Advanced Shakespeare Scene Study: Roman Tragedies
ARTS-UG1023 / Spring 2014
Tuesdays 3:30-6:10
1 Washington Place 430

Instructor:
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Office Hours:

By appointment:
Wednesday: 11-1
Thursday: 2:30-4:30

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course we will continue to build on the basic foundation of text analysis for actors through in-depth scene study of Shakespeare’s three greatest political tragedies: Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra, and Coriolanus. Students will work on a variety of scenes in addition to speeches and soliloquies. While we will briefly consider the plays in their historical and political context, the course focuses more on texts themselves and how the verse and prose inform their meaning. The course will culminate in a workshop presentation of scenes and speeches from the plays. This course is intended for students with a prior background in acting and Shakespeare; it assumes a basic knowledge of Shakespearean text analysis from an actor’s point of view (an understanding of how rhythm, scansion, punctuation, operative words, etc. inform the possibilities of meaning).

REQUIRED TEXTS

The Arden or RSC editions of the plays are recommended for this class; however you may use any edition you have on hand. Folio texts are also available at the Bobst Library and online (see NYU Classes for links). You are expected to bring the texts to class; hard copies only – no electronic copies that require mobile devices.

Recommended texts:
Plutarch, Lives (online, see NYU Classes for Link)
Patsy Rodenburg, Speaking Shakespeare
James Shapiro, A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare: 1599

All other supplemental materials including the John Barton Playing Shakespeare video series and readings will be posted on the NYU Classes site for this course.
REQUIRED PERFORMANCE ATTENDANCE & FILM SCREENINGS

Students are required to see The Public’s production of Antony & Cleopatra edited and directed by Tarell Alvin McCraney. Free tickets are available on Thursday 2/20 @ 8:00pm or Sunday 2/23 at 2:00pm. Sign up for tickets in class.

If you can’t attend on the designated dates; you will be responsible for seeing the production before 2/25 and purchasing your own ticket.

You are required to screen the following films both on reserve at Bobst Library, Avery Fisher Center:

Caesar Must Die (77min) – directed by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani (2012)
Coriolanus (124min) – directed by Ralph Feinnes (2010)

OBJECTIVES & LEARNING GOALS
Students will demonstrate an understanding of each of the following content areas through written work, class discussions, and scene work:

• Understanding of the nature of acting in regards to Shakespeare’s plays through a hands-on approach of performance and rehearsal
• Development of critical reading skills
• Use of text analysis methods and resources
• Development of rehearsal and performance techniques rooted in text analysis
• Critical understanding of the interplay between written texts and performance

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADES

Unless you tell me otherwise, you'll receive a letter grade for the course. You'll be graded on the thoroughness of your work, the seriousness with which you approach the assignments, your willingness to take risks, your on-time attendance, and your growth over the term. Please note, I will not be comparing your work to that of other students in the class. I am interested in your personal journey through the semester and how you grow in terms of your understanding and grasp of the material.

This is an arts workshop class that depends on the regular attendance and dynamic participation of all students. Your timely arrival, participation, and preparation of assignments are vital to the success of the class.

ABSENCE POLICY

It is expected that you will attend all of the classes and arrive on time. Your lateness or absence has an effect on others and the atmosphere of the class. Please note that an unexcused absence will jeopardize your course grade. Each unexcused absence will diminish your course grade by one half letter grade. More than three unexcused absences
will result in failure of the course. Only legitimate absences such as severe illness, family or personal emergencies, or religious observances will be accepted. Even if you are not feeling well, you can still participate by observing and listening. Severe illness constitutes hospitalization or a visit to the emergency room and needs documentation. Headaches and colds are not acceptable reasons for missing class nor are internship or job obligations.

**GRADES**

Class attendance, participation, postings = 40%
Soliloquy/Speech (50% written, 50% performance) = 30%
Final Scene (50% written, 50% performance) = 30%

**CLASS FORMAT**

In this class we will be working on our feet; please dress comfortably in loose clothing for class. Do not wear tight jeans or skirts. If you need to change into rehearsal clothes, do so before the class begins.

I will be asking you to prepare verse lines on a fairly regular basis. It is essential that you take the time to fully commit these lines to memory as we will be working with your prepared text intensively during class. Committing lines to memory can be an issue for some students, please see me regarding techniques if you have struggled with this in the past. I'm here to help!

Because this course focuses on performance, please observe the following etiquette for in class work:

- Cellular phones and other noise making devices must be turned off BEFORE entering the rehearsal room.

- No texting during class or checking messages/email.

- No eating or drinking (water in an enclosed container is ok).

- Lateness is highly disruptive to the working environment and will be noted.

- Please be mindful of the working atmosphere and only exit the room when necessary. Entrances and exits can be highly disruptive. Be prepared to work for 2 hrs. 45 minutes. (You do not need to ask to leave the room as that can also interrupt the flow of work or discussion – I trust you will leave only when absolutely necessary.)

- Above all, come ready to work. Be aware of your energy and presence in class; you have an effect on the entire room whether you intend or not.
GRADES

“A” Reflects consistently solid and high achievement in the course.
“B” Signifies work of good to very good quality.
“C” Denotes that the student has attained an acceptable level of competence as well as a basic understanding of the course material. The student has met the minimum expectations of the course.
“D” Signifies the student’s work has been only minimally adequate.
“F” Reflects that the student hasn’t met the minimum requirements.

NYU CLASSES POSTINGS

You are responsible for writing 10 online postings. For the weeks noted below, **by 9 p.m. on the Sunday before class**, please post on the NYU Classes discussion board two clearly formulated, substantive questions about the week’s reading that you think will stimulate or enrich class discussion unless another prompt is provided in class. Everyone will be responsible for reading all the postings each week and for being prepared to discuss them in class. These postings will NOT be individually graded but considered part of your participation in the course. **Please post on the Sunday before: 2/4, 2/11, 2/18, 2/25, 3/4, 3/11, 4/8, 4/15, 4/22, 4/29**

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

"As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website ([www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html](http://www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html))"

SUPPLEMENTAL PERFORMANCE INFO:

Donmar Warehouse *Coriolanus* –
Royal National Theater Live:
Symphony Space 2/16, 2/26, 3/4
BAM – 3/8

Guerrilla Shakespeare Project: *And to the Republic*
5/24-6/8
Workshop Theater, 312 West 36th St
[www.guerrillashakespeare.org](http://www.guerrillashakespeare.org)
SYLLABUS

This is a brief outline of the topics we will cover throughout the semester. This is a working document and subject to change as we progress.

Part One: Building a Foundation in Text and Performance

1/28 Overview of course/syllabus
   Review Workshop

   Assignments:
   Read: Julius Caesar; Write: post on NYU Classes
   Recommended viewing: Playing Shakespeare: Set Speeches & Soliloquies
   Recommended reading: Plutarch’s Lives, “Caesar” (NYU Classes)

2/4 Discuss Julius Caesar; review basic foundation skills

   Assignments:
   Watch: Caesar Must Die (on reserve in Bobst, Avery Fisher Center)
   Read: “Is This a Holiday?” by James Shapiro (on NYU Classes)
   Write: post on NYU Classes (see handout); Prepare 4-6 lines of verse
   Recommended viewing: Playing Shakespeare: Language & Character

2/11 Discuss Caesar Must Die; investigation of Act III; review basic foundation skills using prepared text

   Assignments:
   Read: Antony & Cleopatra; Write: post on NYU Classes
   Recommended viewing: Playing Shakespeare: Passion & Coolness
   Recommended reading: Pultarch’s Lives, “Antony” (NYU Classes)

2/18 Discuss Antony & Cleopatra; review basic foundation skills

   Assignment:
   Attend: Antony & Cleopatra @ The Public
   Write: post on NYU Classes (see handout); Prepare: 4-6 lines of verse
   Reading: “Antony & Cleopatra In Performance: The RSC & Beyond” (NYU Classes)
   Recommended viewing: Playing Shakespeare: Irony & Ambiguity

2/25 Discuss performance; review basic foundation skills using prepared text

   Assignment:
   Read: Coriolanus; Write: post on NYU Classes
   Recommended viewing: Playing Shakespeare: Poetry & Hidden Poetry
   Recommended reading: Plutarch’s Lives, “Coriolanus” (NYU Classes)
3/4 Discuss Coriolanus; review basic foundation skills

Assignment: Watch Coriolanus (on reserve in Bobst, Avery Fisher Center)
Write: post on NYU Classes (see handout); Prepare: 4-6 verse lines
Read: “Who Does the Wolf Love?: Reading Coriolanus” by Stanley Cavell and “Q&A with Ralph Feinnes (NYU Classes)
Recommended viewing: Donmar Warehouse Coriolanus screening at BAM (3/8)

3/11 Discuss Coriolanus film adaptation; review basic foundation skills using prepared text; speech assignment
Write: speech analysis (for 3/25 – see handout)

3/18 Spring break

3/25 Speech Assignment Due; in class work on set speeches and soliloquies

Part Two: Putting it Together - Staging Selected Scenes

4/1 Guest: Jordan Reeves, Artistic Director of Guerilla Shakespeare Project, to discuss GSP’s spring project: And to the Republic; scene assignments

Assignment:
Write: Text analysis for scene, see handout.
Read: scene packet (handed out in class).

4/8 In class scene work; “making events happen at the table.”

Assignment:
Work on scenes with partner/groups
Write: post on NYU Classes
Recommended viewing: Show Us Womanish (Julius Caesar adaptation at the Gallatin Arts Festival – Apr. 7-11)

4/15 Master Class

Assignment:
Continue working with partner/groups
Meet with instructor for a coaching session outside of class
Write: post on NYU Classes

4/22 In class scene work and speech work

Assignment:
Continue working with groups
Meet with instructor for a coaching session outside of class
Write: final scene essay (see handout)
4/29  In class scene work/Final scene assignment paper due

    Assignment:
    Continue working with groups
    Meet with instructor for a coaching session outside of class
    Write: Post on NYU Classes

5/6  Final Presentations