

## Shakespeare and Magic

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**Start date** 14<sup>th</sup> November 2020**End date** 15<sup>th</sup> November 2020**Venue** Virtual Classroom**Tutor** Valentin Gerlier**Course code** 2021NDR223**Director of Academic Centres** Dr Corinne Boz**For further information on this  
course, please contact**Head of Academic Centre Administration, Sarah Blakeney  
[literature@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:literature@ice.cam.ac.uk)**To book** See: [www.ice.cam.ac.uk](http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk) or telephone 01223 746262

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### Tutor biography

Valentin Gerlier, scholar and musician, has lectured on, directed and performed Shakespeare for many years. Valentin also regularly teaches and lectures for the Temenos Academy, Rewley House, Oxford, the William Blake Society, the Prince of Wales School of Traditional Arts and many others. Aside from Shakespeare, his interests include Plato and the Platonic Tradition, Medieval Literature, Philosophy and Theology, Renaissance Poetry and William Blake and the Romantics.

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## Course programme

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### Day One: 14th November 2020

#### Session 1: 10.00 - 11.15am

**Shakespeare's magical worlds: an introduction**

#### Session 2: 11.45am - 1.00pm

***A Midsummer Night's Dream*: The Fairy-world and the imagination**

### Day Two: 15th November 2020

#### Session 3: 10.00 – 11.15am

***The Winter's Tale*: Wonder and Paradox**

#### Session 4: 11.45am – 1.00pm

***The Tempest*: Power, Magic and Forgiveness**

## Course syllabus

### Aims:

- To enable students to gain familiarity with and insight into the texts studied as well as themes and dramatic devices within them;
- To enable students to gain knowledge and understanding of wider cultural, philosophical and literary contexts that constitute the background to the plays, particularly around the complex issue of 'magic'.
- To enable students to develop greater confidence in approaching, discussing and interpreting Shakespearean drama as a whole, whether in written, oral or group discussion form

### Content:

This course aims to explore what might be meant by 'magic' in Shakespeare, exploring in turn attitudes to magic in early modern times, the magic produced by theatrical practice and devices as well as specific 'magical' ways of comprehending reality to which Shakespeare alludes: wonder, paradoxes and the mafeic power of the poetic imagination. Why does Shakespeare make use of magic in his plays? What is the relation of magic *in* Shakespeare with the magical aura *of* Shakespeare's works?

Our first session will provide background and introduction to the course, weaving together the themes we will explore in Shakespeare: magic as a cultural phenomenon, magic as a theatrical practice, and the related ideas of wonder, paradox and the affective power of dramatic poetry.

After looking at some contextual background, we will explore the themes of the fairy-world and fairy magic in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and discuss Shakespeare's treatment of the poetic imagination, and whether it provides its own mode of magic.

Our second session, on *The Winter's Tale*, will explore the conscious return to the 'magical' world of Romance in Shakespeare's late work as well as the usage of divine oracles, messengers and other magical devices in the play. We will also look at early modern theories of wonder as well as the importance of the literary culture of paradox, and how it might have bearing on the 'magical' atmosphere of the play.

The final session will explore how figure of the 'magus' held great fascination in early modern times. We will discover how the magician Prospero is portrayed in *The Tempest*, as well as discuss the magical status of the Island. What Shakespeare might have meant to suggest in portraying the reaches and limits of magic in this way?

### Presentation of the course:

Each session will begin with a lecture/presentation and be followed by a discussion of several passages in the plays as well as general ideas pertaining to our subject. Students' oral participation is especially encouraged, and generous and enthusiastic discussion are a key part of this course.

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

- Gain introductory knowledge on complex literary and cultural issues related to magic both in the theatre and in the Renaissance world, and how Shakespeare interacts with these.
- Gain introductory knowledge of literary and theatrical practices that bear on the issue of magic: specifically, early modern approaches to wonder, paradoxes and the poetic imagination, and how Shakespeare interacts with these.
- Discuss the complex issues relating to the above, in oral and written form.

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## Reading and resources list

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Listed below are texts that might be of interest should you wish to supplement your learning on the course. Any essential reading is marked with an asterisk \*

**\*\*\* It would be useful if attendees could have familiarised themselves with the plays before the course and have a copy with them during the sessions. We recommend the Arden editions, but otherwise any copy of the plays will do.**

Author	Title	Publisher and date
Das, Nandini and Nick Davis (editors)	<i>Enchantment and Dis-enchantment in Shakespeare and Early Modern Drama: Wonder, the Sacred and the Supernatural</i>	London: Routledge, 2016
Frye, Northrop	<i>A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance</i>	Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1995
Healy, Margaret, edited by Katherine Fraik and Tanya Pollard	Poetic "Making" and Moving the Soul', in <i>Shakespearean Sensations: Experiencing Literature in Early Modern England</i>	Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013
Platt, Peter	<i>Shakespeare and the Culture of Paradox</i>	Abingdon: Routledge, 2009
Thomas, Keith	<i>Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England</i>	London: Penguin, 2003
Yates, Francis	<i>The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age</i>	London: Routledge, 2001
Shakespeare, William, edited by Sukanta Chaudhuri	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> *	Arden Shakespeare Third Series. London: Bloomsbury Arden, 2016

Shakespeare,  
William, edited by  
Alden T Vaughan  
and Virginia Mason  
Vaughan

*The Tempest* \*

Arden Shakespeare  
Third Series. London:  
Bloomsbury Arden,  
2011

Shakespeare,  
William, edited by  
John Pitcher

*The Winters Tale* \*

Arden Shakespeare  
Third Series. London:  
Bloomsbury Arden,  
2010

### Websites:

<https://www.bl.uk/shakespeare/themes/magic-illusion-and-the-supernatural>

Podcast: Shakespeare Unlimited

<https://shakespeareandbeyond.folger.edu/2016/03/08/teller-and-the-tempest-magic-in-shakespeares-time/>

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## Additional information

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### What you will need

The course is open to anyone, however it is taught via a virtual classroom. You will be able to see, hear and interact with your classmates and the tutor. In order to participate you will need to have a laptop, computer, tablet or other device equipped with a camera (webcam), speakers and a microphone.

Full instructions and support on the use of the software will be given on request.

### Venue

This course takes place online using the teleconferencing software ZOOM.

If you have any queries about the software or accessing the course, please contact us by e-mailing [creativewriting@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:creativewriting@ice.cam.ac.uk).

**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:* 02 October 2020