



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

HUMANITIES SEMINARS

Shakespeare's Comedy

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Course Description and Approach

Shakespeare wrote more comedies than either histories or tragedies. This seminar will study five of the comedies from throughout his career. The focus will center on plot, language, and characterization. These matters disclose the plays' larger thematic interests. Examination of selected scenes from DVDs of the plays will broaden the approach and highlight the plays' performative features.

Questions are welcomed throughout the seminar, especially ones submitted in writing before and after as well as during class.

Please read portions of the plays assigned on the syllabus before the class in which they are to be discussed; discussion will be based on the assumption that students are familiar with their substance. Do not be deterred by passages that seem unclear; keep reading and do not get bogged down. Such concerted engagement with the texts yields more understanding than may at first be apparent and, very important, lead to significant questions.

Finally, please have the texts at hand during class. I shall concentrate on particular passages and refer to them in detail, so without them in front of you, discussion and analysis will make little sense.

Required Texts

Any standard edition of the plays will do, provided the format includes act/scene division and numerical lineation, and unfamiliar words are glossed on the page. Individual plays in such series as the Signet or Pelican editions are available on-line through Amazon, AbeBooks.com, Thrift book, and the like. If you prefer a single-volume of Shakespeare's complete works, I recommend the Riverside edition (Houghton Mifflin ed. G. Blackmore Evans, 1974 (and subsequently)). This is the edition I use. Previously owned copies through the outlets mentioned above are often available at reasonable prices and are in more than adequate condition.

Course Calendar

Jan 24: Introduction
Jan 31: *Merchant of Venice*, Acts 1 and 2
Feb 7: *MV* Acts 3, 4, and 5
Feb 14: *As You Like It*, Acts 1 and 2
Feb 21: *AYLI* Acts 3, 4, and 5
Feb 28: *Measure for Measure* Acts 1 and 2

Mar 13: *MM* Acts 3, 4, and 5
Mar 20: *Cymbeline*, Acts 1, 2, and 3
Mar 27: *Cymb* Acts 4 and 5
Apr: 3: *The Tempest*, Acts 1 and 2
Apr. 10: *Temp* Acts 3 and 4
Apr. 17: *Temp* Act 5.