

# Spring 2021

## EN 667: Shakespeare in Performance Practicum

M 2:00-4:30 (A/V-- via Zoom)

Dr. Michelle Dowd

**Contact:** [mmdowd1@ua.edu](mailto:mmdowd1@ua.edu)

she/her/hers

Office Hours: By appointment, via Zoom.

*With gratefully appreciated support and additional expertise by Professor Steve Burch of the Department of Theater and Dance: [sburch@ua.edu](mailto:sburch@ua.edu)*

### Course Description and Objectives:

This course asks students to think about how scholars, directors, and actors interact with, transform, and reimagine early modern playtexts when they bring them to the stage or screen. Toward that end, we will work with Professor Steve Burch of the Theater department to develop our skills at reading a playtext as a performance script.

### Student Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate familiarity with a range of early modern plays and contemporary adaptations
- Analyze early modern playtexts as scripts for performance
- Critically evaluate secondary sources on early modern drama and theater history
- Develop and hone critical writing skills, research methods, and the skills of oral communication.

### Required texts: (\*= e-book available via Gorgas Library)

- Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern, *Shakespeare in Parts*, Oxford UP, 2007.\*
- Alan C. Dessen, *Elizabethan Stage Conventions and Modern Interpreters*, Cambridge UP, 1984.\*
- Arden editions of Shakespeare's plays. (If you have already good critical editions of the plays (such as the Riverside or Norton), you can use those.
- Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist*. Arden/Bloomsbury, 2014. (If you own the *Norton Anthology of Renaissance Drama* or another critical edition, you may use that instead. Also available online via the Cambridge Complete Jonson at UA).
- Toni Morrison, *Desdemona*. Oberon Books, 2012.\*
- Lolita Chakrabarti, *Red Velvet*. Bloomsbury, 2020.\*
- Keith Hamilton Cobb, *American Moor*. Bloomsbury, 2020.\*
- Additional readings on Blackboard (BB)
- Screenings of selected performances.

## Course Schedule

### Module 1: Early Modern Theatrical Practices

**Week 1, Jan 18:**      **MLK Day. No Class.**

**Week 2, Jan. 28:**      Stern, “Text, Playhouse, and London” **(BB)**  
Weimann, “Shakespeare’s Theater: Tradition and Experiment” **(BB)**

**Week 3, Feb. 1:**      Palfrey and Stern, *Shakespeare in Parts*

**Week 4, Feb. 8:**      Dessen, *Elizabethan Stage Conventions and Modern Interpreters*

**\*\*\* Watch at home prior to class on Feb. 15: Resurgens production of *The Alchemist* (via streaming video; access details will be provided)**

**Week 5, Feb. 15:**      Jonson, *The Alchemist*. Kassie and Ashley lead discussion on the play and Resurgens performance.  
Guest Speaker (via Zoom): Brent Griffin, Resurgens Artistic Director  
Schafer and Cox, “*The Alchemist* on the Stage: Performance, Collaboration and Deviation” **(BB)**

**\*\*\* Watch at home prior to class on Feb. 22: ASC production of *Twelfth Night* (via streaming video; access details will be provided)**

**Week 6, Feb. 22:**      Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*. Aubree and Angeline lead discussion on the play and ASC performance.  
Schiffer, “Taking the Long View: *Twelfth Night* Criticism and Performance” (read pages 1-32) **(BB)**

❖ **By Fri. Feb. 26: Option 1: *Alchemist* Performance Reviews Due (by midnight)**

### Module 2: Shakespearean Performance and Our Contemporary Moment

**Week 7, Mar. 1:**      Shakespeare, *Othello*.  
Smith, “*Othello*’s Black Handkerchief” **(BB)**  
Hall, “*Othello* Was My Grandfather” (podcast/lecture, link on **BB**)

❖ **By Fri. Mar. 5: Option 2: *Twelfth Night* Performance Reviews Due (by midnight)**

**\*\*\* Watch at home prior to class on Mar. 8: ASC production of *Othello* (via streaming video; access details will be provided)**

**Week 8, Mar. 8:**      Shakespeare, *Othello*. Kyle and Jacob lead discussion on the ASC performance.  
Thompson, “The Blackfaced Bard” **(BB)**

**Week 9, Mar. 15: Mid-Semester Study Day. No class.**

**Week 10, Mar. 22:** Toni Morrison, *Desdemona*. Chengru, Xinyu, and Alfredo lead discussion on the play.  
Erickson, “‘Late’ Has No Meaning Here’: Imagining a Second Chance in Toni Morrison's *Desdemona*” **(BB)**

❖ **By Fri. Mar. 26: Option 3: *Othello* Performance Reviews Due (by midnight)**

**Week 11, Mar. 29:** Lolita Chakrabarti, *Red Velvet*. Amber and Ciara lead discussion on the play.  
Cline, “Reviewing Ira Aldridge: Red Velvet and Revisionist Narrative” **(BB)**

**\*\*\* Watch at home prior to class on Apr. 5: *American Moor* (via streaming video; access details will be provided)**

**Week 12, Apr. 5:** Keith Hamilton Cobb, *American Moor*. Vic and Tera lead discussion on the play and performance.  
Dadabhoy, “Wincing at Shakespeare: Looking B(l)ack at the Bard” **(BB)**

### **Module 3: Presentations and Wrap-Up**

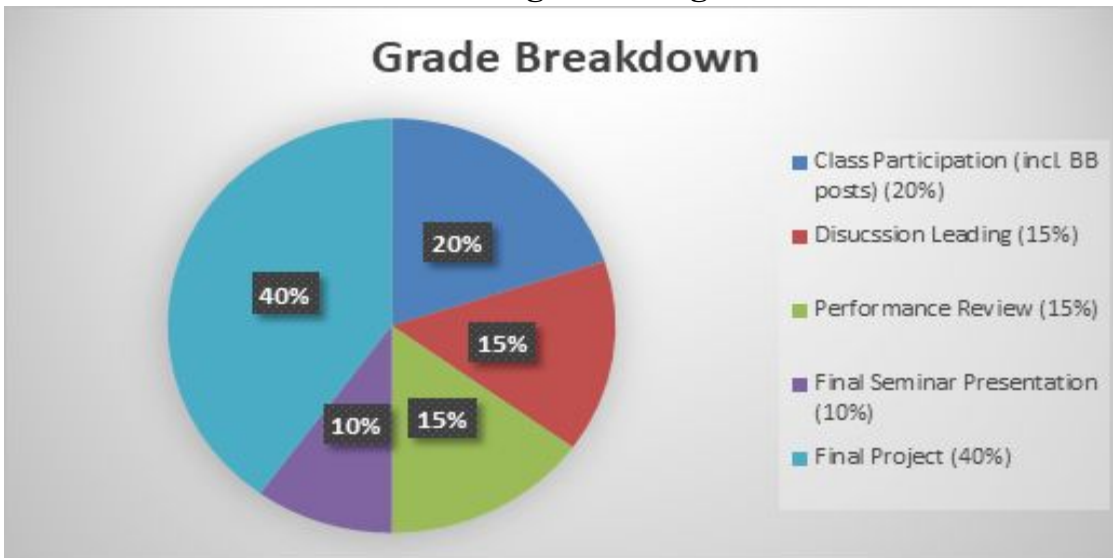
**Week 13, Apr. 12: Seminar Presentations:** Performance projects OR short versions of seminar papers presented and discussed in class

❖ **By Fri. Apr. 16: Option 4: *American Moor* Performance Reviews Due (by midnight)**

**Week 14, Apr. 19: Seminar Presentations:** Performance projects OR short versions of seminar papers presented and discussed in class

**Monday, April 26, 5PM: Final projects due**

## Grading and Assignments



**Weekly Blackboard Posts:** In preparation for our weekly discussions on Zoom, you will post a brief reflection about that week's reading (and/or performance) by midnight on Sunday prior to our class. Your response may consist of: several sentences offering overall analysis of the play's themes, etc.; comments on a specific scene or character; and/or connections to previous course readings (these are just some ideas!). For non-dramatic material, you might comment on key arguments or critical examples. These do *\*not\** need to be polished or formal responses: informal notes, ideas, questions, etc. are absolutely fine! Please include in your response at least 1 question for discussion. I will set up a thread in Blackboard for each week's posts. NOTE: your Blackboard post is optional the week that you are scheduled to lead discussion.

**Performance Review:** You will write one 800-1000 word (approximately 4-5 pages) performance review of your choice. Reviews should demonstrate that you are thinking of the productions as a director would. What worked, what didn't, and (most importantly) why? Your emphasis should fall more on analysis than on summary: any description of the production you provide should be *put in the service of* your larger argument about and assessment of the production. You should email your review as a Word attachment to both Steve and Michelle by midnight on the due date (four options, listed on the schedule above).

**Discussion Leading:** Each student in the seminar is responsible for leading discussion on one of the plays we will read this semester. We will assign you to the plays in groups of two or three. We encourage you to work with your group in advance of the class meeting to organize your questions and comments effectively and clearly. Remember that this is *discussion leading*—not a lecture about the play or production. Certainly, we invite you to share your thoughts, arguments, and specific ideas about the production with the class, but the overall goal of this assignment is to open up discussion about the production and the play(text) for all of us.

**Final Project:** You may either (1) write and produce a short (approx. 20-minute) performance or equivalent creative project directly related to the course's subject matter or (2) write a 15-18-page essay (plus a bibliography or list of works cited) on a performance or interpretive

topic of your choice related to the plays, productions, readings, and exercises assigned in the class. Please email your project as a Word attachment to both Steve and Michelle by 5PM on April 26.

**Final Seminar Presentation:** For those of you writing critical essays for your final project, you will present in class a brief (5-minute) summary of your paper, focusing on its major arguments and highlighting a specific example or two. If you are doing a creative assignment for your final project, you will also prepare a brief (5-minute) overview of your project, highlighting a key element or two. If time permits, we will try to arrange for you to present your full performance live in class (via Zoom), but unfortunately this may not be possible due to our enrollment numbers; if you are choosing the creative option please let us know so we can plan the schedule. At the end of each presentation, we will have a brief discussion period in which all members of the seminar are invited to ask questions and offer suggestions for the final paper or project.

## Procedural Details

**Attendance and Deadlines:** Please come to our weekly Zoom meetings prepared to discuss our readings and engage actively in class discussion. If an emergency, illness, or other circumstance prevents you from attending class, please let me know. If you foresee needing an extension for an assignment, please let me know well in advance so that we can work out a suitable alternative.

**Zoom Discussions and Inclusive Practices:** We will meet every Monday via Zoom for group discussion. Please download the free desktop client or the Zoom app (“Zoom Cloud Meetings”) onto your laptop or mobile device so that you can have access to all of the features in Zoom. The same protocols for etiquette and professional behavior that apply in a regular classroom space also apply on Zoom. Our goal is to ensure that everyone feels that they can participate and succeed in this course. We can achieve that by respecting each other through our behavior and speech. This includes refraining from all disruptive behavior during class and from using language or actions that disrespect another’s race, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, beliefs, or ideas.

A few guidelines specific to Zoom:

- Please mute your microphone when you are not speaking to help reduce background noise.
- Use the “Raise Hand” button at the center of the bottom of your screen when you wish to speak. When called upon, you can unmute yourself and begin speaking. When you have finished speaking, please mute your microphone again.
- Note: Students are prohibited from making audio and/or visual recordings of our Zoom class discussions or distributing such material to others outside our class without prior consent.

**Social Media:** The Hudson Strode Program in Renaissance Studies at the University of Alabama sponsors and promotes numerous Renaissance-related events each semester. We invite

you to like our [Facebook Page](#) (“Hudson Strode Program in Renaissance Studies”) and/or follow us on [Twitter](#) (handle: @hudstrode).

**Please see the OIRA Syllabus for:**

- Statement on Academic Misconduct
- Statement on Disability Accommodations
- Severe Weather Protocol
- Pregnant Student Accommodations
- Religious Observances
- UAAact Statement
- Statement on COVID-19