

Outsiders in Shakespeare's Venice: Race, Religion and Sexuality in *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice*

Start date 11 November 2016**End date** 13 November 2016**Venue** Madingley Hall
Madingley
Cambridge**Tutor** Clare Smout**Course code** 1617NRX036**Director of Programmes**

Emma Jennings

**For further information on this
course, please contact**Public Programme Coordinator, Clare Kerr
clare.kerr@ice.cam.ac.uk or 01223 746237**To book** See: www.ice.cam.ac.uk or telephone 01223 746262

Tutor biography

Clare Smout has contributed courses to Madingley Hall's weekend programme since 2007. She is currently a Teaching Fellow at the University of Birmingham, Visiting Lecturer at Newman University and a major contributor to Crandall University's Study Programme at Oxford. Past teaching includes work for Nebula, Hong Kong, and the Chinese University of Hong Kong and projects for multiple English drama schools.

Clare's publications include: 'Actor, Poet, Playwright, Sharer ... Rival? Shakespeare and Heywood, 1603-4', *Early Theatre*, 13 (2010); a chapter on Mariah Gale for *The Routledge Companion to Actors' Shakespeare*, ed. by John Russell Brown (2011); and 'RSC Performance History' sections for *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Timon of Athens*, and *The Winter's Tale*, ed. by Jonathan Bate (RSC/Macmillan, 2007-2009). She provides regular theatre reviews for academic journals.

Before moving back to the academic world Clare spent two decades in professional theatre, specialising in directing and developing new writing.

Course programme

Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00	Dinner
20:30 – 22:00	Session 1: Historical and Theatrical Context
22:00	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Session 2: Views of Venice; English Attitudes to 'Strangers'
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Session 3: <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> – Religion
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	Session 4: <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> – Gender & Sexuality
18:00 – 18:30	Free
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	Session 5: <i>Othello</i> and Race (1)
21:30	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Session 6: <i>Othello</i> and Race (2)
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Session 7: Conclusion and Comparisons
12:45	Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Course syllabus

Aims:

- To enable students to gain deeper insights into the plays studied – with particular reference to Shakespeare's treatment of outsiders and his exploration of disempowerment due to religion, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation
- To enable students to develop increased awareness of the changing ways in which generations of actors, audiences and academics have responded to the plays' themes
- To enable students to develop transferable skills in analysing Early Modern drama and theatrical craftsmanship and increased confidence in discussion and argumentation

Content:

Shakespeare's two plays *Othello*, *The Moor of Venice* and *The Merchant of Venice*; or, *The Jew of Venice* have at their centres characters who are in some ways outsiders within their community due to their religion, ethnicity, colour, social status, gender or sexual orientation. Four hundred years on, debate on these issues is still at the heart of our daily lives.

This course starts by considering the political and social context in which the plays were written, exploring attitudes to race, religion and sexuality in Shakespeare's time and discussing why the playwright chooses Venice as a backdrop to these conflicts. We then look in more detail at the individual plays, examining Shakespeare's exploration of these themes, his theatrical artistry in developing plot and character in relation to them, and the staging and casting of these plays in his time and across subsequent centuries.

We end by asking whether *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice* are plays that should still be staged today? Do they promote or subvert racism, anti-Semitism and sexual prejudice? What constraints, if any, should be placed on productions to make performance acceptable?

Presentation of the course:

The course will be delivered through a mixture of lectures, class discussion and small group work. We will make significant use of DVD clips from a range of contrasting productions of the plays studied. We will also examine internet extracts in which actors, directors and academics respond to the texts, their themes and contexts.

As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:

- Discuss these plays and their themes with greater confidence, more textual and contextual knowledge and deeper insight
- Demonstrate greater awareness of how interpretations of these plays and attitudes to the casting and portrayal of key roles have changed over the centuries and of how these changes in approach to an unchanging text reflect social attitudes
- Apply the knowledge and transferable analytical skills developed during the course to other plays from this period or on similar themes

Reading and resources list - Essential

Please read both plays before the course starts and bring copies of the texts with you.

I recommend the editions below as these have the most comprehensive and modern introductions and best footnotes. If you have time you will find it very useful to read these introductions in advance as well. One can usually get unmarked second-hand editions relatively cheap via Amazon. However, if you already own other copies of the texts it is not necessary to buy new copies especially for the course.

The Merchant of Venice

ed. by John Drakakis (Arden Shakespeare, Third Series, 2010)

Othello

ed. by E.A.J. Honigmann, with a new introduction by Ayanna Thompson (Arden Shakespeare, Third Series, revised, 2016)

ed. by Michael Neill (Oxford World Classics, 2006)

Further Reading – Optional

Listed below are a number of texts that might be of interest but do not need to be bought (or consulted) for the course. I have provided scans of the key excerpts for those of you who wish to read more widely in advance or afterwards. Copies will be emailed to students. If you have trouble downloading these or printing them, please ask for help.

Author	Title	Publisher and date
Billing, Christian	'Review of Perceval's <i>Othello</i> ' from <i>Shakespeare</i> , 3, 2006	Copy to be sent
Callaghan, Dympna	'Othello was a White Man' from <i>Shakespeare without Women</i>	Copy to be sent Routledge, 2000
Coryat, Thomas	Selected 'Observations on Venice' from <i>Coryat's Crudities</i>	Copy to be sent 1611
Marlowe, Christopher	<i>The Jew of Malta</i> ~ ~ ~	1593, Multiple
Patterson, Steve	'The Bankruptcy of Homoerotic Amity' from <i>Shakespeare Quarterly</i> , 50, 1999	Copy to be sent
Vaughan, Virginia Mason	'Venetians and Turks' from <i>Othello: A Contextual History</i>	Copy to be sent CUP, 1994
Vaughan, Virginia Mason	'Shakespeare's Moor of Venice' from <i>Performing Blackness on English Stages</i>	Copy to be sent CUP, 2005

Online Sites

You might also find these online articles interesting. They are optional not required reading.

- Trevor Nunn on *Merchant*: www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/merchant/ei_nunn.html
- Howard Jacobson on Shylock: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/feb/05/villain-victim-shylock-shakespeare-howard-jacobson>
- Past Shylocks Talk: <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2011/may/08/playing-shylock-patrick-stewart-sher>
- Elizabethan England's Black Community: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-18903391>
- Hugh Quarshie on *Othello*:
http://www.hamhigh.co.uk/etcetera/theatre/is_othello_a_racist_play_rsc_actor_hugh_quarshie_is_asking_the_question_1_4184119
- Sylvia Morris on Quarshie and *Othello*: <http://theshakespeareblog.com/2014/10/hugh-quarshie-othello-at-last/>
- Kwame Kwei-Armah on *Othello* and Race:
www.theguardian.com/stage/2004/apr/07/theatre1
- Andrew Dickson on Past *Othellos*: www.theguardian.com/stage/2015/jun/10/othello-actors-rsc-lucian-msamati-hugh-quarshie

In Performance

You do not need to watch the plays in advance, but if you would like to do so then or later, here is a list of what is available. (If you feel overwhelmed by choice, I recommend the two Trevor Nunn productions.)

Live Productions

The Merchant of Venice: Shakespeare's Globe, revival of Jonathan Munby's 2015 production with Jonathan Pryce, Rachel Pickup, October 4th-15th

Othello: no professional productions currently scheduled

DVDs of *The Merchant of Venice*

1973, dir. Jonathan Miller, with Laurence Olivier, Joan Plowright

(also available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7IYsPPaZNRo>)

1981, dir. Jack Gold, with Warren Mitchell (BBC Shakespeare)

(also available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5npg28v5MU>)

1999, dir. Trevor Nunn, with Henry Goodman (NT)

2004, dir. Michael Radford, with Al Pacino, Jeremy Irons

(also available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-bZWZEwY21Q>)

2015, dir. Polly Findlay, with Patsy Ferran (RSC)

2015, dir. Jonathan Munby, with Jonathan Pryce (Shakespeare's Globe), to be released 2/9/2016

DVDs of *Othello*

1952, dir. Orson Welles, with Orson Welles, Michael MacLiammoir (remastered 2014)

(also available unre-mastered on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=09NWcKA7JKw>)

1964, dir. Jonathan Miller / Stuart Burge, with Laurence Olivier, Maggie Smith (NT)

1981, dir. Colin Lowrey, with Anthony Hopkins, Bob Hoskins (BBC Shakespeare)

(also available on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TexG2p_JWGc)

1989, dir. Trevor Nunn, with Willard White, Ian McKellen, Imogen Stubbs (RSC)

1995, dir. Oliver Parker, with Laurence Fishburne, Kenneth Branagh

(also available on YouTube, but a bit blurry with Spanish subtitles, at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xBLM7HoyQ5I&list=PLE2433AB3CE37401C>)

2007, dir. Derek Bailey, with Eamonn Walker, Tim McInnerny (Shakespeare's Globe)

2016, dir. Iqbal Khan, with Hugh Quarshie, Lucian Msamati (RSC)

Note Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

Information correct as of: 03 August 2016