Shakespeare and the monarchy

Start date   Saturday 26th June 2021   **End date**   Sunday 27th June 2021

Venue   Virtual Classroom
(taught via live and interactive Zoom sessions in British Summer Time)

Tutor   Sean McEvoy   **Course code**   2021NDR027

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

To book   See: www.ice.cam.ac.uk   or telephone 01223 746262

Tutor biography

Dr Sean McEvoy is a Bye Fellow in English at Murray Edwards College, University of Cambridge, where he currently teaches early modern drama and Tragedy. He has also taught on the Shakespeare MA at Royal Holloway, University of London. His research interests are in the theatre, and in particular early modern and contemporary British and Irish drama. His books include *Shakespeare: The Basics* (3rd ed., 2012), *William Shakespeare's 'Hamlet': A Sourcebook* (2006), *Ben Jonson: Renaissance Dramatist* (2008) and *Theatrical Unrest: Ten Riots in the History of the Stage 1601-2004* (2016).

Course programme

This short course is an opportunity to study and discuss perhaps the major political issue in Shakespeare's dramatic writing: the nature of monarchy. How was it understood, and how was it justified as an institution? What made a good monarch, and how far did a subject's duties extend to a bad one? Shakespeare wrote for Elizabeth I and performed for James I as one of the King's Men. Our focus will be the dramatic presentation of the politics of monarchy in his work.

The plays discussed on the course will be *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *King Richard II*, *King Henry IV Part I* and *Macbeth*. It will be very useful to have read *Julius Caesar* and *Richard II* in advance. Extracts for discussion from the other plays will be provided.

Saturday 26th June 2021

- **Session 1: 10:00am – 11:15am BST***
  Contexts: Political theories and real kings

What ideas about the institution of monarchy were current when Shakespeare was writing? After an introduction to some of these ideas we look at how they function in a drama set in feudal England, *King Richard II*.

- **Session 2: 11:45am – 1:00pm BST***
  Stage Monarchs

In Shakespeare's time analogies were drawn between the performing of monarchy in the new public playhouses and monarchs themselves as performers on the political 'stage'. We look at this idea at work in *King Richard II*, *King Henry IV Part I* and *Hamlet*.

Sunday 27th June 2021

- **Session 3: 10.00am – 11.15am BST***
  Up the republic?

Both contemporary politics and classical precedent suggested that monarchy was not the only viable way of running a country. In this session we look at republican politics in *Julius Caesar* and in *Hamlet*.

- **Session 4: 11.45am – 1.00pm BST***
  Tyrannicide or treason?

Both Elizabeth I and James I had plenty to say about whether a monarch could ever be justly overthrown. Our concern in this final session is how this issue plays out in *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar* and *Macbeth*.

* British Summer Time

Aims:

- To look at how the idea of monarchy is presented in Shakespeare's plays.
- To see how Shakespeare's poetic and dramatic technique contributes to that presentation.
- To explore the connections between theatre and politics at the turn of the seventeenth century.

Content:

This short course is an opportunity to study and discuss perhaps the major political issue in Shakespeare's dramatic writing: the nature of monarchy. How was it understood, and how was it justified as an institution? What made a good monarch, and how far did a subject's duties extend to a bad one? Shakespeare wrote for Elizabeth I and performed for James I as one of the King's Men. Our focus will be the dramatic presentation of the politics of monarchy in his work.

Presentation of the course:

We'll be discussing particular passages in the plays in the context of contemporary political ideas which will be introduced on the course.

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

- Show knowledge and understanding of the political ideas found in Shakespeare's plays.
- Discuss the presentation of a range of ideas about monarchy in five of Shakespeare's plays.

Reading and resources list

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 *

*** We recommence you read Julius Caesar and Richard II in advance and have copies of those plays available during the sessions. Extracts from other plays will be provided.

Author	Title	Publisher and date
Andrew Hadfield	*Shakespeare and Renaissance Politics*	Thomson, 2004
Robin Headlam Wells	*Shakespeare's Politics: A Contextual Introduction*	Continuum, 2009
William Shakespeare	*Hamlet* *Julius Caesar** *King Henry IV Part I* *King Richard II** *Macbeth*	Any good edition, e.g. Cambridge, Arden, Oxford

Website addresses

https://www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/republicanism-and-assassination-in-julius-caesar

Additional information

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.

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.