacobean thought, of customs and preoccupations of Jacobean England and the historical and cultural context in which Shakespeare's works thrived, will give substance to the students' analysis of the Shakespearean text.

### **Course Outline:**

#### **Weeks 1&2:**

- The Renaissance: Historical, social and philosophical context.
- Elizabethan and Jacobean drama: Substance and main dramatic conventions.
- Initiation to Shakespeare's main works.

#### **Week 3:**

- Opening scene: (I.i.1-11)

Act I scene 3: (I.iii.1-157)

#### **Week 4:**

- Act I scene 5: (I.v.1-74)

Act 1 scene 7 (I.vii.1-83) / ("If it were done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well" (I.vii.1-28)

#### **Week 5:**

- Act II scene 1: (II.i.33-63) (“Is this a dagger which I see before me?”)

Act II scene 2: (II.ii.30-67)

**Week 6:**

- Act II scene 3: (II.iii.1-42) (The Porter Scene)

Act II scene 4: (II.iv.1-19)

**Week 7:**

Act III scene 1: (III.i.47-140)

**Week 8:**

Act III scene 2: (III.ii.8-56) (“We have scorch’d the snake not killed it” (III.ii.13-26) + “Be innocent of the knowledge dearest chuck, Till thou applaud the deed” (III.ii.46-53)

**Week 9:**

Act III scene 4: (III.iv.1-142) The Banquet Scene

**Week 10:**

Act IV scene 1: (IV.i.1-155) (Apparitions / “From this very moment, the firstlings of my heart shall be the firstlings of my hand”

**Week 11:**

Act V scene 1: (V.i.1-76) (The Sleepwalking Scene)

Act V scene 3: (V.iii.29-60) (“canst thou not minister to a mind diseas’d” (V.iii.40-53)

**Week 12:**

Act V scene 5: “V.v.1-52” ( “There have been a time for such a word/ To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow”)

**Week 13:** Final scene

**Week 14: round up session**

**Course objectives:** The course’s main objective is to show students how a text’s meaning is informed by the cultural and historical contexts in which it is produced and received; and help them articulate how literature both reflects and shapes culture, society and history.

With a play that expresses its concern with witchcraft, prophecy, hereditary succession, divine right of kings but equally explores attitudes to women, mental disorder, repressed wishes, sexuality, fantasy, anxiety and conflict relative to the complex but intertwined concepts of manliness and femininity, this tutorial attempts at initiating M2 students to modern critical approaches to Shakespeare’s drama which have radically challenged traditional classical interpretations focusing mainly on character in their study of Shakespeare’s works. Modern interpretive readings (feminist, psychoanalytic, political, and postmodern) will thus be suggested so as to help students assimilate how changing social assumptions may affect the audience’s (readers’) reception of Shakespeare’s works. The

purpose is thus to help students look at the play from different perspectives, express independent opinions and judgments informed by different interpretations so as to produce persuasive, informed and independent essays.

### **Method of evaluation: Presentations / Term papers / Final exams**

As part of the study of the play, students are asked to write essays, either under examination conditions or for coursework (term papers). Students are expected to set out their thought on a particular aspect of the play, using evidence from the text. They should be able to develop an argument, in an organized, coherent and persuasive way. They can approach the play from a number of critical perspectives (feminist, psychoanalytic, political, etc.) but need to show that any critical approach provides only a partial view of the play. Teachers reward students who think critically, who do not “simply” drop critics’ names into their essays, who are able to provide an informed personal response to the play.

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