Course Description:

This course provides an introductory survey of Shakespeare’s works through a study of his Sonnets along with eight plays: Antony and Cleopatra, Hamlet, Troilus and Cressida, Richard II, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, King Lear, As You Like It, and The Winter’s Tale. Our selections cover the major genres of Shakespearean drama as well as the stages of his theatrical career.

Complementing our close reading of the plays, we will also be situating the texts in relation to their literary, theatrical, and historical contexts. Because Shakespeare wrote his plays for performance rather than publication, we will pay particular attention to the cultural importance of the early modern theater. In addition, we will examine the ways these texts have been reinterpreted over time by looking at the plays in performance and on film.

This semester our discussion of individual plays will be coordinated alongside live screenings from the Royal Shakespeare Company and National Theatre, including the NT production of Antony and Cleopatra with Ralph Fiennes (February), the RSC production of Troilus and Cressida (February), the NT production of Richard II with Simon Russell Beale (March), and the RSC production of As You Like It (April).

Course work will consist of reading quizzes for each play (8 in all), a review of one of the screened productions, active participation, and a final 8-10 page research paper.

Due to student demand for this required class, the course will not be open to auditors this semester.

Please feel free to contact Professor Netzloff (netzloff@uwm.edu) with any questions about the course.