SCHOOL OF ENGLISH, FILM, THEATRE, AND MEDIA STUDIES
ENGLISH SUMMER PROGRAMME, 2008-09

ENGL 415
RENAISSANCE STUDIES:
SHAKESPEARE'S CLASSICAL WORLDS

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Classes:
in Von Zedlitz 808,
Monday and Friday, 10 am–1 pm,
from 24 November to 13 December, and from
19 January to **9 February**
(*note date of last session is later than advertised*).

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Sessions

Mon 24 Nov	Introduction
Fri 28 Nov	*Titus Andronicus*
Mon 1 Dec	*The Rape of Lucrece*
Fri 5 Dec	*The Comedy of Errors*
Mon 8 Dec	*Julius Caesar*
Fri 12 Dec	*Troilus and Cressida*
CHRISTMAS/NEW YEAR BREAK	
Mon 19 Jan	ANNIVERSARY DAY
Fri 23 Jan	*Timon of Athens*
Mon 26 Jan	*Antony and Cleopatra*
Fri 30 Jan	*Coriolanus*
Mon 2 Feb	*Pericles*
Fri 6 Feb	WAITANGI DAY
Mon 9 Feb	*Cymbeline*/Conclusion

The suicide of Brutus. From Geffrey Whitney,
A Choice of Emblemes (1586)

Texts (in order of teaching)
EITHER *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al (Norton, approx $110);
OR editions of the individual texts (the following are recommended, but other recent editions are acceptable): *Titus Andronicus* (Arden), *The Rape of Lucrece* (in *Complete Poems and Sonnets*, Oxford), *The Comedy of Errors* (Oxford), *Julius Caesar* (Arden), *Troilus and Cressida* (Arden), *Timon of Athens* (Oxford), *Antony and Cleopatra* (Oxford), *Coriolanus* (Oxford), *Pericles* (Oxford), *Cymbeline* (Oxford).
AND *ENGL 415 Shakespeare's Classical Worlds: Sources and Backgrounds* (Student Notes).

Aims and Objectives

The course deals with a group of Shakespeare's plays (and one long poem) set in the classical world of ancient Greece and Rome. The plays span a wide range, in date (from the beginning to the end of Shakespeare's writing career), in setting (from mythical Troy to Augustan Rome), and in genre (including comedies, tragedies, histories—and some which defy classification). As well as looking at each text in its own right, the course will consider what, if anything, these diverse texts have in common. Do they reflect a consistent idea of Rome, or Greece, or pagan antiquity? Are there consistent themes which Shakespeare associates with the ancient world?

As well as reading the Shakespeare texts we will also look at some of their classical and medieval sources and contexts (by writers such as Ovid, Seneca, Plautus, Plutarch, Chaucer, and Gower), and consider how Shakespeare used and responded to these sources.

By the end of the course you should
(a) have a close knowledge of each of the Shakespearean texts, their plots, characters, and concerns
(b) be acquainted with some of Shakespeare's source texts, and able to make arguments about Shakespeare's use of them
(c) be able to draw comparisons across the range of Shakespearean texts, and formulate broad conclusions about Shakespeare's relationship to and treatment of the classical world

Attendance, preparation and presentations

All students should prepare for each class by reading the assigned texts (play and source material) and be ready to discuss them in the seminar. In addition, each student will be required to present one seminar presentation (about 15-20 mins), which will form part of the class assessment (see below). 'Students are expected to be well-prepared for classes, particularly in their reading, and to be ready to participate in and lead discussion' (SEFTMS *Postgraduate Prospectus 2008*).

You are expected to attend all seminars. If you are unable to attend one, please contact me as soon as you can in order to find out what you will need to do before the next meeting of the class.

Where to find additional information

Further information will be circulated in seminars. Again, should you miss a seminar please make sure you contact me as soon as possible. Spare copies of handouts will be available from Helen O'Sullivan, VZ 816.

Assessment

Assessment for the course is entirely internal, consisting of an oral presentation and two essays.

- **Class presentation (20%)**. An oral presentation of about 15-20 mins serving as an introduction to a class seminar (topic to be negotiated with me). A written-up version, which may be in 'note' form but should clearly set out arguments and evidence, should be submitted within a week of the seminar (date subject to negotiation!). Assessment will be based jointly on the oral and written versions.
- **First essay (30%)**. Due Friday **19 December.** A discussion of a single Shakespeare text and its source(s). Around 2500 words. Topics to be provided. (Relates to objectives a and b.)
- **Second essay (50%).** Due Friday **13 February**. A discussion of a broader topic in relation to at least four of the Shakespeare texts. Around 4000 words. Topics should be chosen by the student in consultation with me, and may develop out of material used in the class presentation. (Relates to objective c.).

Written work should be presented in accordance with the School's style sheet, which will be distributed. For the sake of external examining you must hand in **two** identical hard copies of your work. One copy will be marked and returned to you.

Extensions

Because of the compressed time-frame of the course, it is very important that work is handed in on time. If you need an extension for the first essay, talk to me in advance of the due date. **No extension is possible for the final essay**, because of the need to have course grades finalised before the start of 1st trimester 2009.

Workload

The guideline for a 400-level paper is at least *20 hours* of reading and study (including class attendance) a week *for 12 weeks*. Since ENGL 415 is accelerated to *6 weeks*, workloads must be adjusted accordingly, especially by doing much of your reading in the four non-teaching weeks of the Christmas/New Year break.

Mandatory course requirements

The minimum course requirements which must be satisfied include the completion of two essays and a class presentation by Friday 13 February. You are expected to attend all seminars unless there is an overwhelming reason why you cannot do so. Failure to satisfy the course requirements will leave you with a fail grade.

Academic integrity and plagiarism

Academic integrity is about honesty – put simply it means *no cheating*. All members of the University community are responsible for upholding academic integrity, which means staff and students are expected to behave honestly, fairly and with respect for others at all times.

Plagiarism is a form of cheating which undermines academic integrity. The University defines plagiarism as follows: The presentation of the work of another person or other persons as if it were one's own, whether intended or not. This includes published or unpublished work, material on the Internet and the work of other students or staff.

It is still plagiarism even if you re-structure the material or present it in your own style or words. Note: It is, however, perfectly acceptable to include the work of others as long as that is acknowledged by appropriate referencing.

Plagiarism is prohibited at Victoria and is not worth the risk. Any enrolled student found guilty of plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct and may be penalized severely. Consequences of being found guilty of plagiarism can include:

- an oral or written warning
- cancellation of your mark for an assessment or a fail grade for the course
- suspension from the course or the University.

Find out more about plagiarism, and how to avoid it, on the University's website:

www.victoria.ac.nz/home/studying/plagiarism.html

General University policies and statutes

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the Victoria University Calendar available in hardcopy or under "about Victoria" on the VUW homepage at:

http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/calendar_intro.html

Information on the following topics is available electronically at:

http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/newspubs/universitypubs.aspx#general.pdf

- Academic Grievances
- Student and Staff Conduct
- Meeting the Needs of Students with Impairments
- Student Support
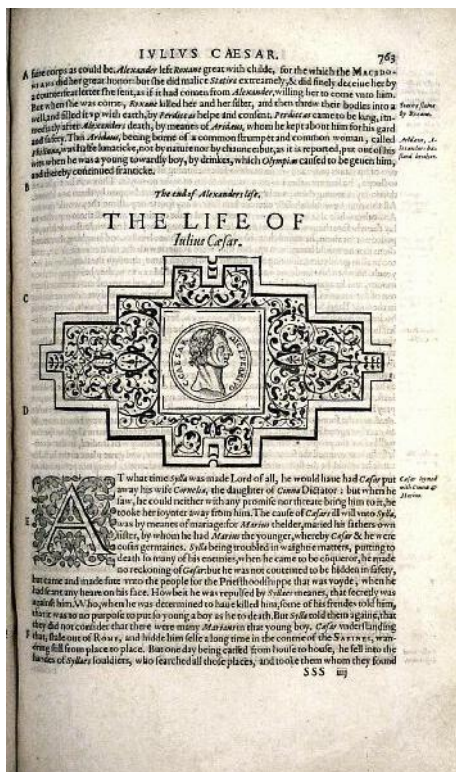
A page from Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* (1579)

SOME BACKGROUND READING

On Shakespeare's classical plays

Adelman, Janet. *The Common Liar: An Essay on 'Antony and Cleopatra'*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.

Arnold, Oliver. *The Third Citizen: Shakespeare's Theater and the Early Modern House of Commons*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P., 2007. (Chapters 3–5 on 'political representation in Shakespeare's Rome'.)

Bate, Jonathan. *Shakespeare and Ovid*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.

Braden, Gordon. *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition: Anger's Privilege*. New Haven: Yale U.P., 1985.

Brower, Reuben A. *Hero and Saint: Shakespeare and the Greco-Roman Heroic Tradition*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.

Bullough, Geoffrey. *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*. 8 volumes. London: Routledge, 1957–. (Volume 5 deals with the Roman plays, volume 6 with other classical plays.)

Donaldson, Ian. *The Rapes of Lucretia: A Myth and Its Transformations*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982.

Dubrow, Heather. *Captive Victors: Shakespeare's Narrative Poems and Sonnets*. Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 1987. (Chapter 2 on *The Rape of Lucrece*.)

Hadfield, Andrew. *Shakespeare and Republicanism*. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2005.

James, Heather. *Shakespeare's Troy: Drama, Politics, and the Translation of Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997.

Kahn, Coppélia. *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds, and Women*. London: Routledge, 1997.

Leggatt, Alexander. *Shakespeare's Historical Drama: The History Plays and the Roman Plays*. London: Routledge, 1988.

Martindale, Charles and Michelle. *Shakespeare and the Uses of Antiquity*. London: Routledge, 1990.

Martindale, Charles, and A.B. Taylor. *Shakespeare and the Classics*. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2004.

Miles, Geoffrey. *Shakespeare and the Constant Romans*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.

Miola, Robert S. *Shakespeare's Rome*. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1983.

Miola, Robert S. 'Reading the Classics.' In Kastan, *A Companion to Shakespeare* (see below), 172–85. (On Shakespeare's classical sources and influences.)

Paster, Gail Kern. *The Idea of the City in the Age of Shakespeare*. Athens, GA: U. of Georgia Press, 1985. (Ch. 3 on 'Shakespeare's idea of Rome'; ch. 4 includes discussion of *Timon*.)

Ronan, Clifford. *'Antike Roman': Power Symbology and the Roman Play in Early Modern England 1585–1635*. Athens, Ga.: U. of Georgia Press, 1985.

Simmons, J. L. *Shakespeare's Pagan World: The Roman Tragedies*. Brighton: Harvester, 1974.

Shakespeare Survey 10 (1957), on 'The Roman Plays': includes Terence Spencer on 'Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Romans' (27-38), and Eugene Waith on 'The Metamorphosis of Violence in *Titus Andronicus*' (39-49).

Shakespeare Survey 31 (1978), on 'Shakespeare and the Classical World': includes John W. Velz on 'The Ancient World in Shakespeare: Authenticity or Anachronism?' (1-12).

Useful reference works (on Shakespeare and on the classical world)

Crystal, David and Ben. *Shakespeare's Words: A Glossary and Language Companion*. London: Penguin, 2002.

Kastan, David Scott (ed.). *A Companion to Shakespeare*. London: Blackwell, 1999.

McDonald, Russ (ed). *The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare: An Introduction with Documents*. Boston: Bedford, 1996.

Oxford English Dictionary. (The multi-volume version, in Reference.)

Onions, C. T. *A Shakespeare Glossary*. Revised and enlarged by R. D. Eagleson. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

Radice, Betty. *Who's Who in the Ancient World*. Harmondworth: Penguin, 1971.

Ronberg, Gert. *A Way with Words: The Language of English Renaissance Literature*. London: Arnold, 1992.

Tripp, Edward. *The Meridian Handbook of Classical Mythology*. New York: Meridian, 1974 (and various other editions).

Trussler, Simon. *Shakespearean Concepts*. London: Methuen, 1989.

Wells, Stanley (ed). *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986.

Wells, Stanley (ed). *Shakespeare: A Bibliographical Guide*. Second edition. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990. (Useful surveys of criticism up to the late 1980s.)

The plays on video

Titus, dir. Julie Taymor, 1999 (film, with Anthony Hopkins, Jessica Lange). (Vis 3576)

Titus Andronicus, dir. Jane Howell, BBC TV 1985 (with Trevor Peacock, Hugh Quarshie). (Vis 628)

Comedy of Errors, dir. James Cellan-Jones, BBC TV 1984 (with Michael Kitchen, Roger Daltrey). (Vis 1395)

Comedy of Errors, dir. Trevor Nunn, 1976 (TV version of Royal Shakespeare Company musical adaptation, with Roger Rees, Mike Gwilym, Judi Dench). (Not in VUW, but in Wellington Public Library.)

Julius Caesar, dir. Joseph Mankiewicz, 1953 (film, with Marlon Brando, James Mason, John Gielgud). (Vis 350)

Julius Caesar, dir. Herbert Wise, BBC TV 1979 (with Richard Pasco, Keith Michell, Charles Gray). (Vis 226)

Troilus and Cressida, dir. Jonathan Miller, BBC TV 1982 (with Anton Lesser, Suzanne Burden, Charles Gray). (Vis 140)

Timon of Athens, dir. Jonathan Miller, BBC TV 1981 (with Jonathan Pryce). (Vis 630)

Antony and Cleopatra, dir. Trevor Nunn, 1972 (TV version of Royal Shakespeare Company production, with Richard Johnson, Janet Suzman, Patrick Stewart). (Vis 2531).

Antony and Cleopatra, dir. Jonathan Miller, BBC TV 1980 (with Colin Blakely, Jane Lapotaire). (Vis 615)

Coriolanus, dir. Elijah Moshinsky, BBC TV 1984 (with Alan Howard, Irene Worth, Joss Ackland). (Vis 138)

Pericles, Prince of Tyre, dir. David Jones, BBC TV 1984 (with Mike Gwilym). (Vis 1394)

Cymbeline, dir. Elijah Moshinsky, BBC TV 1984 (with Helen Mirren, Robert Lindsay, Michael Pennington). (Vis 1388)

SOME QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Titus Andronicus

- The title-page of the 1594 Quarto edition calls the play *The most lamentable Romaine tragedie of Titus Andronicus*. In what senses is this a 'Roman tragedy'? How important is Rome and Romanness in the play?
- What qualities and values are associated with Rome in the play? What kind of relationship (contrasts, similarities) is set up between Romans and Goths?
- What kind of political system is portrayed in the play? Is there a relationship between the play's concerns with public politics and with private, 'domestic' violence and rape?
- What kind of uses are made in the play of classical myths—especially the myth of the rape of Philomela, as told by Ovid?
- How does the style and atmosphere of the play compare with that of Ovid and Seneca?
- How does the play invite us to judge Titus's revenge? How does it compare with the revenges of Philomela and Procne (in Ovid) and of Atreus (in Seneca)?
- In what ways is the play concerned with language and communication?
- 'The barbarity of the spectacles and the general massacre which are here exhibited can scarcely be conceived tolerable to any audience' (Dr Johnson). What is your response to the relentless violence and cruelty of the play? Is it merely sensationalist?

The Rape of Lucrece

- How does the poem deal with the moral problems involved in Lucrece's rape and suicide? In particular, does it answer the challenge posed by St Augustine: 'If she was adulterous, why is she praised? If she was chaste, why did she have to die?'
- How is honour/fame (male and female) defined in the poem, and how important is it?
- As in *Titus*, a woman's rape is here linked to a political crisis. How does the poem deal with that connexion?
- How is the Trojan War story used in the poem?
- How does Shakespeare's treatment of the Lucrece story differ from those of Ovid, Livy (Painter), and Chaucer?
- A critic refers to the poem's 'rich if tedious eloquence'. How, and how successfully, does *Lucrece* use rhetoric? Does it criticise its own rhetorical strategies?
- Charles and Michelle Martindale describe *Lucrece* as 'not a success … The fundamental mismatch of Ovidian style and tragic content in *Lucrece* repeats the failure of *Titus*.' Do you agree?

The Comedy of Errors

- *The Comedy of Errors* is based on Plautus' *Menaechmi.* How far does Shakespeare imitate Plautus' play? What changes does he make, and with what effect,
  – in plot and structure?
  – in characterisation?
  – in tone, atmosphere, moral values?
- Is *The Comedy of Errors* 'classical' in any sense other than its Roman source?
- What assumptions does the comedy make about gender roles and about marital (and extra-marital) relationships?

- Does the comedy have anything serious to say about identity and the ways in which identity is constructed?

Julius Caesar

- How far are the characters in *Julius Caesar* conscious of being Roman? How is 'Romanness' defined in the play, in terms of
    – political values?
    – moral values?
    – gender roles?
- What attitude does the play invite us to take to the assassination of Caesar? Is Caesar portrayed as a 'tyrant'?
- How do the play's Romans define their identities? You might think about the use of names; images of acting and the theatre; the characters' habit of speaking of themselves in the third person ...
- How does the play's treatment of violence, death, and suicide compare with *Titus* and *Lucrece*?
- To what extent is the play concerned with knowledge, judgement, and error?
- Does the play contain a sense of the supernatural?

Troilus and Cressida

- The genre of *Troilus and Cressida* is debatable: the Folio classified it as a tragedy, but it has also been called a satirical comedy, a tragicomedy, or a history play. How would you classify it? How would you define its tone?
- How does the play use the legend of the Trojan War, and what attitude does it take to the legendary characters and situations?
- How are we invited to see the love story of Troilus and Cressida? Does the play endorse the traditional archetypes—'as true as Troilus' and 'as false as Cressid'?
- The language of the play is notoriously complex, difficult, and long-winded: is there a reason for this?

And some major 'themes' you might think about:
- Value ('What's aught but as 'tis valued?')
- Time
- Honour and 'opinion'
- Identity

Timon of Athens

- Is *Timon of Athens* a tragedy, or a morality play, or a satire?
- How does the tone of the play compare with Plutarch's biographical sketch and Lucian's satirical dialogue?
- How is the society of Athens represented in the play, and how far is Shakespeare concerned with the historical reality of Athens?
- What attitude(s) does the play encourage us to take to the character of Timon?
- What does the play suggest about money and its use?
- So far on the course, this play and *The Comedy of Errors* are the most concerned with money and debts; is there any significance in this comparison?

Antony and Cleopatra

- How does the representation of Rome and 'Romanness' in *Antony and Cleopatra* compare with that in *Julius Caesar*?
- What kinds of comparisons and contrasts are set up between 'Rome' and 'Egypt'—in terms of moral values and ideals, political situations, gender assumptions, characteristic images? Is this a play about 'East and West'?
- How significant in the play are ideas and images of change, mutability, and uncertainty? How important is (Roman) constancy?
- What does the play suggest about identity and the ways in which it is constructed?
- Does the play provide a single coherent view of the main characters or the action, or a series of incompatible perspectives?
- Do you agree with the view that there is a huge gap between the heroic language and images applied to them and the unheroic way they are in fact depicted?
- Is *Antony and Cleopatra* a tragedy? What sort of tragedy?

Coriolanus

- How is Rome and Romanness represented in this play, and how does it compare with the representations in *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*?
- What is the Roman political situation in this play? Does it change in the course of the play? Does Shakespeare seem to take sides in the disputes between patricians and plebeians? Does Menenius's 'fable of the belly and the members' in the opening scene set up political norms for the play?
- What is the relationship between Coriolanus and Rome? How is his identity defined in relation to the city? Is Coriolanus 'constant'?
- How do you read the relationship between Coriolanus and Volumnia?
- How do you read the relationship between Coriolanus and Aufidius?
- Is it significant that a number of the play's key scenes take place in the market-place?
- What does the play suggest about language?

Pericles

- To what extent is *Pericles* a 'classical' play? Does it have any concerns in common with the earlier 'classical' plays (from *Titus* to *Coriolanus*), or is it a completely different sort of play?
- *Pericles* is commonly described as a 'romance'—what does this mean? What kind of play is this? How does its narrative structure differ from other plays of Shakespeare? What kind of responses does it demand from its audience? What is the importance of Gower in the play?
- From Antiochus's incest in the first act to the adventures of Marina in the last, the play is continuously concerned with sexual themes—chastity and unchastity, love, lust, and marriage. Why the focus on these themes, and what is the play saying about them?
- What political values or concerns are implied in the play?
- What, if anything, is *Pericles* 'about'? Does it have a moral/didactic purpose, or is it essentially an entertainment?

Cymbeline

- *Cymbeline* has been described (in Polonius's phrase) as 'tragical-comical-historical-pastoral'. How would you describe the genre of the play, and does it hang together coherently? How does it compare with *Pericles* as a 'romance'?

- 'To remark the folly of the fiction, the absurdity of the conduct, the confusion of the names and manners of different times, and the impossibility of the events in any system of life, were to waste criticism upon unresisting imbecility . . .' (Dr Johnson) Discuss! In particular, what do you make of the play's 'confusion ... of different times' (classical Rome/Britain, Renaissance Italy, the world of fairy tale)?
- How does the play represent Rome, especially in comparison with Shakespeare's earlier Roman plays? What does it suggest about the relationship between Rome and Britain, especially in the plot concerning Cymbeline's rebellion against and reconciliation with Augustan Rome?
- What does the play suggest about 'nobility'?
- How does the play's treatment of Innogen as a figure of constancy or chastity compare with the treatment of other heroines in the plays, from Lucrece to Marina?