

**B.A. Seminar
Shakespeare Now**

**Wed. 16.15-18.00
Prof. Elisabeth Bronfen**

To read Shakespeare at the beginning of the 21st century involves two over-arching questions: What can we learn about our contemporary moment by turning back to this early modern dramatist? How, given a focus on specific cultural issues, is our reading of Shakespeare colored by these contemporary critical concerns? Crossmapping a set of four plays – one problem comedy and three late tragedies – not only onto cinematic refigurations of these texts but also two early 21st television series more implicitly inspired than explicitly influenced by Shakespeare's imaginary, we will explore the following thematic constellations: 1) The representation of maternal power as well as female sovereignty and agency in a world of war. 2) Conspiracy fantasies, surveillance strategies and the culture of secrecy in response to aporias in the political realm.

(1./ 18.2) Introduction

Measure for Measure

(2./ 25.2) Dramatis Personae and their shifting constellations
-- Garber in *Shakespeare After All*; Maus in *Norton Shakespeare*

(3./ 4.3) Political power in the polis, gender and surveillance

(4./ 11.3) A critical debate:

-- Janet Adelman "Marriage and the Maternal Body: On Marriage as the End of Comedy in *Measure for Measure*" (in Wheeler)

-- Barbara Bains "Assaying the Power of Chastity in *Measure for Measure*" (in Wheeler)

-- Jonathan Dollimore "Transgression and surveillance in *Measure for Measure*" (in Dollimore / Sinfield)

-- Katherine Eisaman Maus "Sexual Secrecy in *Measure for Measure*" (in Maus)

Macbeth

(5./ 18.3) Dramatis Personae and their shifting constellations
-- Garber in *Shakespeare After All*; Greenblatt in *Norton Shakespeare*

(6./ 25.3) Cinematic interpretation 1: Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* (1957)

(7./ 1.4) Cinematic interpretation 2: Roman Polanski's *The Tragedy of Macbeth* (1971)

(8./ 15.4) Cinematic interpretation 3: David Fincher's *House of Cards* Season 1-2 (2013-)

Coriolanus

(9./ 22.4) Dramatis Personae and their shifting constellations
-- Garber in *Shakespeare After All*; Maus in *Norton Shakespeare*

(10./ 29.4) The hero and the polis:

-- Jonathan Dollimore "The Chariot Wheel and its Dust" (in *Radical Tragedy*)

-- Ralph Fiennes' film *Coriolanus* (2011)

Anthony and Cleopatra

(11./ 6.5) Dramatis Personae and their shifting constellations

-- Garber in *Shakespeare After All*; Cohen in *Norton Shakespeare*

-- E. Bronfen "Hybrid Spaces in *Anthony and Cleopatra*"

(12./ 20.5) Global queenship now: *The Honourable Woman* (BBC-Miniseries 2014)

(13./27.5) What I have learned: Shakespeare's late tragedies – a comparison

Requirements for the class: All students must prepare a thesis statement for each class, to be posted on Olat (course forum) by Wednesday 9 am of the respective week. This can also entail a series of questions, comments or associations; it will facilitate class discussion and allow me to see in what directions you have been thinking while preparing for the class sessions. In addition, all students must compile written minutes (*Sitzungsprotokoll*) for one of the class sessions (also to be uploaded to Olat). Finally, students taking the class for 6 KP must write an essay. It is wise to use the class discussions to test your ideas for this written assignment.

Bibliography

Deats, Sarah Munson (Ed.). *Anthony and Cleopatra. New Critical Essays*. New York/London: Routledge, 2005.

Dollimore, Jonathan. *Radical Tragedy. Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries*, third edition. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Dollimore, Jonathan and Alan Sinfield. *Political Shakespeare. New Essays in Cultural Materialism*. Manchester: Manchester U. P., 1985.

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

Drakakis, John and Dale Townsend (Eds.) *Macbeth. A Critical Reader*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.

Feather, Jennifer and Catherine E. Thomas (Eds.) *Violent Masculinities. Male Aggression in Early Modern Texts and Culture*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Garber, Marjorie. *Shakespeare After All*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2004.

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

-- *The Norton Shakespeare*. based on The Oxford Edition, second edition. New York: Norton, 2008.

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

Wheeler, Richard P. *Critical Essays on Shakespeare's Measure for Measure*. New York: G.K. Hall & Co., 1999.

Wofford, Susanne L. (Ed.): *Shakespeare's Late Tragedies. A Collection of Critical Essays*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1996.