

Professor Stephanie Shirilan
Syracuse University
ENG 340 Shakespeare in the Age of Covid-19

Assignment 2 (and for some, 3). Pitches due on bb, Monday April 12, 12 pm.

Your second assignment for this course is to **examine one of the productions studied to date in critical and/or historical context**, historical here meaning the conditions/circumstances surrounding and out of which this production emerged. Your aim is to **show how such contextualizing allows for richer critical and/or creative engagement** with a pandemic Shakespeare production/project of your choice. A critical context may be a critical lens (i.e. adaptation studies, disability theory, queer/trans studies). A historical contextualization might emphasize the history of the production and its creative process in relation to regional, institutional, or other histories. The historical context of pandemic as it (specifically and unobviously) shaped this production (contemporaneous events, “moment” in the pandemic, etc.) would make very good sense to emphasize/analyze.

Close reading remains a key skill at this phase of our coursework. You are expected to close read elements of the production as well as other pieces of evidence you bring into consideration: critical essays, news articles, reviews, websites, etc. Evidence never speaks for itself. It’s your job to show us what you are doing with it, what you are reading into it, and what value is to be had by doing so.

Traditional options:

Context/Critical lens essay: 4-5 pages (1000-1250 words)

Context/Critical lens presentation: (5-10 minutes live, 4-8 minutes asynchronous/pre-recorded, power-point or other multi-medium equivalent).

Other, or “non-traditional” options:

Podcast or other sound project; audio/video performance; graphic novel, “visual essay”; research proposal for a production of your own. More complex projects of these kinds would be best attempted in 2 parts (assignment 2+3). Feel free to propose others!

Note: Non-prose based projects require a critical reflection, length to be determined individually in consultation (or response to pitch), probably 2-4 pages.

Also note: Those of you not opting to produce assignments 2 and 3 as a sequence may choose to do any other option listed here for assignment 3. Assignment length, scope, integration of research and, where appropriate (i.e. creative projects), detail of critical reflection should be about 25% greater than for assignment 2.

FAQ:

Can I work with classmates on a collaborative/group project? Yes, and not just for non-traditional options! Pitch together and indicate how collaboration will work, who will be responsible for what tasks, etc. Group projects should reflect in some way on this collaboration, either by incorporating into the project itself or as part of a critical supplement.

Do I have to read the play that this project is based on, pertains most closely to, etc.?
It depends on your project, the critical/creative questions you wish to pose about the production, the contexts you're examining or lenses you're applying. I will recommend accordingly.

Can I work on same production I've already written about?

You may use assignment 2 as an opportunity to develop a project that you will execute in assignment 3, traditional or otherwise. Projects that span across assignments 1 and 2 must either engage with new elements or develop/evolve previous analyses such that there is very little repetition. **Those who wish to work on a single project across assignments 2 and 3 should develop new work (pages, minutes, etc.) at least equal in length/depth to the work done in assignment 2 and integrate it as a revised whole project.**

Where can I find critical contextual sources and what counts as an appropriate one?

Jstor, Project Muse, Summon, GoogleBooks are all great tools to search for critical essays, monographs, and journal articles. You will not find many peer-reviewed scholarly publications on covid-era Shakespeare. There are, of course, plenty of scholarly texts you could apply to these productions that you can find⁹. Review SU library guidelines on research strategies and how to identify peer-reviewed sources if this is new for you.

Where can I find historical/production history sources and what counts as appropriate? Every project will dictate its own path here, but most of you will be working with online archives: production or theater websites, newspapers (print or online), theater reviews, blogs, etc.

What do I include in the pitch?

If you're pitching a traditional essay or presentation, your pitch will indicate what critical or historical context you're investigating in relation to which production and what kinds of questions you are already bringing to bear on text and context. Everyone should **review the ETS and general learning outcomes and skills** copied below as you develop your pitches, but **non-traditional project undertakers should use these as a guide to align aims with their chosen form of research and output.** Pitches should consider how the ETS assignment rubric (copied here) might be translated or adapted to appropriately assess their proposed work if taking a non-traditional option.

Skills specific to the field of English and Textual Studies:

1. Recognize how meanings are created through acts of critical reading and analysis
 - o Analyze texts using various theoretical paradigms for literary and cultural studies
 - o Analyze texts in relation to their historical contexts
 - o Analyze texts as bearers of political meaning and mediators of power relationships

1. Analyze the ways texts construct categories of difference, including differences of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, and class
2. Formulate sustained interpretive, analytical, or conceptual arguments based on evidence drawn from texts
3. Develop skills for creative self-expression in fiction or poetry

General skills and abilities:

1. Organize ideas in writing
2. Use clear and appropriate prose
3. Use library and web-based resources to locate primary and secondary sources
4. Use and cite sources appropriately
5. Express ideas and information orally
6. Engage in analytical and critical dialogue orally
7. Evaluate arguments
8. Identify and question assumptions

ENGLISH DEPT. ESSAY RUBRIC	THESIS	ORGANIZATION	USE OF EVIDENCE	USE OF RESEARCH (if applicable)	STYLE	GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS
Excellent	Clear, ambitious, convincing argument. Responds to assignment in nuanced ways with evidence of independent thought.	Logic of information flow is consistently clear. Paragraphs are unified and transitions effective.	Assertions supported with well-chosen evidence. Effective use of quotations with full explication and compelling analysis.	Evidence of thorough research. Effective integration and documentation of sources.	Sophisticated, precise diction and syntax. Tone and terms appropriate to audience and assignment.	Varied, well-crafted and virtually error-free prose.
Able	Clear argument. Addresses assignment topic directly. Argument may be a little unadventurous, or ambitious but not convincing.	Logic of information flow is reasonably clear. May have some digressions or some unclear transitions.	Good use of quotations as evidence, but choices may be predictable and/or analysis less than compelling.	Evidence of adequate research. Adequate integration and documentation of sources.	Reasonably precise diction and sound syntax. Tone and terms appropriate to audience and assignment.	Effectively crafted prose with minor errors.
Inchoate but acceptable	Argument unclear or vague; may be too broad or too specific. May not respond fully to assignment.	Logic of information flow sometimes unclear or repetitive. Paragraphs disorganized and/or unconnected.	Some use of quotations as evidence. Inadequate or unpersuasive explication and analysis.	Sparse research or reliance on inappropriate sources. Awkward integration of research and/or errors in documentation.	Some words used inaccurately or imprecisely. Some problems with syntax. May have problems with repetitiveness.	Some mechanical errors, but ideas still comprehensible.
Unacceptable	Lack of controlling idea or any debatable claim. Misses point of assignment.	Little or no discernable order to flow of information. Disjointed paragraphs with problematic or absent transitions.	Lacks support for claims. Few quotations or inappropriate quotations. Lack of analysis.	Inadequate or absent research. Poor integration and/or documentation of sources.	Frequent misuse of words and/or problematic syntax. Little awareness of intended audience. Inappropriate tone.	Serious mechanical errors. Problems so glaring as to make meaning incoherent.