

Lee Daniels' Empire and Black Shakespeare

SPRING 2016

Professor Matt Richardson

E376M, AFR 372E, MWF

Office Hours W 10-11:30

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Lee Daniel's television series, *Empire* has become a cultural phenomenon. This course will look critically at how the show has repurposed Shakespeare in order to make commentaries on Black sexuality, gender and class politics. There are many reasons for the show's popularity, not the least of which is the seemingly exceptional use of the Shakespearean themes and characters. In fact, Black people from around the diaspora have and still make use of Shakespeare as a point of reflection on contemporary and historical themes. We will discuss issues of class, sexuality and gender as they relate to the course material.

Required Texts

William Shakespeare Four Tragedies

The Tempest

A Tempest

Mama Day

Course Reader: Readers are available at Jenn's Copy on Guadalupe and 21st St.

Grading Policy

2 Quizzes 40% (20% each)

Final 35%

Performance and Participation 20%

Course Requirements:

Office Hours: Students are REQUIRED to come to office hours at least once during the semester to discuss your progress in the class and any additional questions you may have. You are encouraged to take further advantage of office hours and I am also available by appointment.

Attendance: Students are expected to attend class every session. Participation in all aspects of the class is MANDATORY. All readings and assignments should be completed before class meetings and students are responsible for adding to class discussions of material. Late arrivals are disruptive to class and I will not repeat concepts and assignments given during class. If you miss a class or are late, you are still responsible for any announcements, assignments, lecture material and/or deadlines that are made. Your grade will be affected if you have more than two unexcused absences during the semester.

Performance: In addition to the reading have built performances of Shakespeare into the course. Students are NOT graded on the quality of their acting, but on their ability to take the assignment seriously. Students are expected to work as hard on their performances as they would any other group presentation. Also, I am hoping that people have fun!

Quizzes: There will be two quizzes during the semester. The quizzes are constructed to test your comprehension and writing about the topics in the class.

Final Exam: The final exam is designed to assess students accumulated application of knowledge. The exam is cumulative.

Canvas: I will be in contact with you about updates in assignments through Canvas. It is the students' responsibility to make sure that Blackboard has your updated email address.

No computers, telephones or pads in class except to read the class material.

Code of Mutual Respect: In general, this is not a lecture class, but one grounded in dialogue. Feel free to be candid and direct in this class. Your opinions and insights are important, and your voice needs to be heard, so look forward to the opportunity to chime in. I will respect you as adults and assume that you will treat others in the class with respect as well. Because we will be sharing many personal ideas which may conflict with your own personal ideas and beliefs, it is important that you strive to be considerate, sensitive, and respectful. Be prepared to offer constructive criticism as well as receive it. We will discuss work that includes lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender themes in this course. Students are expected to approach all class material with maturity and academic rigor.

Code of Academic Conduct: University policy requires that students cite sources they use in their work. THIS INCLUDES PARAPHRASING of materials. Any inclusion of ideas that are not your own will be considered plagiarism. Students who do not properly cite ideas, quotes or paraphrasing of other published or unpublished material will automatically face disciplinary action which will also be reflected in their grade.

Students with Disabilities: Any student with a documented disability (physical or cognitive) who requires academic accommodations should contact the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259 (voice) or 471-4641 (TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations.

Religious Holidays: If you observe a recognized religious holiday that is in conflict with the university schedule, please come talk to me.

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| Week One | |
| W 1/20 | Introduction |
| F 1/22 | The Basics |
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| Week Two | |
| M 1/25 | First Episode of Empire |
| W 1/27 | Discussion of Empire/ Raymond Williams, "Mass Communication and Minority Culture" |
| F 1/29 | King Lear Act 1-3 |
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| Week Three | |
| M 2/1 | King Lear Act 3-5 |
| W 2/3 | Watch King Lear |
| F 2/5 | Perform King Lear |
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| Week Four | |
| M 2/8 | Episode of Empire |
| W 2/10 | Discussion of Empire/ George Lipsitz, "Popular Culture: This Ain't No Sideshow" |
| F 2/12 | Hamlet Act 1-3 |
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| Week Five | |
| M 2/15 | Hamlet Act 3-5 |
| W 2/17 | Perform Hamlet |
| F 2/19 | Quiz |
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| Week 6 | |
| M 2/22 | Episode of Empire |
| W 2/24 | Discuss Empire/ Tonia Modleski, "Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women" |
| F 2/26 | Wesoo Hamlet/ Various Authors, "African Shakespeares: A Discussion" |
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| Week 7 | |
| M 2/29 | Wesoo Hamlet |
| W 3/2 | Wesoo Hamlet |

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| F 3/4 | Episode of Empire |
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| Week 8 | |
| M 3/7 | Discuss Empire/ bell hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze:Black Female Spectators" |
| W 3/9 | MacBeth Act 1-3 |
| F 3/11 | MacBeth Act 3-5 |
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| Week 9 | Spring Break |
| M 3/14 | |
| W 3/16 | |
| F 3/18 | |
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| Week 10 | |
| M 3/21 | Discuss MacBeth |
| W 3/23 | Watch MacBeth |
| F 3/25 | Perform MacBeth |
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| Week 11 | |
| M 3/28 | uMabatha |
| W 3/30 | uMabatha |
| F 4/1 | Quiz |
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| Week 12 | |
| M 4/4 | Episode of Empire |
| W 4/6 | Discuss Empire/ Berreta Smith-Shomade, "Capitalism, Class and the Promise of Black Media" |
| F 4/8 | The Tempest Act 1-3 |
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| Week 13 | |
| M 4/11 | The Tempest Act 3-5 |
| W 4/13 | Watch The Tempest |
| F 4/15 | Perform The Tempest |
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| Week 14 | |
| M 4/18 | Episode of Empire |
| W 4/20 | Discuss Empire/ Michael Curtin, "On Edge: Culture Industries in the Neo-Network Era |
| F 4/22 | A Tempest |
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| Week 15 | |
| M 4/25 | A Tempest |
| W 4/27 | Episode of Empire |
| F 4/29 | Discuss Episode/ |
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| Week 16 | |
| M 5/2 | Mama Day |
| W 5/4 | Mama Day |
| F5/6 | Mama Day |