

**HS 2019 – B.A. Seminar**  
**Serial Shakespeare**  
Prof. Dr. Elisabeth Bronfen  
*Wed. 16.15-18.00*

As Jan Kott writes in *Shakespeare, Our Contemporary*: “Sometimes one has the impression that Shakespeare has in fact written three or four plays and kept repeating the same themes in different registers and keys.” The provocative claim of this seminar is the following: Given this tendency toward repetition, the four Shakespeare plays we will focus on can fruitfully be read as a series. On the one hand, we will explore the serial reworking of key themes (abandonment and return) and figural constellations (matching and rematching of lovers) within this select group of romantic comedies, problem plays and one late romance. On the other hand, we will look at the adaptation of Shakespearean thinking by Hollywood cinema, making him, indeed, our contemporary.

(01) **Sept 18** Introduction

(02) **Sept 25** No class

A HEROINE LOST AND RETURNED

(03) **Oct 2** *Two Gentlemen of Verona*

(04) **Oct 9** Theories of Repetition  
– Sigmund Freud, “Erinnern, Wiederholen und Durcharbeiten”  
 (“Remembering, Repeating and Working Through”)\*, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*  
 Kapitel 2 (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, chapter 2)\*  
– Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, “The Paradoxical Status of Repetition”\*

(05) **Oct 16** *Much Ado About Nothing*

(06) **Oct 23** *Much Ado About Nothing*

(07) **Oct 30** Theories of Cultural Survival  
– Walter Benjamin, “Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers” (“The Task of the Translator”)\*  
– Elisabeth Bronfen, “Introduction: Crossmappings”\*

(08) **Nov 6** *Intolerable Cruelty* (US 2003, Dir. Joel and Ethan Cohen)  
– Stanley Cavell, “Words for a Conversation” in: *Pursuits of Happiness. The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage*\*

POSSIBILITIES OF REMARRIAGE

(09) **Nov 13** *All's Well that Ends Well*

(10) **Nov 2** *All's Well that Ends Well*

(11) **Nov 27** *Gone Girl* (US 2014, Dir. David Fincher)

(12) **Dec 4** How to Write the Seminar Paper  
Prepare a thesis for this session; you can always adjust the topic for the final paper

(13) **Dec 11** *Winter's Tale*

(14) **Dec 18** *The Lady Eve* (US 1941, Dir. Preston Sturges)  
– Stanley Cavell, “Cons and Pros. The Lady Eve” in *Pursuits of Happiness*\*

All students must procure their own copies of the Shakespeare plays. You can either use *The Norton Shakespeare*, based on the Oxford Edition, edited by Stephen Greenblatt. Or you can get the plays individually from *The Arden Edition, third series*. Please **do not** use a version on your computer or other devices.

All texts marked with \* will be on OLAT

### **Background Reading:**

Adelman, Janet. *Suffocating Mothers. Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, Hamlet to the Tempest*. New York, 1992.

Bronfen, Elisabeth. *Stanley Cavell zur Einführung*. Hamburg, 2009.

Cavell, Stanley. *Pursuits of Happiness. The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage*. Cambridge, 1981.

van Doren, Mark. *Shakespeare (1939)*. New York, 2005.

Freedman, Barbara. *Staging the Gaze: Postmodernism, Psychoanalysis, and Shakespearean Comedy*. Ithaca, 1991.

Garber, Marjorie. *Shakespeare After All*. New York, 2004.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Shakespearean Negotiations. The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*. Berkeley, 1988.

Lanier, Douglas. *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture*. Oxford, 2002.

Maus, Katherine Eisaman. *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance*. Chicago, 1995.

### **Course Requirements**

#### **Portfolio**

##### *Thesis paper*

All students must prepare **a thesis paper as a preliminary discussion for 10 of the seminar sessions** (200-300 words), to be posted on OLAT by 9 a.m. on Tuesday of the respective week. This **does not include** the thesis you prepare for the session on “How To Write a Seminar Paper”. Each thesis paper should, as the title suggests, entail a thesis, but could also contain a series of questions, comments or associations. It should present an argument; indeed, it should help you practice your skills at argumentation. At the same time, it will facilitate class discussion and allow us to see in what directions you have been thinking while preparing for each session. The point is not to read out what you have written but, using what you have developed in writing, to enter into a dialog with the other members of the class. The thesis papers will count towards your portfolio and, thus, are compulsory. Since these thesis papers are part of your portfolio, not handing each in **on time** will mean it will not be counted and this, in turn, lowers your portfolio grade. For the last session, please **compile all your thesis statements using the template provided on OLAT** and hand them in as one piece of writing. If you want to edit them, so as to reflect the class discussion and the thinking it has provoked, you are allowed to do so. It is this set of papers that will be graded.

##### *Session Minutes*

As part of the portfolio, all students must also compile written minutes (Sitzungsprotokolle) for one of the class sessions. Please send these to my assistant Morgane Ghilardi (morgane.ghilardi@es.uzh.ch) **no later than one week** after the respective session **at the latest**. As with the thesis papers, not handing in the session minutes **on time** will mean they will not be counted and lower the grade of your portfolio.

### **Final Essay**

All students should hand in an essay (4000-5000 words) by **March 1, 2020**; hard copy in my pigeonhole in the secretary's office and a PDF version to my assistant Morgane Ghilardi.

The essay should be based on the materials covered in this B.A. seminar, as well as the class discussions. Your essay must include a strong thesis statement (this can be several sentences) at the beginning of your paper (within the first page). A thesis is a statement that is arguable; but also one that requires a coherent argument and materials supporting the argument. You are also expected to do research on your topic beyond the recommended literature and the theoretical texts discussed in the seminar.

For the session on "How to Write an Essay" please have a thesis statement and a first paragraph ready for discussion in class; you may alter the topic or the direction of your argument afterwards according to the feedback you get. However: Make use of this session to begin planning your final essay. Before writing the final essay, please discuss the outline with Prof. Elisabeth Bronfen or one of her assistants, Morgane Ghilardi and Hannah Schoch, in an office hour.

### **Final Grade**

The **portfolio counts 20%** toward the final grade. The final **seminar paper counts 80%** toward the final grade.