

Shakespeare, Ambition and Assassination: *Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar*

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| Start date | 5 April 2019 | End date | 7 April 2019 |
| Venue | Madingley Hall Madingley Cambridge | | |
| Tutor | Clare Smout | Course code | 1819NRX028 |

Director of Academic Centres Sarah Ormrod

For further information on this course, please contact Head of Academic Centre Administration, Zara Kuckelhaus
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To book See: www.ice.cam.ac.uk or telephone 01223 746262

Tutor biography

Clare Smout has contributed courses to the Institute's weekend programme since 2007, teaching Shakespeare, Early Modern Drama and Irish Drama. She is currently a part-time Teaching Fellow at the University of Birmingham, a Visiting Lecturer at Staffordshire University and a major contributor to Crandall University's Study Programme at Oxford. Other regular teaching includes projects for i-Learner (Hong Kong) and the Chinese University of Hong Kong. She also contributes theatre reviews for academic journals. She has just co-edited *The Palgrave Handbook of the History of Women on Stage*, a volume stretching across the centuries and round the globe, from Ancient Greece to 2019 Britain.

Clare previously spent two decades in professional theatre, specialising in directing and in developing new writing, and this has shaped her research and teaching interests. She still directs whenever possible: her most recent project was an adaptation of *King Lear* for primary school students in Hong Kong.

Clare's approach to teaching is essentially interactive. Most sessions are a combination of informal lecturing, full group discussion and small group work. They generally include DVD clips of the plays being studied and occasionally involve students in reading short extracts. Clare believes the strength of courses such as those at the Institute comes from the opportunity for students to exchange ideas and debate interpretations as well as to gain insights from the tutor's specialist knowledge and enthusiasms. The weekends at Madingley are the highlight of her teaching year. It is a great joy to work with students who are so informed, motivated and engaged and a privilege to have time to explore these plays together in such detail.

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: Introduction**

Introduction to each other and to the historical and theatrical context of the plays

Initial comparison of the two plays - narratives, genre and focus

22:00 Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30 Breakfast

09:00 – 10:30 **Session 2: Comparisons – One Basic Plot. Two Very Different Plays**

Continuing comparison of key themes, approaches and focus

10:30 Coffee

11:00 – 12:30 **Session 3: *Julius Caesar* (1) Politics, Marriage and the Supernatural**

13:00 Lunch

14:00 – 16:00 Free

16:00 Tea

16:30 – 18:00 **Session 4: *Julius Caesar* (2) – Language and Manipulation**

18:00 – 18:30 Free

18:30 Dinner

20:00 – 21:30 **Session 5: *Macbeth* (1) - Marriage, Masculinity and Inheritance**

21:30 Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30 Breakfast

09:00 – 10:30 **Session 6 *Macbeth* (2) – Language, Ambiguity and the Supernatural**

10:30 Coffee

11:00 – 12:30 **Session 7: Conclusion and Final Comparisons**

12:45 Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Course syllabus

Aims:

- To enable students to gain deeper insights into the plays studied and the themes explored within them, including ambition, power, politics, marriage, masculinity, fate, murder, manipulation, rhetoric, idealism and tyranny.
- To enable students to develop increased appreciation of the theatrical craftsmanship used in these plays and of how the interplay between character, structure, language, imagery and the dramatic conventions of the time creates meaning and shapes audience's response
- To enable students to develop transferable skills applicable to analysing Early Modern drama and theatrical craftsmanship, as well as increased confidence in discussion and argument in this field

Content:

The course will investigate Shakespeare's exploration of assassination and its consequences, both for the individual and the state. In *Julius Caesar* Shakespeare concentrates primarily on the public and political, in *Macbeth* on the personal and psychological. These two plays, written seven years apart (in 1599 and 1606) and under two very different monarchs (the aging Elizabeth and the Scottish James I) have similar plot narratives, in which we see the catalysts, motivation and planning for an assassination, followed by the bloody act itself and then its aftermath. In both narratives, events appear to be in some way to be fated, predetermined. Yet the themes and tone of these two plays could not be more different.

We will discuss how Shakespeare creates such contrasting works out of these similar ingredients but also what the two plays have in common in less obvious ways. We will explore: the use of structure and imagery to shape audience response; the deployment of ingredients such as the supernatural to raise questions and also to entertain; the exploration of themes of ambition, power, politics, marriage, inheritance, masculinity, fate, murder, manipulation, idealism, tyranny; and the use of rhetoric, language and key words such as honour and manhood by characters and Shakespeare himself.

Presentation of the course:

The sessions will be a combination of formal and informal lecturing, full group discussion and small group work. They generally include DVD clips of the plays being studied and occasionally involve students in reading short extracts. The work is essentially interactive. Clare believes the strength of courses such as these comes from combining the tutor's specialist knowledge and enthusiasms with the opportunity for students to exchange ideas and debate interpretations.

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

- Discuss these plays, their themes, language and structure with greater confidence, more textual and contextual knowledge and deeper insight
- Demonstrate awareness of how similar basic plots can be used to very different effect by the same playwright in different plays
- 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 Advance Reading

Please read both the plays before the course starts and ideally also the introductions to the editions below or something similar.

Please bring a text of each of the plays with you if possible.

I recommend these editions because they have the best modern introductions and footnotes, but if you already own copies of these plays, please don't feel you need to buy new copies.

| Author | Title | Publisher and date |
|----------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| Shakespeare, William | <i>Julius Caesar</i> , ed. by David Daniell | Arden Shakespeare: Third Series, 1998 |
| Shakespeare, William | <i>Macbeth</i> , ed. by Sandra Clark and Pamela Mason | Arden Shakespeare: Third Series, 2015 |

Reading and Resources List – Future / Optional Reading

Listed below are some texts that might be of interest for further reading. Copies of these articles are attached. However, they do not need to be read in advance of the course.

Multiple volumes of critical work have been published on *Macbeth*, though surprisingly little recent material on *Julius Caesar*. I'm very happy to recommend reading tailored to students' individual interests either during or in advance of the class.

| Author | Title | Publisher and date |
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Chapters / Articles – Copies Attached

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| Bartels, Emily C. | ' <i>Julius Caesar</i> : Making History', in <i>Oxford Handbook to Shakespearean Tragedy</i> , edited by Michael Neill and David Schalkwyk | OUP, 2016 |
| Kahn, Coppélia | <i>Roman Warriors: Warriors, Wounds and Women</i> (Chapter 4: <i>Julius Caesar</i>) | Routledge, 1997 |
| Leggatt, Alexander | <i>Violation and Identity</i> (Ch. 7: ' <i>Macbeth</i> : A Deed Without a Name') | CUP, 2005 |
| McLuskie, Kate | ' <i>Macbeth</i> , the Present and the Past', in <i>A Companion to Shakespeare's Works, Vol. 1, Tragedies</i> , edited by Richard Dutton and Jean Howard | Blackwell, 2003 |
| Power, Andrew J | "'O Horror, Horror, Horror!': <i>Macbeth</i> and Fear", in <i>Oxford Handbook to Shakespearean Tragedy</i> , edited by Michael Neill and David Schalkwyk | OUP, 2016 |
| Wilson, Richard | "'Is This A Holiday?': Shakespeare's Roman Carnival" | ELH 1987, vol. 54 |

Books

You will also find **James Shapiro**'s two academic popular best-sellers interesting and useful. I haven't attached copies of the relevant chapters as you will find the full books interesting and they can easily be bought cheap online second-hand or borrowed from town libraries.

Shapiro, James 1599: A Year in Shakespeare's Life (Faber&Faber, 2006) covers the move to the Globe and has a chapter on *Julius Caesar* as well as ones on *Henry V*, *Hamlet*, *As You Like It* and the comic Will Kemp. His follow up **Shapiro, James, 1606: The Year of Lear** (Faber&Faber 2016) focuses mainly on *Lear* but covers the period from James I's accession in 1603 onwards. With substantial discussion of *Macbeth*.

DVDs

Many participants find it helpful to watch DVDs of the plays in performance in advance of the weekend, though this is by no means essential.

Julius Caesar – There are three good recent DVDs of stage productions – the RSC's 2017 production and the Globe's 2014 version, both classical 'toga' productions, and the RSC's 2012 African version. The star-studded 1953 black and white film with Marlon Brandon is still very powerful. There's also a 1970 version with Gielgud and Charlton Heston which is reasonable and can be seen on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-fjI1DSAUG>).

Macbeth -The most critically applauded stage version from the 20th century is the 'timeless' Dench/McKellen/Nunn version played in the tiny intimate space of the Other Place at Stratford in the 1970s, which is available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YpKWWK0Pj34>. The best recent stage production is that by Patrick Stewart (dir. Rupert Goold) set in a Stalinist-style modern world. Both of these stage productions were revisioned for film. There are other options made for film versions such as the 20th century versions by directed by Orson Welles and Roman Polanski or the recent Michael Fassbender movie.

Website addresses

- Professor Emma Smith's 45 minute podcasts are always interesting and each takes a different way in to the play discussed. On *Macbeth* she discusses agency and the witches (though the first 10 minutes are bit off-piste) while on *Caesar* she looks particularly at the tiny scene in which Cinna the Poet is killed. <https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/macbeth> and <https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/julius-caesar>
- Mya Gosling's goodticklebrain.com site provides clever cartoons. Her dramatis personae of *Macbeth* is a good example - <https://goodticklebrain.com/home/2015/9/14/macbeth-dramatis-personae>
- The RSC 48-minute one-man play called *I, Cinna*, detailing events from the point of view of Cinna the Poet, can be seen on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xQAr5le0UU>

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: 06 March 2019