



Independent Study | in **Idaho**

English 476
Shakespeare

Independent Study in Idaho
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Study Guide

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PO Box 443225
Moscow ID 83844-3225

Self-paced study. Anytime. Anywhere!

English 476 Shakespeare

Idaho State University
3 Semester-Hour Credits

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Independent Study in Idaho

This course is offered through Idaho State University.

Engl 476: Shakespeare

3 Semester-Hour Credits: ISU

Welcome!

Whether you are a new or returning student, welcome to the Independent Study in Idaho (ISI) program. Before beginning this course, read the information provided below, including course description, prerequisites, required materials, course objectives, and information about lessons, exams, and grading.

Important!

As you read this section, you will see the following icon:



Use this icon to direct yourself to the **Appendix** in the back of this study guide for essential registration information, Independent Study in Idaho policies and procedures, and forms you will need to complete this course successfully. You are responsible for understanding and following ISI policies and procedures.



Turn to the **Appendix** now. Familiarize yourself with the information in the *Registration* section, student responsibilities in *Academic Integrity*, and the necessary forms. If there is anything you do not understand, please contact the ISI office for clarification before starting your course.

Course Description

Intensive study of selected works of Shakespeare.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course; however, it is strongly recommended that students take introductory college writing classes such as English 101 and English 102, also offered through Independent Study in Idaho, and an introductory class in literature before taking this course.

Course Materials

Required Course Materials

- Greenblatt, Stephen, ed. *The Norton Shakespeare*. 1st ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1997. ISBN-10: 0-393-97087-6; ISBN-13: 978-0-393-97087-6
- McDonald, Russ, ed. *Shakespeare: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1945–2000*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004. ISBN-10: 0-631-23488-8; ISBN-13: 978-0-631-23488-3 (paperback)

Strongly Recommended Supplementary Course Materials

- Harmon, William, and Hugh Holman. *A Handbook to Literature*. 10th ed. New York: Prentice Hall, 2005. ISBN-10: 0-131-34442-0
- Lynn, Steven. *Texts and Contexts*. New York: Pearson Longman, 2004. ISBN-10: 0-321-20942-7
- In addition, I encourage you to obtain any student manual, handbook to writing, or quick reference guide to MLA-style formatting to facilitate your editing of written assignments—all of which are expected to adhere strictly to standards of writing and formatting.

Independent Study in Idaho course materials are available for purchase at the University of Idaho Bookstore. Visit the UI Bookstore's Web site, <http://www.uidahobookstore.com>, select *Textbook*,

Independent Study for a list of course materials. You may order online, by telephone, (208) 885-7334, or by e-mail to genbks@uidaho.edu.

Independent Study in Idaho courses are updated and revised periodically. Ordering course materials from the UI Bookstore at the time of registration allows you to purchase the correct edition(s) of textbooks, study guides, and supplemental materials. If purchasing textbooks from another source, refer to the ISBN(s) for the textbook(s) listed for this course to ensure that you obtain the correct edition(s).

If you have questions regarding the course materials you have ordered and received, contact the UI Bookstore.

Additional Course Requirements

This course requires a computer with Internet access and word-processing software.

Course Introduction

General Course Overview

This course will introduce you to the life and works of William Shakespeare. Specifically, we will be looking at drama written by the Great Bard for the early modern stage during the English Renaissance, that is, during the sixteenth and seventeenth century. While the focus will lie with the tragedies (*Titus Andronicus*, *Hamlet*, and *King Lear*), we will study a variety of dramatic genres, including comedies (*The Comedy of Errors* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), histories (*Henry V*), and romances (*The Tempest*).

William Shakespeare is considered one of the greatest and most influential poets of all times, and his writing has left a mark on literary culture by painting an intriguing, authentic, and often highly critical picture of his own life and times. Through an intensive study of Shakespearean drama, this course will explore early modern culture and politics and illuminate the social and religious concerns of this historical period. While much of early modern culture is reflected in the works of William Shakespeare, much more is hidden within the intricate syntax of his poetry. The unraveling of Shakespeare's poetic genius and the probing into his meaning and self-reflective portrayal of early modern culture will drive our interpretative efforts in this course.

Cultural and Literary Overview

The Renaissance was a period of enormous social, political, and intellectual unrest. Power became a universal theme—and the search for truth a quest of epic dimensions. The Protestant Reformation and Italian humanism struck the European continent with full force, sending new and revolutionary ideas all the way across the English Channel. But medieval beliefs were not replaced by these movements—neither in Europe, nor in England. Rather, they were complemented and supplemented by new findings and hypotheses that sometimes caused confusion, but more often resulted in intellectual debates. These debates reached back and forth and extended in both directions, away and toward the English Isles, thereby imbuing the early modern world with an internationalism and connectedness that had heretofore been unimaginable. Early moderns wrote treatises and tracts, and short expository and explorative writings, which initiated cross-national discussions about the problem of free will, the responsibilities of rulers, the art of warfare, the conduct of courtiers, the nature of love, and the dangers of public performances. Social commentary fashioned itself in the form of non-fictional expository writings, comparable to current-day news flashes. Literature was on the rise.

Indeed, the sixteenth century gave birth to some of the greatest achievements in English literature. William Shakespeare, of course, made his not-so-humble beginnings toward the end of the 1500s, writing some of his finest plays during the late sixteenth century—his *Richard II* through *Henry V* historical sequence, for example, and his famous romantic tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*; *Hamlet*, of course, forever

marks the beginning of the seventeenth century, with an estimated composition date of 1600. But Shakespeare was not the only sensation, nor were his plays, the most unique writings of the day.

Martin Luther's posting of the 95 theses at the doors of the cathedral in Wittenberg in 1517 set in motion the Protestant Reformation, a religious and cultural movement that would recast the western world. Luther's theses initiated religious doubt and, saturating early modern European thought, unleashed an intense intellectual energy. This energy quickly and forcefully surged through Renaissance Europe, produced debate and, quite literally, set the stage for Shakespeare and other creative thinkers like him, who channeled the productive forces that surrounded them and created literary works that paid tribute to the world they imitated. It is in the works of these early modern playwrights that we find the earliest and most extensive engagements with early modern culture and a world in flux.

Poetry and drama were thus born alongside philosophical and theological debates. Although generally concerned with matters similar to those raised by theological and philosophical polemicists, poets and playwrights were additionally interested in portraying these concerns in a manner that made them accessible to peoples from all walks of life and all levels of education. Plays were meant to entertain, to amuse, and to delight; but they were also meant to instruct and to raise awareness of cultural issues that occupied the nation. Unlike previous types of literature then, the early modern play was also inherently public, and to accommodate this new genre a public space had to be created. Thus the English playhouse experienced its nascence toward the end of the sixteenth century, quickly establishing itself as the place where the new intellectualism and internationalism found their most vivid and often most controversial expression.

This course will examine Shakespearean drama as part of these "debates," and acknowledge Shakespeare's indebted- and connectedness to cultural, political, and intellectual concerns. Additionally, it will examine how early modern creative energies impacted the stage literature of Renaissance England and how Shakespearean drama channeled these energies, responded to them, and translated them for the general public, inviting all social classes to experience his plays.

Analytical and Interpretative Tools

As mentioned earlier, unraveling Shakespeare's poetic genius is our primary analytical technique in discovering cultural context and literary meaning. In addition to **themes, genres, and character development**, all of which are intricately tied to **plot structure** and contribute to our overall understanding of a play, Shakespeare's **poetry** serves as an important analytical tool for interpreting his drama. More specifically, through the **style, diction, and rhythm** of Shakespearean poetry, the reader is introduced to the importance of language and gains access to the linguistic culture in which Shakespeare lived and the times during which he wrote. But "unraveling" requires sensitivity and a skillful and informed reading, all of which are qualities that have been lost to many of us. The reacquisition of this sensitivity will be instrumental to our attempts to unveil Shakespearean drama.

Shakespeare drew on a large array of **dramatic** and **poetic conventions** and an even wider array of **literary** or **stylistic devices**. The few key conventions and devices listed below are the most important and easily identifiable ones and, as such, will facilitate your reading and comprehension of Shakespearean drama. Be sure to familiarize yourself with these terms and concepts, as they will keep reappearing throughout this course. You will be expected to know them, and will be responsible for identifying and interpreting them within the context of a given Shakespearean play.

Dramatic Conventions

Dramatic conventions will help you anticipate plot developments and character types.

- **Dramatic plot structure**

A typical Shakespearean play follows a **five-step structure**, with each step fulfilling a certain function within the overall **plot** of the play. Unlike Greco-Roman drama, which begins *in medias res* (i.e., in the middle of the action), early modern drama introduces its story gradually. Plays typically begin with an **exposition**, in which the preceding events are summed up and future plans are laid out. We learn about major problems and come to anticipate potential plot developments. During the second step, **rising action**, problems thicken, conflicts intensify, and plans and intrigues begin to unfold before our eyes. Step three marks the **climax** of the story—events reach a point of no return, intrigues are unveiled, and conflicts leave cracks in the foundation of the fictional world created within the play. The fourth step, **falling action**, slows down the action as the plot moves toward its **conclusion** in step five, in which problems are resolved and conflicts decided. The form in which problems are resolved varies from play to play, but generally we can assume that they end happily (and often in marriage) in the comedies and unhappily (and often in death) in the tragedies. While histories end in whichever way history dictates, romances end typically in the same way as comedies, although in romances the resolution comes about somewhat abruptly and is often introduced by some type of divine or supernatural intervention (e.g., Hermione comes to life in *The Winter's Tale*). Importantly, all Shakespearean plays consist of five distinct acts, and often the five steps of the dramatic plot structure align themselves with the five act division of the play (beware though, sometimes they do not or do so only loosely and on the surface).

- **Subplots**

Alongside the main plot—the five-step action surrounding the main characters—a *subplot* often haunts Shakespearean plays, subtly mirroring the main action and proffering alternative solutions to problems as well as alternative ways of dealing with conflicts or of viewing the world. By comparison with the main plot, subplots are meant to illuminate flaws within the main action of the play.

- **Dramatic foils**

The characters involved in these subplots often function as *foils* to the characters involved in the main action of the play; that is, they function as doubles or variations to the characters of the main plot by offering intriguing points of comparison and contrast to the protagonist and his/her immediate circumstances. Understanding the motivations of minor characters that function as foils to the characters of the main plot will illuminate the more complex and puzzling actions of the play's protagonists/antagonists.

- **Protagonist/Antagonist**

Respectively, *protagonist* and *antagonist* are technical terms that refer to the hero/heroine and the anti-hero/heroine or villain/villainess of a play. Hamlet, for example, is the protagonist or hero of the play that bears his name, *Hamlet*, while Claudius can be viewed as the antagonist, who is plotting against the story's hero, constantly and persistently trying to perpetuate his downfall and possibly even death. In *Othello*, the play's protagonist is Othello and his counterpart and antagonist can be found in the ever-conniving Iago—whose malice, by the way, makes him one of Shakespeare's most spectacular villains.

- **Tragic hero**

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle describes a *tragic hero* as the protagonist of a play who brings about his own downfall and tragic demise. Marred with a character flaw of which s/he is largely unaware—and which Aristotle calls *hamartia*—the tragic hero seems unable to avoid doom. In Greco-Roman drama, *hubris* (i.e., excessive pride or arrogance) can often be identified as the tragic hero's *hamartia*. In Shakespearean drama, identifying the flaw and successfully focusing blame on this one flaw can be

tricky; Shakespeare's plays are more complex and often a combination of flaws and/or circumstances need to be drawn into consideration.

Poetic Conventions

Poetic conventions will help you differentiate speech patterns and dramatic emphases.

- **Dialogue**

Language is everything in Shakespeare; his plays thrive on words. When you read a Shakespearean play, you will see that it is composed mostly of *dialogue*. Occasionally, there may be a few stage directions, but the authenticity of those stage directions is questionable. Editors or directors could have added them, and Shakespeare's colleagues John Heminges and Henry Condell, who were responsible for assembling the First Folio edition of his works in 1623, might have copied stage directions from manuscripts used by actors during performances. Remember that Shakespeare was not just a writer; he was also a director and an actor, and in those capacities he would have been present at performances, ready to provide stage directions in person. Direct speech thus surpasses stage directions in importance and emerges as our most comprehensive clue to Shakespearean message and intent.

- **Soliloquy**

A *soliloquy* occurs when a character is alone on stage or is so isolated from the remaining actors and the action that it can be safely assumed s/he can be overheard only by the audience. Typically, soliloquies are reserved for the protagonist or the antagonist, i.e., for the main character, the play's hero, or for his/her dramatic opponent. Through soliloquies, the audience learns about the hero's innermost thoughts, revealing his/her doubts, hopes, and fears. Delivered by the antagonist, soliloquies more typically reveal secret plans, intrigues, and grudges. Since nobody but the audience can overhear soliloquies, they are the most immediate and the truest revelation of character within a play.

- **Aside**

An *aside* is like a mini-soliloquy that, unlike the soliloquy, does not require solitude or isolation, but can be uttered in the middle of a conversation. Like the soliloquy, however, it is meant to be overheard only by the theater audience, although occasionally it might be addressed to a co-conspirator. Asides are brief and often sharp or witty commentaries on the action of the play or the conversation and characters immediately surrounding it.

Diction

Diction is a term used to describe the way in which characters speak within a play. There are three types of speech patterns in a Shakespearean play: **prose**, **rhymed verse**, and **blank verse**. In your *Norton Shakespeare*, you will be able to differentiate easily between the three types simply by looking at the way in which the lines are arranged on the page.

- **Prose**

Prose is unrhymed and non-rhythmic speech. It is typically aligned by left and right justifications; in your text, lines run on and over, and there is no capitalization of the first word of every line; only "I," proper nouns, and the beginnings of sentences are capitalized.

Virtue? A fig! 'Tis in ourselves that we are this, or thus. Our bodies are our garden, to the which our wills are gardeners: so that if we plant nettles or sow lettuce, set hyssop and weed up thyme, supply it with one gender of herbs or distract it with many—why, the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills. (Iago in *Othello*, 1.3.314–21)

- **Rhymed verse**

Rhymed verse differs from prose in that lines do not run over and are not right justified, but break rhythmically and the last word of every line rhymes; in Shakespearean drama, we typically find a simple aa, bb, cc, or abc, abc rhyme scheme, with a, b, and c marking the last syllable of every line.

She that was ever fair, and never **proud**; **a**
Had tongue at will, and yet was never **loud**; **a**
Never lacked gold, and yet went never **gay**; **b**
Fled from her wish, and yet said “Now I **may**”; **b**
She that being angered, her revenge being **nigh**; **c**
Bade her wrong stay, and her displeasure **fly**; **c**

(Iago in *Othello*, 2.1.146–51)

- **Blank verse**

Blank verse looks on the page like rhymed verse in that it is left aligned only and the beginning of each line is capitalized. But, unlike rhymed verse, blank verse does not rhyme; instead, it consists of ten syllables per line, with each line containing **five iambic feet**—that is, unstressed, *stressed* syllables, a pattern commonly referred to as **iambic pentameter**. In the following example, notice the **rhythm** created by **iambic pentameter**: -da DUM/da DUM/da DUM/da DUM/da DUM.

O [pause], / be-ware, / my lord /, of jea / lou-sy!
It is / the green /-eyed mon /ster, which / doth mock
The meat / it feeds on/. That cuck / old lives / in bliss
Who, cer / tain of / his fate /, loves not / his wronger;
But O /, what dam / ned min / utes tells / he o'er
Who dotes /, yet doubts /—sus-pects /, yet fon / dly loves!

(Iago in *Othello*, 3.3.165–70)

The majority of Shakespearean dialogue is written in blank verse; it is the speech pattern for which Shakespearean drama is famous. Occasionally, the last two lines of a passage written in blank verse might rhyme; when this happens, the end rhyme is called a **capping couplet** or a **heroic couplet**, and its rhetorical function is to add extra emphasis and alert the reader to important plot developments.

The Moor is of a free and open nature,
That thinks men honest that but seem to be so,
And will as tenderly be led by the nose
As asses are.
I haven't. It is engender'd. Hell and **night** **a**
Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's **light**. **a**

(Iago in *Othello*, 1.3.388–93)

Stylistic Devices and Figures of Speech

Stylistic devices and *figures of speech* will help you identify dramatic emphases and alert you to major dramatic themes.

- **Simile**

A *simile* is an **explicit comparison** (using “like” or “as”) as in “Her lips are **like** roses.”

- **Metaphor**

A *metaphor* is a word or phrase that equates one thing with another by suggesting a likeness or analogy between the two. A metaphor is generally an **implicit comparison** (which does not use “like” or “as”): “Her lips **are** roses” and “Our bodies **are** our gardens.”

- **Personification**

A *personification* attributes life, sense, and reason to something inanimate, such as an object, an abstraction, or a concept; it personifies a thing by treating it as though it were a person: for example, “my humble home,” “a sad attire,” and “the woods looked on as the child passed through.”

- **Oxymoron**

An *oxymoron* is a deliberate combination of seemingly contradictory words. Hamlet’s reference to Polonius as an “honest fishmonger” is an example of this, as fishmongers are traditionally viewed as anything but honest—they are notorious market criers who persistently try to dupe their unsuspecting customers into buying day-old fish and inferior catches for normal or even higher than normal prices.

- **Alliteration**

An *alliteration* depends on the repetition of consonant sounds, frequently (but not exclusively) at the beginning of words. In “When I do count the clock that tells the time,” for example, both the “k”-sounds and the “t”-sounds are repeated to emphasize the speaker’s impatience with the slow passage of time.

- **Pun**

A *pun* is a deliberate confusion of words based upon similarity of sound as in “made/maid” or “sun/son.” A pun is a deceptively simple stylistic device and one of which Shakespeare was particularly fond. His audience encompassed folks from all walks of life and puns were something everybody could understand. Often, however, puns are misleading—they seem straightforward when in reality they point to much larger themes and motives. At the beginning of *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, Sampson and Gregory joke that movement can mean many things—sexually as well as in the sense of taking action, running from danger, and escaping consequences. At the end of the play we realize that all of the meanings of the word “move” have come into play and contributed to the dramatic ending of the tragedy.

- **Anaphora**

An *anaphora* is the repetition of a word or words at the beginning of a series of parallel syntactical units. See, for example, John of Gaunt’s dying lament in *Richard II*: “**This** royal throne, **this** scept’red isle, / **This** earth of majesty, **this** seat of Mars, / **This** other Eden, demi-paradise...**this** blessed plot, **this** earth, **this** realm, **this** England.” The present (“this”) greatness of England is emphasized and through it an anticipation of a future (“that”) England is suggested, one which will be distinctly less brilliant than the present one.

The suggestion here is that “that” England will lack all of the glory “this” England obviously possesses.

- **Hyperbole**

A *hyperbole* is a deliberate **overstatement** or an **exaggeration** for dramatic effect. Examples of this abound in Shakespeare and stretch from Antipholus of Syracuse’s lament “I am to the world like a drop of water” in *The Comedy of Errors* to Lady Macbeth’s notorious exclamation in *The Tragedy of Macbeth* that “All the perfumes of Arabia” will not cover the smell of blood that seems to have penetrated her hands since the murder of King Duncan.

- **Allusion**

An *allusion* is a reference to a familiar expression, person, place, or concept, typically stemming from biblical, classical, or proverbial traditions. For example, “prodigal son” alludes to a parable in the Bible, and the expression “Trojan horse” alludes to a story from the *Iliad*.

Helpful Hints

As we begin our exploration, we need to remember that Shakespeare wrote for the stage and that his works were meant to be watched, not read. In fact, the first complete edition of his plays came out in 1623 (this edition is commonly referred to as the First Folio), which was several years after the poet’s death. Generally speaking, people came and saw his plays performed, and the reason for that is obvious: Shakespeare’s works need to be *experienced*. I strongly recommend that you read Shakespeare aloud, and that you watch as many productions of his plays as possible (made for the screen or the stage). If at all possible, try to watch more than one performance per play, because every enactment of Shakespearean drama is an interpretation, be it by its actors, directors, or screenwriters. In other words, every production of a Shakespearean play is just one interpretation or reading of that particular play. No single production can capture all the facets and nuances that Shakespeare wrote into his plays: There is always more; there is always something that remains just beneath the surface.

Course Objectives

At the end of this course you should be able to:

- Read and comprehend Shakespearean drama independently
- Write reflective, interpretive, and critical essays about early modern drama
- Contextualize and historicize early modern drama
- Utilize and criticize scholarly articles on early modern drama

Lessons

Overview

This course consists of three units. Unit 1 contains two lessons and covers two plays; Unit 2 contains three lessons and covers three plays; and Unit 3 contains two lessons and covers two plays. Each of these units ends with a proctored, written exam. Together the three units cover seven lessons and seven plays. Comprehension of and familiarity with all of these plays will be tested in the comprehensive final exam that marks the end of this course.

Lesson Components

Each lesson includes the following components:

- **Lesson Objectives**

The lesson objectives are meant to alert you to the learning goals of a particular lesson. By the end of the lesson, you are expected to meet the objectives of that particular lesson.

- **Reading Assignment**

The reading assignment for each lesson-provides you with a list of readings that need to be completed in order for you to meet the lesson objectives. The successful completion of each lesson hinges on finishing the readings *prior* to engaging with the lectures, study questions, written assignments, and exams.

- **Important Terms**

The list of important terms alerts you to some of the conventions you will encounter in the readings, lectures, study questions, written assignments, and exams. While some of the terms might have

already been mentioned in the *Course Introduction* or during previous lectures, a few will be new. It is your job to figure out their meaning and to situate their significance within the context of the play under discussion. Both *A Handbook to Literature* and *Texts and Contexts* will be helpful in defining and situating these terms. At the end of the play under discussion, you are expected to be familiar with these terms.

- **Lecture**

Each lecture is meant to help you process the information you have already encountered in your reading of the play, as well as in the supplemental material from *The Norton Shakespeare* and the secondary discussions from *Shakespeare: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1945–2000*. Be aware that the lectures depend for their argument upon your completion of the readings. In general, lectures will reinforce concepts introduced by the readings, and they will direct your attention to specific parts of the play or passages from the reading. Each lecture extends the focus of its analysis and builds upon insights acquired in previous lectures.

- **Self-Study Questions**

The *self-study* questions are geared to lead you toward a closer reading and a deeper understanding of each play, as well as toward a more critical engagement with and a more informed analysis of each play and its supplementary materials. To complete this course successfully, you need to put some time into answering all of the questions posed in this section. **Note that while you are encouraged to respond to these questions in writing, you will not submit these responses to your instructor.** The questions are intended to make you think critically about the texts. As you formulate your responses to questions and study prompts, make sure that you can draw on the text for support. You need to be able to provide evidence for your claims; referencing quotations from the text of the play and the scholarly articles that you read is the best and easiest way to go about providing such evidence and support. While you will not be able to answer any of the questions without having completed the all of the assigned readings, skimming through the questions before you read the play and the article might help you focus your reading efforts.

- **Written Assignment**

There are three types of written assignments that you will be asked to complete during the course of this Shakespeare seminar—four, if you count the responses to the *self-study* questions. The written assignments are designed in a manner that encourages you to engage critically with the plays, express your individual thoughts on the readings, and lead you toward an informed analysis of the text. The individual assignments are discussed in more detail below in the *Written Assignments* section.

Study Hints

- Complete all assigned readings.
- Set a schedule allowing for completion of the course one month prior to your desired deadline. (An *Assignment Submission Log* is provided for this purpose.)
- Submit all writing assignments at least two weeks prior to scheduling a proctored exam on the unit to give your professor time to return graded work to you and comment on your overall learning achievement for the study unit, and to give yourself time to go over your instructor's comments and review the material once more.
- Wait for responses from the instructor before submitting more work, scheduling exams, or moving on to the next lesson.
- Review all of the plays, all of the assigned reading, and all of the graded assignments and instructor comments prior to scheduling and taking an exam.
- Make use of the sample exam that has been provided for you in the back of this study guide. Complete it carefully and without assistance after you have finished Unit 1 and prior to scheduling

your first unit exam. Expect a similar format for the proctored exams that you will complete at the end of each unit, as well as for the final exam. Do **not** submit this exam to your instructor.

- *Self-study* questions: Even if you are not asked to submit your written work to the instructor, as is the case with the short responses to the *self-study* questions, it is meaningful to complete the assignment diligently and to follow instructions carefully. In fact, I encourage you to answer *all* of the questions posed in the *self-study* section and to read the plays closely for textual evidence and quotations that you may provide to support your responses. The unit exams will draw on the *self-study* questions; developing responses to these *self-study* prompts will save you time during the exams.



See the **Appendix** at the back of this study guide for essential **ISI policies on submitting lessons to your instructor**. See your *Registration Confirmation Letter* for **your instructor's requirements: how to format and submit lessons, number of lessons you may submit at one time, and lesson guidelines**.

Written Assignments

To complete this course and its units successfully, you need to submit a total of six written assignments. There are three different types of writing that you will be asked to submit for this course: **summary analysis, annotated bibliography, and analytical paper**. Examples of these three types of writing and detailed instructions for the assignments are provided for you toward the back of this study guide. All of the written assignments are geared toward providing you with an opportunity to express your independent analysis and critical response to the readings.

A few rules apply to all written assignments. These are formal writing exercises, and you are expected to follow the rules of Standard Written English. Your papers should be no longer and no shorter than the number of pages specified and required for the individual assignment. Neither longer nor shorter papers will be accepted for any given assignment, so please pay attention to the guidelines accompanying the individual paper assignment. All papers should have a 1" margin all around and display your name and a page number in the upper right-hand corner. Be sure to provide an introduction and a conclusion to your paper and organize your thoughts into coherent paragraphs of sensible lengths (a well-developed paragraph consists of a minimum of 7–10 sentences). Please proofread your paper and follow MLA conventions. Again, these rules apply to **all** of the six written assignments: the summary analyses, annotated bibliographies, and analytical papers.

Two summary analyses (1–2 pages, double-spaced)

A *summary analysis* involves a summary and a critical evaluation of a scholarly article. It is a detailed summary of all of the major points of a scholarly discussion of a play followed by a brief analysis of the writer's credentials and the value of his or her analysis for the improvement of your own personal understanding of the play.

Here is a breakdown of the three steps involved: 1) summarize the article; 2) research the author and his or her professional qualifications; 3) comment on how the reading of this article has impacted your understanding of the play.

Any of the articles in McDonald's *Shakespeare: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1945–2000* pertaining to the play or genre under discussion are acceptable for a summary analysis. Besides summarizing the article of your choice in one or two pages, you will also be required to comment on the quality and relevance of the article and on the professional qualifications of the article's author. How does the article contribute to your understanding of Shakespeare, the play under discussion, Shakespeare's overall dramatic accomplishments, and/or early modern culture more generally? Who is the writer of the

article; what is his/her professional expertise; where does s/he work; and what other scholarly work has s/he published? Check the back of this study guide for an example of a summary analysis paper.

Two annotated bibliographies (2–4 pages, double-spaced)

To complete an annotated bibliography, you will need to read five articles from *Shakespeare: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1945–2000* and write concise and critical annotations for **each one** of them. Your annotations to these articles should resemble what you have done for the summary analyses assignments, but should be briefer than the summary analyses and should only focus on the main argument of the article and its value in illuminating the play under discussion. The caveat here is that you may not include the articles that you have used for your summary analyses; all of your articles must be new. Check the back of this study guide for an example of an annotated bibliography.

Two analytical papers (4–6 pages, double-spaced)

Each *analytical paper* will require your integration of at least four critical articles from *Shakespeare: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1945–2000* in your own discussion of a play, a specific scene, a certain theme within one play or reoccurring in several of the plays you have read. Any of the articles that you will have discussed and critically analyzed for the annotated bibliography and summary analysis assignments may be used for these papers, but you may also include articles from *Shakespeare: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1945–2000* that you have not discussed for a prior assignment. Check the back of this study guide for more detailed guidelines for an analytical paper.

Exams

Overview

- You must wait for grades and comments on lessons prior to taking each subsequent exam.
- You must wait for exam results before submitting the next lesson.
- For your instructor's exam guidelines, refer to your *Registration Confirmation Letter* and the *Exam Information* sections in this study guide.
- All exams for this course, the unit exams as well as the final exam, are proctored.

Sample Exam (Self-Study)

Complete the sample exam (Part 1 and Part 2) in this study guide carefully and without assistance after you have finished Unit 1 (lessons 1 and 2) and prior to scheduling Exam 1. Do NOT submit the sample exam to your instructor.

Three Unit Exams (proctored, up to 3 hours)

In order to complete this course successfully you will have to pass three unit exams, each one covering the lessons and plays contained within the units. All of these exams will be proctored and all of them will consist of passage identifications and a choice of two short essay questions or one longer essay response.

One Final Exam (proctored, up to 3 hours)

In order to pass this course successfully you will have to complete one comprehensive final exam, which covers all of the seven plays read in the course. As with the unit exams, the final exam will be proctored and consist of passage identifications and a choice of two short essay questions or one longer essay response.

Choosing a Proctor/Scheduling Exams

All exams require a proctor. You should choose a proctor **at least one month prior** to scheduling the first exam.



See the **Appendix** for guidelines on *how to choose a proctor and schedule exams*.

Grading Standards

This course and all of its assignments will be graded on a standard scale from A to F, with A being greater than 90% and F lower than 60%. All grades are determined by applying standards of language, tone, coherence, style, logic, organization, and mechanics.

The **A paper** is a superior paper—it surpasses other papers because it is original, logical, and eloquent. In general, this type of paper stands out because the writer has chosen an interesting topic—one about which s/he is obviously enthusiastic. The approach to the paper topic is unique, and the analysis is insightful. This paper follows a clear and systematic organizational pattern and is devoid of any major mechanical mistakes and logical fallacies. There is a clear and exceptional command of language, stylistic devices, and academic conventions. The A paper succeeds because it demonstrates a superior understanding of the literature under discussion and a clear awareness of the expectations of the writer’s audience. It does what it sets out to do and it does it competently, confidently, and convincingly.

The **B paper** is a very good paper—but it is not superior to most others. It does, however, achieve almost all of its major goals. It has a clear introduction and a good thesis statement, a well-developed argument and a logical layout, and the conclusion follows naturally. Under closer scrutiny, the paper falls short of succeeding in one or perhaps even two of its major purposes. It might have a great thesis and a good exposition and a clear organization, but the argument struggles or strays at times; conversely, it might have an excellent argument but a slightly shaky organization with too little textual support. Mechanically, this paper should be comparable to the A paper: the writer must demonstrate an exceptional command of language, stylistic devices, and academic conventions even without achieving flawlessness.

The **C paper** is a good paper, which fulfills the assignment, but fails to impress the reader. It does what has been asked but refuses to go beyond that. It lacks passion and conviction. The writer falls short of getting the reader involved in the topic and making his/her audience care; more importantly, it falls short of making his/her audience believe that the writer cares. While the argument might be sound, adequate support is slim and occasionally absent altogether. The paper might be organized logically and strategically, but its use of language disappoints: there is a lack of sentence variety, smooth transitions, and appropriate word choices. Structurally, the paper is predictable, ideas do not surprise, and paragraphs fail to delve below the surface; the paper’s narrative tone might need occasional adjustments.

In the **D paper**, multiple things have gone wrong at the same time. The paper might still be fulfilling the assignment, but both organization and mechanics suffer shortcomings. Perhaps, the thesis fails to convince, or to stir the reader’s interest. The support might be inadequate or insufficient—the quotes from the text are not interpreted sufficiently, and sources are not integrated convincingly. The narrative fails to meet the audience’s expectations, and the style is inappropriate to a formal, academic writing exercise. Typically, this type of paper suffers from serious mechanical errors, which distract the reader from its argument, and the content remains too far removed from the reader to make him or her care about the topic. Vagueness prevails, obscuring both argument and organization.

The **F paper** receives a failing grade because it falls short of fulfilling the assignment—a failure to meet the required page length is this paper’s most immediately damaging error. **An F is applied automatically to papers that fail to meet the required minimum page requirement or exceeds the maximum page limit.** Be sure to closely read the guidelines to the individual assignments. There are other problems, though, that might lead to an F. Often F papers have no thesis statement or one so vague that it is impossible to identify, let alone follow, the argument. There is little to no audience awareness; language and style fail to reflect an understanding of academic standards. Word choice and sentence structure are simplistic, and generalizations prevail. F papers achieve little beyond confusing the reader by the randomness of their claims. Throughout, support is insufficient, and the argument remains ill-defined until the very end. Structurally, this paper is superficial; mechanically it is sloppy.

An **X paper** represents incomplete or misdirected efforts. This grade is given when the work demonstrates clear effort and engagement by the students, but would benefit from a more focused revising of the paper topic or theme. X papers are given on merit basis only and cannot be negotiated. While they might be regarded as a second chance, beware that an X on a paper will prevent you from scheduling an exam at the end of a unit and from moving on to the next unit. You will have to resubmit the paper and wait for your letter grade before you can advance to the next unit or schedule an exam.

Written Assignments	Points	Percentage of Homework	Final Grade Scale		
Summary Analysis 1	50	5%	A	=	930 to 1000
Summary Analysis 2	50	5%	A-	=	900 < 930
Annotated Bibliography 1	75	7.5%	B+	=	870 < 900
Annotated Bibliography 2	75	7.5%	B	=	830 < 870
Analytical Paper 1	100	10%	B-	=	800 < 830
Analytical Paper 2	100	10%	C+	=	770 < 800
Total	450	45%	C	=	730 < 770
			C-	=	700 < 730
			D+	=	670 < 700
			D	=	630 < 670
			D-	=	600 < 630
			F	=	0 < 600
Exams	Points	Percentage of Exams			
Exam 1	100	10%			
Exam 2	100	10%			
Exam 3	100	10%			
Final Exam	250	25%			
Total	550	55%			
Grand Total	1000	100%			

The final course grade is issued after all of the assignments have been evaluated, all of the lessons have been completed, and all of the exams have been graded.



See the **Appendix** for information about *confidentiality of student grades, course completion and time considerations*, and *requesting a transcript*.

About the Course Developer

Your course developer is Dr. Verena Theile. Dr. Theile earned her Ph.D. in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century British Literature at Washington State University and her M.A. in Seventeenth-Century Poetry at Minnesota State University. Her focus lies with early modern English performance literature and Metaphysical poetry. Her most recent research is concerned with the influence of continental European demonological treatises on the stage literature of early modern England.

Contacting Your Instructor

You will receive *course and instructor contact information* in your *Registration Confirmation Letter*.



See the **Appendix** for detailed information on *contacting your instructor*.

Disability Support Services



See the **Appendix** for *information on Disability Support Services (DSS)*.

Assignment Submission Log

Lesson	Reading Assignment	Written Assignment	Date Submitted
1	<i>Comedy of Errors</i> , all <i>Norton Shakespeare</i> , pages 1–29, 683–89 <i>An Anthology of Criticism and Theory</i> , pages 93–99, 861–79	<i>Self-Study</i> : No submitted written assignment	_____
2	<i>Titus Andronicus</i> , all <i>Norton Shakespeare</i> , pages 30–40, 371–77 <i>An Anthology of Criticism and Theory</i> , pages 50–62, 515–34	Summary Analysis 1	_____
<p>Complete the sample exam (Part 1 and Part 2) in this study guide after you have finished Unit 1 (lessons 1 and 2) and prior to scheduling Exam 1. Do NOT submit the sample exam to your instructor.</p>			
<p>It is time to make arrangements with your proctor to take Exam 1. You should choose a proctor at least one month prior to scheduling the first exam.</p>			
3	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , all <i>Norton Shakespeare</i> , pages 41–65, 3281–3301, 805–11 <i>An Anthology of Criticism and Theory</i> , pages 481–510	Summary Analysis 2	_____
4	<i>Henry V</i> , all <i>Norton Shakespeare</i> , pages 1445–53 <i>An Anthology of Criticism and Theory</i> , pages 880–907, 100–115, 245–64	Annotated Bibliography 1	_____
5	<i>Hamlet</i> , all <i>Norton Shakespeare</i> , pages 1659–67 <i>An Anthology of Criticism and Theory</i> , pages 125–48, 225–44	Analytical Paper 1	_____
<p>It is time to make arrangements with your proctor to take Exam 2.</p>			

Lesson	Reading Assignment	Written Assignment	Date Submitted
6	<i>King Lear (Conflated Text)</i> , all <i>Norton Shakespeare</i> , pages 65–76, 2307–16 <i>An Anthology of Criticism and Theory</i> , pages 338–52, 535–46	Annotated Bibliography 2	_____
7	<i>The Tempest</i> , all <i>Norton Shakespeare</i> , pages 3047–54 <i>An Anthology of Criticism and Theory</i> , pages 781–93, 817–44	Analytical Paper 2	_____
It is time to make arrangements with your proctor to take Exam 3.			
After the completion of all units and their assignments and exams, it is time to make arrangements with your proctor to take the Final Exam.			

Lesson 1

The Comedy of Errors (Self-Study)

Lesson Objectives

After careful completion of the reading assignment, lecture, study questions, and written assignment, you should be able to do the following:

- Respond to all of the study questions confidently and competently
- Define Shakespearean comedy in the context of ancient and early modern drama
- Contextualize *The Comedy of Errors* as part of Shakespeare’s literary accomplishments
- Identify dramatic, poetic, and comic conventions in *The Comedy of Errors*
- Discuss themes, motives, and language of *The Comedy of Errors*
- Explain authorial and editorial decisions made by Shakespeare in *The Comedy of Errors*

Reading Assignment

- Stephen Greenblatt, General Introduction, “Shakespeare’s World,” *The Norton Shakespeare*, pages 1–29.
- Stephen Greenblatt, Introduction to *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Norton Shakespeare*, pages 683–89.
- William Shakespeare, *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Norton Shakespeare*, all.
- Northrop Frye, “The Argument of Comedy,” *Shakespeare: An Anthology of Criticism*, pages 93–99.
- George T. Wright, “The Play of Phrase and Line,” *Shakespeare: An Anthology of Criticism*, pages 861–79.

Important Terms

Below is a list of terms with which you need to familiarize yourself in order to complete this lesson and the unit exam successfully. Consult *A Handbook to Literature*, a glossary of literary terms, or the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, or “Google” the terms and phrases that have not been explained in the *Course Introduction*, and with which you are unfamiliar.

exposition	rising action	climax
falling action (denouement)	resolution	comedy
<i>deus ex machina</i>	blank verse	commonplace
dramatic conventions	stylistic devices	rhyming couplet
protagonist	dramatic foil	comic relief
plot	Petrarchan poetry	farce

Lecture

An Introductory Analysis of and Interpretative Approach to *The Comedy of Errors*

As Stephen Greenblatt in his introduction to *The Comedy of Errors* points out, this play is certainly amongst the earliest of Shakespeare’s plays. While its date of composition (that is, the year in which Shakespeare wrote this play) is unknown, a public performance of the comedy has been documented for the winter of 1594. This play is one of the many plays of Shakespeare’s that never saw print until the First Folio edition of his collected works in 1623—seven years after the playwright’s passing.

It is interesting that Greenblatt should argue for the narrative and performative value of *The Comedy of Errors* and that he would criticize literary scholarship for having relocated this early play to the very periphery of the Shakespearean corpus as a work feeble in wit and technique. What do you think are the play’s redeeming qualities that lead Greenblatt to launch such a defense? Why, in other words, does he like it? As we probe deeper into the plot, the characters, and the language of the play, we need to come to

terms with Greenblatt's take on the play. Why is it, according to Greenblatt, "a mistake to view [*The Comedy of Errors*] as a mere apprentice work," and how, according to Greenblatt, should we view it instead? (Norton 684). At the end of this lesson, you need to decide for yourself whether you agree with Greenblatt and, more importantly, you need to be able to defend your view and interpretation of the play.

The story is simple, but confusing enough. It involves two sets of twin brothers: the young sons of the Antipholus merchant family and their twin serving boys, the Dromios. Both sets of twins are split apart and separated from each other during a shipwreck. One twin of each "master-servant" set appears to have drifted away with the mother; the other two are stranded elsewhere with the merchant father. Later, as a grown man, one of the master twins begins pining after his sibling and, with his servant twin, leaves his father to find his lost brother. The play begins with the father, Egeon, looking for this twin, who has been gone for so long that Egeon fears this son has been lost as well.

The play opens to Egeon's having been arrested for loitering on foreign and unfriendly soil. He delivers a detailed recounting of his losses and hardships, retelling, in effect, the background story related above. At the close of 1.1, and upon pain of death, the despairing father has been allotted one day to find friends and favor amongst the people of Syracuse and to procure a ransom for his release. Except, we never see Egeon searching; we never hear him asking for money. What we see instead are two sets of twins walking on and off the stage, confusing, mistreating, and manhandling each other. And despite the fact that at least one of the Antipholus/Dromio sets is looking for the other, no insinuation by either is made that some confusion and mixing up of identities might be taking place.

This is certainly bizarre, but is it clumsy? Are these plot inconsistencies, in reality, some of the carefully orchestrated "errors" that Shakespeare refers to in his title, *The Comedy of Errors*? Could the title reveal a novice playwright jesting at his own developing skills? Or are such inconsistencies unintentional and indicative of Shakespeare's then-fledgling artistic skills? Could Shakespeare do no better? Greenblatt refuses to question Shakespeare's ability. But if it is not a lack of skill, the mess on stage must be intentional. What do you think?

Perhaps an analysis of some of the structural elements of the play will help us illuminate Shakespeare's intentions in *The Comedy of Errors*.

In the "Introduction" to this course, we talked about dramatic conventions. We know that Shakespearean drama begins with an exposition, a short introduction that explains what has happened before the opening of the play, and which foreshadows some of the events that will transpire as the play progresses. And, voilà, this does indeed explain Egeon's prolonged lament. Following dramatic conventions, Shakespeare composed Egeon's speech to inform his audience of past events and to explain why Egeon finds himself in such dire straits. His story likewise foreshadows his search for the twins, whom he undeniably finds in the conclusion of the play—together with his long-lost wife, Emilia, no less. In other words, Shakespeare seems to have had a plan; and our knowledge of dramatic conventions helps us discover meaning in the play and lay bare an intricate plot.

What about poetic conventions? Can language help us appreciate Shakespeare's accomplishment in *The Comedy of Errors*? Let's look at Dromio of Syracuse's exquisite description of the woman who mistakes him for her dear husband, Dromio of Ephesus, in 3.2. This passage is certainly one that Greenblatt could have brought forth in his defense against the play being little more than an "apprentice work." The arrangement of lines, the use of stylistic devices and figures of speech, and the sheer comedy of this exchange between Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse suggest an experienced writer, careful composition, and superior skill.

Asked what's so special about his alleged wife, Dromio replies:

Marry, sir, she's the kitchen wench and all grease; and I know not what use to put her to but to make a lamp of her and run from her by her own light. I warrant, her rags and the tallow in them will burn a Poland winter: if she lives till doomsday, she'll burn a week longer than the whole world. (3.2.94–99)

It is important to note as here that Dromio speaks in plain prose; his topic is not elevated enough to warrant poetry (neither is his social status, by the way). Dromio's speech does call for poetic and stylistic devices, however. Notice the hyperbole, the metaphor, and the intensive (yet delightful) swearing. The comedy in these and the following fifty lines is entirely dependent on Shakespeare's mastery of language. To accomplish such playfulness takes talent.

The switch in pace at line 145, where Antipholus of Syracuse abruptly resumes control by ending the joke and reminding Dromio of his duties, is likewise indicative of Shakespeare's skill and talent. Antipholus is Dromio's social superior and thus orders him around as he chooses; Antipholus is also the twin who set out to find his lost brother and who now finds himself in a strange land where people act as if they know him, although he is certain that he knows "none."

In blank verse, he informs the audience of the next (logical) step in this adventure:

Go hie thee presently. Post to the road.
 An if the wind blow any way from shore,
 I will not harbor in this town tonight.
 If any barque put forth, come to the mart,
 Where I will walk till thou return to me.
 If everyone knows us, and we know none,
 'Tis time, I think, to trudge, pack, and be gone. (3.2.144–51)

Ephesus has proven confusing to Antipholus of Syracuse, a stranger to the city, and he is ready to take any ship available to leave the confusion behind him. The rhyming couplet that concludes his announcement alerts the reader that Antipholus of Syracuse is far from comprehending what's really going on. He has no inkling of his confused identity and cannot explain to himself why everyone seems to recognize him when no one seems familiar to him. It will take a miracle to open the eyes of this benighted twin.

As the audience laughs and shakes its head at Antipholus' folly, Shakespeare goes about devising the miracle required to untangle confused identities, unite twins, and save Egeon from execution. It is in 5.1.38 where divine providence will intervene to untwist plot strings, unveil characters' confusions, and unravel the mysterious fate of the second set of twins and Egeon's lost wife. While the Abbess' violent berating of Adriana and her failings as a wife introduce Emilia as a healer, they also cast a shadow over the reunion between mother and son. The audience has to wait until 5.1.331 before Antipholus of Syracuse reappears as a healed man, with his honor restored. "Most mighty Duke, behold a man much wronged," the Abbess declares:

Whoever bound him, I will lose his bonds,
 And gain a husband by his liberty.
 Speak, old Egeon, if thou beest the man
 That hadst a wife once called Emilia,
 That bore thee at a burden two fair sons.
 O, if thou beest the same Egeon, speak,
 And speak unto the same Emilia. (5.1.340–46)

The Abbess serves as the miracle-working medium who, by revealing her own hidden identity, dissolves the fog that heretofore covered the other characters' eyes, allowing them to see the true identities of the people around them.

Her intervention and her revelation untangle the various plot strands, and shed light upon the mystery that has caused so many mistakes throughout the course of the play. "And they lived happily ever after" comes to mind, and, quite literally, that is exactly what happens: Brothers finally recognize each other, husbands and wives are reunited, and a new union is suggested in the happy finding that Antipholus of Syracuse and Luciana can now be together. To sum it all up, the two Dromios march off stage together, hand-in-hand, and identical.

After this close reading of *The Comedy of Errors*, one might feel compelled to join Greenblatt in his protest against condemning the play as the work of a beginner. But at the same time, one has to admit that a few of the plot turns occur rather suddenly and seem a tad abrupt. In addition, even a cursory reading of the play reveals that none of the characters are multi-dimensional and that no true protagonist ever emerges. Rather, the reader finds him-/herself confronted with a scene-driven play that thrives on witty verbal exchanges and comical chance encounters. If this is intentional, if even an early Shakespeare was nobody's apprentice, then the emphasis of *The Comedy of Errors* must lie elsewhere—somewhere far away from character development, dramatic conventions, and plot structure. But where? What could Shakespeare's emphasis have been here? What is most poignant in this play? What drives the comedy? And is this play really a comedy? Or might it be something else all together? Does it remind you perhaps of a modern genre? Something rarely practiced in Elizabethan England and certainly less clear-cut than our traditional genres of tragedy, comedy, and romance?

Self-Study Questions for *The Comedy of Errors*

After you have completed all of the readings for this lesson, take a moment to reflect on the study questions below. Then pick five of the questions and respond to them in two to three paragraphs each. Draw on *The Comedy of Errors* as you construct your answers; that is, quote the text and use evidence from the play to support your answer. **You do not need to submit this exercise to your instructor.** Your *self-study* responses are for practice only. They are meant to give you an opportunity, prior to submitting graded assignments, to test your own critical thinking and analytical writing skills.

Helpful Hints

Even if you are not asked to submit your written work to the instructor, as is the case with these five short responses to these *self-study* questions, it is meaningful to complete this assignment diligently and to follow instructions carefully. In fact, for all of the *self-study* assignments, I encourage you to answer *all* of the questions posed here and to read the plays closely for textual evidence and quotations, which you may provide to support your responses. The unit exam will draw on these *self-study* questions; preparing ready responses to these study prompts will save you time during the proctored exam.

Discuss the role of *setting* in the play. Greenblatt mentions some stage conventions, carried over from Greek tragedy and comedy, such as house façades and the classic movement between public and domestic spaces. Can you identify other stage props and roles that the setting might play to help advance and perhaps contribute to the development of the plot?

1. As discussed in the lecture above and the *Norton* introduction to this play, Shakespeare drew on a number of ancient sources for *The Comedy of Errors*; most obviously, he used Plautus' *Menachmi*, a Roman play about the mistaken identities of a set of twins. Shakespeare was clearly aware of the rules of playwriting (rules that date back to ancient Greece), such as the "unities" of time, place, and action. Discuss how Shakespeare adapts both dramatic conventions and his sources to meet his needs. For

your response, “Google” *unities* and *Menachmi* and use specific examples from the text of *The Comedy of Errors* to support your argument.

2. In the lecture to this course, we touched upon a few structural plot elements that might help the reader identify Shakespearean plays as comedies. There are others that we did not name, but which are likewise essential to the genre. What, for example, is it that makes a comedy funny? What is comic about *The Comedy of Errors*?
3. In this context, you might also want to consider how the threat of tragedy—Egeon’s execution—affects the comedy of the play. We might remember his long expository speech at the beginning of the play at this point. What is the connection between tragedy and comedy in *The Comedy of Errors*? And what might be the significance of the choice of the word “errors”—as opposed to something more fitting, like “confusions” or “misrecognitions” in the play’s title?
4. How are Adriana and Luciana different from one another? How do they respond to men, problems they encounter, to each other? They are sisters, but—unlike all of the other siblings in the play—they are not twins, and they are most certainly not identical. Their views on marriage might be a good starting point here. Marriage, in fact, is a recurrent theme in Shakespearean drama and early modern writing, more generally. (“Google,” for example, the Elizabethan *Homily on Matrimonie*—in particular, 2.18.1-304–306—and the section on marriage service in the 1559 *Book of Common Prayer*.) Notice how Luciana’s recital of a wife’s “natural” subjugation to her husband starkly contrasts with Adriana’s view of marriage as “servitude” (2.1.26). What might the playwright be saying about the nature of marriage in early modern England?
5. In 3.2, Luciana’s advice to Antipholus of Syracuse deeply affects him; she wants him to pretend to be a devoted and loving husband even when he is not and does not feel that way at all toward Adriana. In the first instance, pretense is insincere and, furthermore, it is precisely what he is already doing, since he is not Adriana’s husband. In the second instance, it must sound to him as if Luciana is suggesting he keep her sister happy even if he loves Luciana. His response to Luciana (3.2.29–52) is thick with what we call “Petrarchan” sentiment. As the speech proceeds, Antipholus changes his tone (3.2.61–69), however. Self-recognition seems to take place within the misrecognition of the scene. Look up what the term “Petrarchan” means, contextualize its use in this scene, and figure out what it is that Antipholus discovers about himself.
6. The issue of marriage brings up another power relationship, i.e., that between masters and servants. Compare the status of a wife to the status of a servant, and discuss the Dromios and their relationships to their masters. Consult the Bible for contemporary, sixteenth-century perceptions of servitude and marriage. See, for example, Ephesians 5 (on wives) and Ephesians 6 (on servants); Colossians 3 (on wives) and Colossians 4 (on servants). Other opinions on marriage can be found in 1 Corinthians 7. How does the concept of liberty shift from the husband/wife relationship to master/servant relations?
7. In 4.1, a golden chain serves as a suitable emblem for the chain of associations, trusts, and dependencies that holds a community together—friend to friend, merchant to customer, master to servant, husband to wife, and, perhaps, man to courtesan. Antipholus of Ephesus assumes that his goldsmith friend, Angelo, has saved him from rashly giving to the courtesan the chain intended for his wife (26). Thus, Antipholus is bound to his friend, but his friend, the goldsmith, needs payment or he will be arrested for defaulting on his bond to a merchant. One thing is tied to another in this scene, and each person is dependent upon another person’s faithful delivery of payment. What is the relevance of the metaphorical “chain” evoked here in the context of confused identities and financial dependencies?

8. Some critics claim that every character in *The Comedy of Errors* can be measured by him-/ herself, by others, by how much s/he is worth—in terms of money, social status, and reputation. One might also argue that a person can be measured by how much s/he perceives s/he and others are worth. What are the standards applied to others and to the self? How do these standards differ from person to person, in application and in results/measurements? Is there such a thing as identity—other than in relation to others? And is misrecognition the same as identity loss or a loss of the self? Demonstrate your answer with at least two representative examples of characters within the play.
9. In 5.1, an abbess appears on the stage. What is the purpose of having her appear at this point in the play, revealing herself as a woman of the church, Egeus' wife Emilia, and the twins' mother? This appearance of a mediator, one who bears insight into events beyond the comprehension of the regular characters, is a commonplace in Elizabethan drama, but not necessarily in Shakespearean comedy. Explain the significance of the various roles Emilia embodies and her overall relevance to the play.
10. Interestingly enough, a servant/slave has the last word in this comedy of errors. In his final speech, Dromio of Ephesus praises fraternity and its equalizing powers. It is curious that this should be the conclusion to a play in which we have encountered everything but equality. Throughout, power structures function to demarcate clear boundaries between social classes and the institutions of marriage and servitude. Nothing comparable to the “hand-in-hand” relationship expressed in Dromio's speech is tangible—other, perhaps, than Adriana's angry rants about the evils of living in wedlock. Why, then, this final scene? What might be its structural, rhetorical, and contextual purpose?

Written Assignment

There is no submitted written assignment for this lesson.