The concerns of Shakespeare's plays remain our own: cultural conflict, wealth inequality, war, political change, race, gender and power, the family and marriage.

This course provides an introductory survey of Shakespearean drama through a focused study of four plays: The Merchant of Venice, Henry V, Hamlet, and Othello. 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.

Course work will consist of four response papers (1-page each) and active participation in the online forum.