

**Term Paper or Project**  
**35% of final grade**

You have 7 options for your term project. Some of the options ask you to take any one tool or approach from our course toolbox and apply it to any play (or plays) other than the one I used to introduce the tool/approach. Other options give you a chance to stretch your research skills. **Choose a problem and an approach that capitalize on the skills you have acquired in your university program thus far and help you to acquire new skills.**

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**A. Structure/genre.**

Apply to any play(s) other than *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, although you may invoke *MND* briefly for comparative purposes.

Preliminary investigative work: Map the comic structure of the play and think about the questions I posed in the “Four Stages of Comedy” document. As you work through those questions, pay attention to anything interesting or puzzling that emerges.

Argumentative work: In your essay, ask – and answer – a research question that your structural and generic analysis helps you to answer. Make sure that your essay is not merely a plot summary or a series of answers to my questions about comedy. You do not have to offer a complete “map” of the four C’s in your essay.

**Example of an observation, research question, and answering thesis:**

**Observation during investigative work**: *MND* has an unusually long celebration phase in which Quince’s company performs their play of Pyramus and Thisbe and the newlyweds comment on the play. (Note that this sentence would make an excellent opening sentence for the essay. It establishes a context for the research question to follow.)

**Research question**: What is the comedic function of this protracted celebration?

**A possible answer (i.e., thesis)**: The play provides an opportunity for Theseus and Hippolyta, who have been left out of the complication and clarification stages, to establish the dynamics of their marriage by commenting on the play.

**Another possible answer (depending on the evidence you invoke and what you do with that evidence)**: The protracted celebration dramatizes the player-playgoer relationship and shows how even Quince’s misconception of the imaginative contract can be righted by a willing playgoer.

If you choose this type of project, I will be looking for an excellent research question and answering thesis. Because the topic requires little or no research, I expect more from you in terms of structure, argument, citation of evidence, and textual analysis.

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**B. Performance History**

Apply to any play other than *The Merchant of Venice*. Take any one play on the syllabus and research one aspect of its performance history. Your essay should spell out the relationship between production decisions and the meaning of the play in its cultural context(s).

Useful sources: *World Shakespeare Bibliography*, the *ISE*, *Shakespeare Bulletin* (a journal), the *Shakespeare in Performance* series from Manchester University Press, the *Shakespeare in Production* editions from Cambridge University Press, the introductions to the Arden paperback editions of the plays (especially the Arden3 series), the *Players of Shakespeare* volumes, the performance history essays that often appear in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, essays in theatre journals, reviews of twentieth-century performances in newspapers and magazines (which you can find either in their original source or in collections of such material), and the many books surveying the stage history of Shakespeare's plays.

Narrow your topic according to one of the following issues:

- Conventional cuts and/or rewritings
- The resolution of a particular interpretive problem (does Orlando fall in love with Ganymede?)
- Portrayal of one character (e.g., Puck) or group of characters (the fairies)
- Performance of a play in one country or venue (e.g., *Merry Wives of Windsor* in Canada, *Measure for Measure* at Stratford Ontario, *The Winter's Tale* by the Royal Shakespeare Company)
- Performance of the play in one particular historical period (e.g., Restoration, Victorian)
- Trends in recent productions (i.e., in the last twenty years)
- Comparison of two recent productions
- A combination of the above issues that further limits, rather than enlarges, the scope of your research

As always, you must have a research question and an answering thesis.

### **C. Character Analysis**

Analyze one character except Mrs. Quickly or Fenton in the way that we analyzed Mrs. Q or and Fenton. The character can be minor or major. Use any analytical tools available to you and examine things like the character's style (diction, prose/verse, characteristic rhetorical devices), relationship to other characters in the play, pronouns and epithets, first/last lines, and descriptions by other characters (if relevant) in order to develop an argument EITHER about the character's development over the course of the play OR about the character's plot function in the play. Make sure that your essay is not merely a plot summary. You must make an argument about the character. This topic will probably be more fruitful if you choose a character other than one of the romantic leads. If you choose this type of project, I will be looking for an excellent research question and answering thesis. Because the topic requires little or no research, I expect more from you in terms of structure, argument, citation of evidence, and textual analysis. See the handout I gave you for tips on doing a character analysis.

### **D. Rhetorical Analysis of Characters' Relationship**

Apply to any play (including *LLL*, but not *Rosaline and Berowne*). Choose two characters who interact frequently in the play. Assume that linguistic power can reflect or subvert social power in these plays.

Investigative work: Who is the more effective speaker? Who gets the last word in any given exchange? in the play overall? Does linguistic power support, subvert, change, or challenge normal social hierarchies? Use any analytical tools available to you and examine things like the characters' style (prose/verse, characteristic rhetorical devices), forms of address (who says *thou* and who says *you* to whom?), insults and compliments, and descriptions of the relationship by other characters (if relevant).

Argumentative work: Ask and answer a research question about the development of the relationship, the power within the relationship, or the way that problems are resolved (or not) over the course of the play. Make sure that your essay is not merely a plot summary of how the relationship develops..

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### **E. Review of Criticism**

Find **four scholarly articles/chapters** dealing with one issue in one play. Two of your articles must be from 2005 or later. Essays in essay collections are fine (but check date of original publication if they are reprints) as are chapters from monographs.

Use the MLA on-line bibliography and the *World Shakespeare Bibliography* to find articles. You might also want to browse through back issues of journals and check out the essay collections and monographs in the library. Reputable journals devoted to Shakespeare include (but are not limited to) *Shakespeare Quarterly*, *Shakespeare Studies*, *Renaissance Quarterly*, *Shakespeare Bulletin*, the Spring issue of *Studies in English Literature*, and *English Literary Renaissance*. A good on-line journal is *Early Modern Literary Studies*. Some journals are available for on-line browsing through JSTOR, Project MUSE, and other databases. See the UVic Library homepage.

Write a review essay in which you (a) **contextualize** the issue, **explain** its history, and give the reason(s) that it is important to our understanding of the play; (b) **summarize and compare** the approaches of the four articles; (c) point out any **limitations** in each approach, especially those that fail to account for all the evidence in the play; and (d) **suggest**, if you are able to, the work that needs to be done next. Note: you do need to read the play carefully yourself.

If you choose this topic, please consult with me early in your research process.

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### **F. A Research Question of Your Own Devising**

Ask and answer a research question that intrigues you. You **MUST** consult with me early in your research process in order to take up this option.

To produce a balanced reading, you must consult at least five sources. At least must be a book from the last decade, and at least one must be a scholarly article from the last decade. One of those sources may be the editorial matter from a good, single-volume edition of the play (e.g., Arden, Oxford, Cambridge).

You may present your research project – which should include an analysis of at least ONE play – as a standard research essay OR as a digital project to be published on the internet.

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### **G. Digital Historical Research Project**

This topic is open only to students with excellent research and writing skills who would like to contribute to *The Map of Early Modern London* or *The Early Modern England Encyclopedia*. **You require my permission** to work on a digital project, and will need to work closely with me to narrow your topic. One possibility is to create an edition of a text from Shakespeare's time that sheds some light on a play we have read (e.g., *The Arte of English Poesy*). Another possibility is to create a contribution to the Topics page of the London website (e.g., clowns and fools; a member of Shakespeare's company; some social phenomenon that we have discussed).

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## REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL PROJECTS

- Due at the beginning of class on Wednesday, April 1, 2020.
- Minimum: **1750 words**; maximum: **2250 words** (excluded Works Cited).
- Document all your sources (whether you quote from them or not) so as to give credit where credit is due and to allow me (your reader) to find your sources. MLA citation style is usually adequate, but you aren't obligated to use MLA as long as you observe my [Three Rules of Citation](#). If you cite digital resources, give the DOI (Digital Object Identifier) for articles/books, the project name for digital projects/tools, or the URL for any webpage that I might not be able to find easily.
- Picky details:
  - Double-side the pages if your printer will do so.
  - Number and staple the pages.
  - Do not submit a title page or a folder.
  - Put your identifying details on the top left of the first page (name, course, V00-number).
  - Give your essay a title.