BIG IDEAS

These are the **seven big ideas** that we will uncover and explore in English 205. Each has four parts: a **definition**; a set of essential **questions**; an **outcome**, or the knowledge and skills you'll gain; and **assessments**, or the ways you'll be graded on that outcome.

What does this idea mean?

What questions does it provoke?

What knowledge or skill will you gain?

How will you demonstrate your knowledge or skill?

1 / Methods

We read Shakespeare in an age of abundance, with multiple other media drawing on our attention. We concentrate on difficult texts for the rewards of their enduring ideas, and beautiful and compelling language. We critique Shakespeare using 21st-century literacies: the mindsets, skills, and techniques that leverage both physical and digital spaces for knowledge creation.

How are the ways we interpret Shakespeare possible only in 2015? How do our learning spaces (physical, digital) and media affect and effect new knowledge about his texts? What are the past reading, writing, and thinking habits that we should practice? What are the (slow) reading habits that encourage close reading? Which media and platforms are the most effective for capturing our critical thinking?

strategies like annotation and note-taking.

- Response 1 (on annotations)
- Final Exam (dossier)
- Participation Badges

2 / Language

Reading Shakespeare requires mental paraphrase (into modern English), but we must also interpret the texts as they appear on the page. A close-reading analyzes its form; its speaker (voice, tone); its setting or context; its argument; its structure; its imagery; its sound and meter; its language (syntax, diction, word meanings); and its rhetorical devices (including metaphors, similes, and symbols).

You will compile the evidence for, and write, close-readings of passages that prioritize their key elements (see list at left), and identify those elements that make them similar or different to other passages.

You will document your reading practices for both digital and physical books, and reflect on the impacts of knowledge-creation and retention

How do you know you understand the text? How do you read the lines, and between the lines? How do you interpret the results of your close reading? How do you recognize these elements of a text, and what do you do with this information? How do you paraphrase, and why? How do you compare two or more passages?

- Exercise 1 (close reading)
- Exercise 2 (paraphrasing)
- Final Exam, Section A (identifications/ comparisons)
- Participation Badges

3 / Performances

Whenever we read Shakespeare's plays on the page, we must imagine them in performance. They are stories unfolding in time, turning on the variable motives and knowledge of discrete characters. Every performance, good or bad, provokes new insights into a text's story and language.

You will analyze performances as a series of interpretive decisions, and critique a performance to illustrate its effect on your own interpretation.

How does Shakespeare arrange the action of a text? Where does he start and stop the narrative? How does your knowledge of a play's theatrical/interpersonal elements help you understand motives, and the unfolding narrative? How do productions and performances make interpretive decisions?

- Response 2, Option A (review) or B (dramaturgical advice)
- Participation Badges

4 / Questions

Ignorance is the beginning of wisdom. The best questions provoke multi-layered answers, which help us ask new and more complex questions. Our arguments in response to these questions must have a counter-argument. They must also be carefully structured.

You will formulate critical questions about Shakespeare's texts, and write multi-layered responses that provoke new questions.

What are the kinds of questions we ask of literary texts? How do we formulate them? How can we make logical and clear arguments? How should essays take a position rather than discuss a topic? What is the function of an introduction, a paragraph, a conclusion? How do you outline an argument? Will criticism ever be definitive?

- Response 2, Option C (exam questions)
- Final Exam, Section B (essay)
- Participation Badges

5 / Forms

Shakespeare's plays adopt five main *genres* (tragedy, comedy, history, romance, and problem play) and a range of *modes* (pastoral, elegiac, lyric). His non-dramatic (lyric and narrative) poetry and his sonnets are in dialogue with his plays.

You will identify how Shakespeare's genres influence his plot- and characterlevel decisions, and how his modes influence elements of style like diction and tone.

How do the conventions (genre, mode) of a text inform its internal elements/structure? How do they influence our expectations? Should they? How do the plays and poems reflect each other stylistically? thematically? in other ways?

- Exercise 3 (on genres and modes)
- Response 3, Option A (on sonnets and plays)
- Final Exam, Section B (essay)
- Participation Badges

6 / Origins

Shakespeare's theatre/audiences and publications/readers were very different from ours. He wrote in and for a specific culture, and adapted his sources and ideas to that culture. Our print and digital editions adapt the material forms (manuscripts, quartos, folios) of their own origins.

You will demonstrate and explain the impact of Shakespeare's narrative sources and theatre context on his decisions.

How did Shakespeare's material circumstances influence his writing? How did he adapt the sources of his plays and poems? How were his writings first performed and circulated? How do editions affect our readings of him today?

- Exercise 2
- Response 3, Option B (on contexts/sources)
- Participation Badges

7 / Evidence

A compelling argument is a resourceful argument: it uses textual evidence to make a nuanced and convincing case. It uses the right formats to quote and cite that evidence.

You will compile and interpret enough textual evidence to make rigorous, multi-dimensional arguments.

How do you know what you believe to be true? How do you gather evidence, and how much is enough? How are facts different from opinions? What are the correct ways to quote and cite Shakespeare's texts? How do interpretations construct knowledge?

- Responses 1, 2, and 3
- Final Exam, Section A (identifications/ comparisons)
- Final Exam, Section B (essav)
- Participation Badges