

FS 2022 – B.A. Seminar
Shakespeare's Cryptonomies
Prof. Elisabeth Bronfen
Thursday 14.00 – 15.45

A crypt is a vault used as a chapel or burial place. The word comes from the Greek *kruptos*, meaning 'hidden'. The adjective 'cryptic' (from the Greek *kruptikos*), in turn, is used when speaking about something mysterious or obscure. Finally, 'nomia', refers to an arrangement or a distribution. In this seminar we will explore how Shakespeare's plays map out an obsession with and an extreme enthusiasm for secrets. The word I will propose for this is 'cryptomania'. Why do characters keep information from each other? Why do they hide their identities from each other? Why do they undertake conspiracies? What does this desire to keep things secret not only say about them, but also about the world in which each of them plays their designated part? What dramaturgic effect does cryptomania serve – politically, psychologically and aesthetically? And how does Shakespeare's own obsession with secrets change with each subsequent reworking, as he moves between comedy and tragedy?

- (1) Feb 24 **Meet and Greet:** Introductions and Course Organization
- (2) Mar 3 **Melancholic Lovers and Separated Twins**
William Shakespeare. *Twelfth Night*
- (3) Mar 10 **Mapping Locations of Secrecy**
William Shakespeare. *Twelfth Night*
Michel Foucault. "Heterotopias"*
- (4) Mar 17 **Courtship and Crossdressing**
William Shakespeare. *Twelfth Night*
- (5) Mar 24 **Star-Crossed Lovers and Their Cohort**
William Shakespeare. *Romeo and Juliet*
- (6) Mar 31 **Chapels, Wedding Beds, and Vaults**
William Shakespeare. *Romeo and Juliet*
- *** *Spring Break* ***
- (7) Apr 28 **Family Feuds and Conspiracies**
William Shakespeare. *Romeo and Juliet*
Baz Luhrman. *ROMEO + JULIET*
- (8) May 5 **Murdering Fathers, Mourning Sons, and Hysteric Daughters**
William Shakespeare. *Hamlet*
- (9) May 12 **The Stage and the Open Grave**
William Shakespeare. *Hamlet*
- (10) May 19 **Paternal Haunting and Filial Revenge**
William Shakespeare. *Hamlet*
Nicolas Abraham. "Notes on the Phantom"*
- (11) June 2 **Wrap-Up: How to Write a Seminar Paper**

Background Reading

Garber, Marjorie. *Shakespeare After All*. Pantheon Books, 2004.

Greenblatt, Stephen. "General Introduction" in *The Norton Shakespeare*. Norton, 2008.

Smith, Emma. *This is Shakespeare. How to Read the World's Greatest Playwright*. Random House, 2019.

Course Requirements

Portfolio (20% of final grade)

Students are required to complete the following tasks as part of the portfolio:

Forum Posts: You must write a preliminary discussion (approx. 250 words) for 8 seminar sessions, to be posted on the course's OLAT Forum by 9 a.m. on Wednesday of the respective week. Contributions should entail a thesis, but could also contain a series of questions, comments, or associations. This should not only help you practice your argumentative skills, but also facilitates class discussion by allowing 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 engage in a dialogue with the other members of the class.

Short Research Paper or Visual Research Essay: Students are required to do background research on the subject of the session assigned to them and to compile this research either in a short, written essay (600-1200 words) or a visual essay (max. 3 min.). They will be asked to speak to the content of their research in the corresponding session (5-10 min.). A final version of the research paper, as a PDF or transfer link, depending on the chosen format, should be sent to morgane.ghilardi@es.uzh.ch *one week after the session*.

Handing in your portfolio: At the end of the semester, please compile the thesis statements you have posted and short research paper/visual essay using *the template provided on OLAT*. Send the complete portfolio as a PDF to morgane.ghilardi@es.uzh.ch by **June 3, 2022**.

Final Essay (80% of final grade)

All students should hand in an essay (4000-5000 words) **in printed format** by **October 1, 2022**. Additionally, it should be handed in as a PDF version (incl. *Selbstständigkeitserklärung*) to morgane.ghilardi@es.uzh.ch. The essay should comply with the MLA format and style guidelines (i.e. be typed in a **12pt serif font, 1.5-spaced, ample margins** for comments by the instructor, and have a title page).

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) and a set of research questions. A thesis is a statement that is arguable, but also one that requires a coherent argument and materials supporting the argument. The research questions should guide you in your argumentation. You are also expected to do research on your topic beyond the recommended literature and the theoretical texts discussed in the seminar.