

ENGL3306 Shakespeare: The Major Works
Prof. Jamie Ferguson, fall 2012

“He was not of an age, but for all time!” (Ben Jonson, 1623)
“Every age creates its own Shakespeare.” (Marjorie Garber, 2004)

This is an introduction to the dramatic works of William Shakespeare, through reading of six of the major plays: *I Henry IV*, *Hamlet*, *Measure for Measure*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *The Tempest*. We shall approach these plays as examples of Shakespeare’s work in four genres: tragedy, comedy, history, and romance; we shall also follow Shakespeare’s thematic concerns and artistic development across these generic boundaries. We shall use various critical categories to discuss and write about the plays: source-study, character-study, imagery and symbolism, aesthetics, performance and textual history. We shall study the plays in their social, political, and religious contexts and review some of the relevant criticism associated with each play.

The texts of Shakespeare’s plays are available in a number of editions. The following are recommended:

One-volume editions: *Oxford Shakespeare*; *Norton Shakespeare*; *Norton Shakespeare: The Essential Plays* [contains all the plays we’re reading for this course]; *Riverside Shakespeare*; David Bevington, ed., *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*; *Arden Shakespeare: Complete Works*; *Complete Pelican Shakespeare*.
Critical single-play editions: Arden, Oxford, New Cambridge, Norton Critical, Longman Cultural, Bedford Texts and Contexts.
Single-play editions with minimal critical apparatus: Pelican, New Folger Library, Signet, New Kittredge, Yale University Press.