

College of Humanities Seminar:

Shakespeare's First Folio (1623)

Peter E. Medine

[medine@u.arizona.edu](mailto:medine@u.arizona.edu)

520.820.3346

Shakespeare's First Folio (1623)

This seminar will explore the abiding relevance of Shakespeare's drama, extending from romantic love, to political power, to human fate. To mark the 400th anniversary of the publication of the First Folio, we will study six of the plays that the collection is divided into: comedy, history, and tragedy. Following this organization, we shall focus on the pattern of plays' plots, in which comedy proceeds from conflict to order, and tragedy from order to disorder. A dramatic genre originating in the sixteenth century, the history play is distinguished by subject matter but depends on plots that conform to the comic and tragic patterns. Mindful that Shakespeare was always a practical man of the theatre, we shall supplement the textual discussion with viewings of selected scenes from recent DVD productions. As Shakespeare's contemporary Ben Jonson put it in the preface to the First Folio, Shakespeare was "not for an age, but for all time!"

TEXTS:

Plays to be read include: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; *Twelfth Night*; *Richard III*; *Romeo & Juliet*, and *Othello*.

The text for Meeting One will be copies of the "front matter" of the First Folio and selected excerpts of Quarto and Folio texts. These will be available on the class web page and should be downloaded and printed out. Subsequent meetings will focus on the selected plays listed below.

Any edition, or editions, of the plays are acceptable provided they contain glosses of unfamiliar words *on the page* and not at the end of the text. (I shall use the complete works edition, *The Riverside Shakespeare* (1997).) Reliable individual editions include paperbacks in the Pelican, Penguin, or Signet series. These editions are readily available on Amazon.com, ABeBooks.com, Thriftbooks.com, or eBay. Please email or ring me if there are any questions.

CLASS PROCEDURE:

Participants should read the assigned selections in advance of class discussion. The discussion will be based on the assumption that everyone is familiar with the selections and has the texts at hand during class.

CALENDAR:

Meeting One: Introduction to the Renaissance stage and early editions.

Meeting Two: Introduction concluded.

Meeting Three: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Meeting Four: *Twelfth Night* Acts 1-3.

Meeting Five: *Twelfth Night* Acts 4-5.

Meeting Six: *Richard III*.

Meeting Seven: *Romeo & Juliet* Acts 1 - 3.

Meeting Eight: *Romeo & Juliet* Acts 4 - 5.

Meeting Nine: *Othello* Acts 1-3.

Meeting Ten: *Othello* Acts 4-5.