# SHAKESPEARE & METAMORPHOSIS

# Oberlin College ENG 304/CMPL 304

Spring 2021 :: T/Th 1:30-2:45







# **Professor Wendy Beth Hyman** (she/her)

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Office hours T/Th 3PM-4:15PM (and by appointment)
Sign up at least 24 hours in advance; secure zoom link will be emailed

This course will examine several Shakespeare plays and poems in conversation with classical myths and their major themes of transformation, sexuality, suffering, artistic creation, coming of age, wisdom, love, and loss. Shakespearean works include Romeo and Juliet, Midsummer Night's Dream, Titus Andronicus, Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale, and "The Rape of Lucrece." We will read these alongside and in conversation with the greatest mythologizer of metamorphosis who ever lived, Publius Ovidius Naso, otherwise known as Ovid. His collection of 250+ myths, aptly titled Metamorphoses, was one of Shakespeare's two most important literary sources (the other was the Bible). How did these themes of transformation, evolution, creation, devastation, apotheosis, and revolution take on mythological form? How does Shakespeare himself transform—indeed metamorphize—these myths and make them his own? We will look, too, at other retellings of these archetypal stories, in sources ranging from the picaresque novel of the ancient African writer Apuleius, to the poetry of Bohemian-Austrian aesthete Rilke, to contemporary feminist revisions by Paisley Rekdal, Mary Zimmerman, and A. E. Stallings. We will consider issues of translation across media, across time, and across language, also looking at some examples of Ovidian painting and sculpture. Among our guiding questions will be myths' relationship to magic and religious awe, to suffering, to other kinds of art, to truth and to lies, to gender, to power, and to the ability of human beings to remake themselves. We will consider the place of mythology in our own era, and think about the virtues and risks of archetypal/trans-historical narratives in contemporary literary and cultural study. Throughout, we will live with this controversial question: Are there fictions that are truer than the truth, and might literature have access to them?

This class is cross-listed with the Comparative Literature Department, and it meets the English Department requirement for "literature written before 1800." The prerequisite is two prior 200-level English or Comparative Literature courses. If you do not meet the prerequisite, please see me.

# **OBJECTIVES:**

- Acquire increased analytical and interpretive skills for reading Shakespeare, including the more difficult plays
- Identify the literary components, cultural value, and symbolic power of written myths in western literature
- Make active connections between analytical and creative approaches to knowledge generation
- Identify ways that historical literature is part of an ongoing conversation with current social issues
- Gain a deepened understanding of the relationship between literary and visual arts in the Renaissance
- Gain confidence in discussing literature study' value as a creative endeavor and academic field
- Use research and literary analysis to develop problem-solving skills
- Engage the intellectual as well as ethical benefits of grappling with challenging topics
- Gain awareness of some issues involved in translation among languages, nations, and historical eras
- Develop confidence forming literary arguments in class and in writing, and comfort in learning how to revise your views when appropriate, and
- Participate in a community of care and learning in the midst of real-world trauma

#### **TEXTS:**

LAIS.					
Ovid (Humphries trans.)	Metamorphoses	Indiana	1960	978-0253200013	REQ'D
Apuleius (Walsh, trans.)	The Golden Ass	Oxford	1994	978-0199540556	REQ'D
Mary Zimmerman	Metamorphoses: A Play	Northwestern	2002	978-0810119802	REQ'D
Paisley Rekdal	Nightingale	Ingram	2019	978-1556595677	REQ'D
Frank Bidart	Desire	Farrar, Strauss	1997	0374525994	REQ'D
Rilke, Rainer Maria	Selected Poetry	Penguin	1989	978-0679722014	REQ'D
Vaughan, Virginia	Shakespeare and the Gods	Ingram		978-1474284264	REC.
Shakespeare	Shakespeare's Poems	Bloomsbury	2007	978-1903436875	REC.
Shakespeare	The Winter's Tale	Bloomsbury	2010	978-1903436356	REC.
Shakespeare	Cymbeline	Bloomsbury	2010	978-1904271307	REC.
Shakespeare	Titus Andronicus	Bloomsbury	2018	978-1350030916	REC.
Shakespeare	Midsummer Night's Dream	Bloomsbury	2017	978-1408133491	REC.
Shakespeare	Romeo and Juliet	Bloomsbury	2017	978-1903436912	REC.
All other readings	Course Bb site				REQ'D

Shakespeare's plays & poems can be accessed for free at <a href="https://shakespeare.folger.edu/shakespeares-works/">https://shakespeare.folger.edu/shakespeares-works/</a>. The editions by Bloomsbury are, however, strongly recommended due to their wonderful glosses, primary source materials, introductory notes, and more. Any edition of the Norton Shakespeare is also fine. If you have questions about access to these or any other of our readings, please let me know.

## A COUPLE OF THOUGHTS ABOUT SHARING SPACE AS LEARNERS in 2020-2021:

No gaslighting zone: I am poignantly aware that we are have been living through a pandemic, an uprising, a fraught election and insurrection, environmental crises, racist violence, economic uncertainty, and yet more. I think it is safe to say that we are all living through varying degrees of fear, uncertainty, and trauma. As a result, I will be generous about deadlines, accommodations, and anything else you need; just be in touch. (In fact, most of the deadlines in this class will be determined by you). My ardent goal is simply for us to just keep learning together, whatever version of our world we find ourselves in. Please be aware that your professor is living through the same conditions you are, and is new to teaching online, so we need to all be patient with each other. Things may be messy. That said, great learning can still happen even when (sometimes especially when) there is mess.

**Diversity:** This classroom will operate with respect for all its members, and will strive to create an environment where our differences are a rich asset. We are collectively responsible for creating the kind of space we want to learn in, so please bring your best self to the proverbial table. That said: there needs to be space made to get things wrong. That's called learning! So give each other the benefit of the doubt. Students with disabilities should contact me as early as possible so that we can discuss proper accommodations. If financial hardship is interfering with learning, please let me know and I will try to help you to secure resources (I was a Pell Grant student myself). Anyone who has other concerns should sign up to chat during an office hour.

Course content: "Omnia praeclara tam difficilia quam rara sunt." The great early modern Jewish philosopher Baruch Spinoza's words can be translated this way: "all things supremely splendid are as difficult as they are rare." Although hopefully we all experience moments of delight that are not necessarily hard-earned, I take his words to mean that many of the most precious things we experience in life—and some of the most beneficial knowledges we arrive at—might emerge out of pain, difficulty, or discomfort. Some of the material we will encounter this semester is about—and has even produced—suffering, and some may be very difficult to read and see. Racism, sexual coercion, misogyny, ableism, and other forms of exclusion and cruelty are a regular feature of these texts. In particular, sexual violence is a major theme of the course, so before committing to this class, please decide if this is material you are prepared to wrangle with, especially during this already challenging time. I cannot always anticipate every reader's reactions (you may not even anticipate your own!), and I want you to take excellent care of yourself in all circumstances. Still, it is my conviction that to respond on an aesthetic, intellectual, and personal level to difficult texts increases our internal resources, and deepens our capacity for knowledge, growth, righteous action, and even delight.

#### **FORMAT:**

As a default, plan to have most of the reading for the week done by Tuesday's class, but I will indicate readings that can be done a little later in the week (i.e. for Thursday's class). We have a quite heavy reading load, so be sure to space out the work over time.

Synchronous Zoom meetings: Accessible at this link. Meeting ID: 894 2648 8524; passcode: 283250.

- Tuesdays Mini-lectures, context, time for close reading; all students attend 1:30-2:45
- Thursdays Smaller group discussions: <u>Group A</u>: 1:30-2:05PM; <u>Group B</u>: 2:10-2:45PM (beginning week 2; we'll meet as a whole class for the full first week)

Asynchronous Slack discussion: Accessible at this link after you activate a Slack account

All students required to post twice a week, about ~150-200 words for each post:

- One response to the readings culminating in a discussion question (24 hrs. before either class)
- One response to class discussion or something another student posted (within 48 hours of class or post)

<u>Ongoing student projects</u>: As I'll detail below (p. 5), a substantive portion of your work for the class will be done through self-directed individual and group projects, in ongoing consultation and <u>office hours</u> with me.

#### VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT EXPECTATIONS:

- Stay focused. Please stay engaged in class activities. Close any apps on your device that are not relevant and turn off notifications. Being present has never been more important.
- Turn on your video whenever possible. It is so helpful to be able to see each other, just as in live classes!
- Mute your microphone when you are not talking to help eliminate background noise.
- Find a quiet, distraction-free spot from which to log on if possible. Turn off any music, videos, etc. in the background. Use headphones with a microphone if necessary.
- Use the chat window for questions/comments that would be off-topic at the moment but you'd like to come back to. I'll ask one student each class to keep an eye on the chat and alert me to anything I've missed. That said, the preferred form of engagement will be real time, camera-on, and verbal.

#### **Attendance Policy:**

- Regular and on-time attendance at our daily Zoom sessions is expected, analogous to in-person class attendance. The content of the course relies upon each student's interaction with the professor and each other. *However*, if you have time zone issues, connectivity issues, or for some other reason find making these sessions impossible, please let me know and we will discuss accommodations (usually by way of additional asynchronous contributions).
- Please let me know as soon as possible if you must miss class due to illness, religious holiday, or another issue. Zoom sessions will not be recorded, so everyone in the class might want to have a note-taking compatriot you can check in with if needed; you are responsible for missed material.
- If you miss more than four days, we will need to set up a virtual <u>office hour</u> to assess whether or not you will be able to successfully complete the course.

#### A NOTE ABOUT READING RENAISSANCE LITERATURE:

Renaissance English literature contains the earliest literary works—written during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries—that most college students read without the works first having been "translated" or modernized. This class is primarily directed at those with some prior experience reading Shakespeare, but if you are new to reading Renaissance plays you are still very welcome; just be aware that you may find it somewhat challenging at first. Unlike contemporary novels, say, this is not literature that you can read passively. It must be read slowly, repeatedly, often out loud, and with pencil in hand. Oddly, the Ovid will be easier to read, because his 2000 year-old Latin has been translated into modern English. Periodically during the semester, however, we will look at the version of Ovid that Shakespeare himself read (which will seem archaic indeed to our ears), listen to the Latin (no familiarity with the language required), and view images which, in their own way, are a form of translation.

The most important way to demonstrate that you are working hard is to participate in class. Although I have a lot that I am eager to teach you about this literature, we will proceed primarily through informed discussion. Your time in class, like your time spent doing the reading, cannot be passive. Always come to class with questions and ideas already jotted down, passages underlined, and controversial ideas you want to put to the test.

## **OFFICE HOURS:**

I am eager to work with you and I encourage you to sign up for office hours if you have a question about the literature or your writing for this course. The link above connects you to my google "pages" spreadsheet (please sign up 24 hours in advance so I know to hold that spot open; I will email a zoom link before we meet). Since individual student choice projects are a major component of this course, we will also want to work closely together as you develop your ideas So: sign up early and often. ©

## **EVALUATION/ASSIGNMENTS**

The following things are required of all students in the course, with grade percentages:

15% Excellent attendance, active participation and thoughtful listening in synchronous sessions

15% Twice weekly posts on the class slack, as detailed above (see "asynchronous discussions" page 3)

20% One analytical essay (5-7pp) due March 9

The other 50% of the course grade will be earned by combining any of the following "student choice" elements, in proportions and on dates you choose, after discussion with me. Written proposal due 2/18; final accounting sheet due May 12. The below possibilities can be modified as per your interests.

5%

- Five additional slack posts (~150-200 words each) over the course of the semester
- Final self-evaluation and reflection (3pp.) at the end of the semester

10%

- Oral presentation (5-8 min) of an article—summarize, analyze, point to ideas it raises
- Visual analysis (3pp.) of an object in the AMAM or online related to metamorphosis
- Response paper (3pp.) to any primary or secondary reading for the day

15%

- Annotated bibliography of 3-4 articles not on the syllabus (one paragraph per source)
- Analysis (3-4pp) of the stylist choices of any Ovidian translator (Comp Lit students, NB!)

20%

- Attempt to create your own myth (!)
- Continue the story of any Ovidian or Shakespearean character
- Lesson plan for teaching a Shakespeare play to high school students

25%

- Write a second 6-8 pp. analytical essay on:
  - → any primary source reading from the second half of term
  - → a relevant text Shakespearean or early modern text not on the syllabus
  - → one or more myth(s) from another culture/linguistic tradition, etc.
- Final exam (2 hours): comprising discussion of terms, passage analysis, and one essay

50%

Final original research paper, 15-18pp.; requires 6+ secondary sources and a consultation with a librarian.

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- Online virtual exhibition/web page: let's discuss what you envision, and agree on scope.
- Major performance, podcast episode(s), staged production/video, etc.
- Or? I am open to other unconventional approaches (e.g. I had a student compose music and poetry for an installation in Tappan Square; I received an ASL translation of the myth of Philomela; a former editor of the newspaper used that template to feature the happenings of Shakespearean and Ovidian characters, etc. etc.). Again, let's discuss.

I.

As the above rubric suggests, there any many ways to complete the work for the course. I would like to speak with you about your intentions, but there is no right or best way. Do a combination of approaches that seem most interesting, that you would enjoy completing, and that you would learn the most from. Here are examples of ways that six different students might complete the requirements for the course:

Student A		Student B	
Active participation	15 15	Active participation	15
Slack posts	_	Slack posts	15
Analytical essay	20	Analytical essay	20
Article presentation	10	Visual analysis x 2	20 20
Wrote own myth	20	Response paper x 2	
Annotated bibliography	15	In-class article presentation	
Extra slack posts	5		
		Student D	
Student C			
		Active participation	15
Active participation	15	Slack posts	15
Slack posts	15	Analytical essay	20
Analytical essay	20	Response paper	10
Second essay	25	Lesson plan	20
Final exam	25	Recorded 30 min. podcast	20
Student E		Student F	
Student L		Student 1	
Active participation	15	Active participation	15
Slack posts	15	Slack posts	15
Analytical essay	20	Analytical essay	20
Research paper	50	Suite of original poems	20
1 1		Translation of short myth	25
		Extra slack posts	5
		Final self-evaluation	5
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## A few other ground-rules:

- Please submit a personal plan for how you intend to meet the course requirements by **February 18.** You may modify it once after this date if your interests change, as long as you submit a revised plan and explanation.
- Generally only one article presentation will be allowed each day, so as to not take too much time away from discussion. This will be on a first-come basis, so you may have to be flexible if choosing this option.
- No more than two of any element may be submitted (e.g. two response papers, two art object analyses)
- You must earn at least 20 "student choice" points by **March 18**, except by prior agreement, unless writing the final research paper.
- I am would like to meet with you to help you figure out which sort of approach is likely to work best for you, and I can also help you come up with reasonable deadlines. It is your job to keep track of your points as you go. You will turn in a sheet confirming your "accounting" on **May 12**.

## READING AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

#### Week 1: INTRODUCTION: CREATION MYTHS and FICTIONS OF THE COSMOS

\*Note: All students meet for the full class session both Tuesday and Thursday this week

(T) Feb 2: Introductions; syllabus and class overview

Pico della Mirandola, Oration on the Dignity of Man excerpt

Rilke, "Archaic Torso of Apollo"; Vaughan, "Context," Shakespeare and the Gods

(Th) Feb 4: Ovid, Books 1 and 2 (esp. The Flood; Deucalion and Pyrrha; Apollo and Daphne;

Jove and Io; Pan and Syrinx; Phaeton; Acteon)

## Week 2: LOVE AND FATE; LOVE AND WAR

(T) Feb 9: Ovid, Book 3 (esp. Echo; Narcissus); Book 4 (esp. Pyramus and Thisbe; Mars and Venus);

"Dido to Aeneas" (Heroides); Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, Act 1-3; Rilke: "Birth of

Venus"; Chatti, "After Touching You, I Think of Narcissus"

Criticism: Colin Burrow, "Re-embodying Ovid: Renaissance Afterlives"

(Th) Feb 11: **Group A:** 1:30-2:05PM **:: Group B:** 2:10-2:45PM

Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, Acts 4-5; Jonathan Bates, "Shakespeare's Ovid"

## Week 3: LOVE and THE SOUL, and DARK NIGHTS OF THE SOUL

(T) Feb 16: Ovid, Metamorphoses Book 5 (esp. Proserpina); Ted Hughes, "The Rape of Proserpina"

Apuleius, Cupid and Psyche (Books 4-6 of The Golden Ass)

(Th) Feb 18: **Group A:** 1:30-2:05PM :: **Group B:** 2:10-2:45PM

Criticism: Vernat, "The Reason of Myth"

\*Due: Personal course plan

# Week 4: METAMORPHOSIS, METADRAMA, and TRANSLATION

(T) Feb 23: Shakespeare, Midsummer Night's Dream, Acts 1-3

Criticism: Forey, "Thou art translated!: Ovid, Golding, and Midsummer Night's Dream"

(Th) Feb 25: **Group A:** 1:30-2:05PM **:: Group B:** 2:10-2:45PM

Shakespeare, Midsummer Night's Dream, Acts 4-5

Criticism: Uman, "Translation, Transformation and Ravishment in MND"

## Week 5: SUFFERING, TRAGEDY, CREATION

(T) March 2: Ovid, Book 6 (especially Philomela; Arachne through Marsyas); Book 7 (esp. Medea)

Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale"; Shakespeare, Titus Andronicus, Acts 1-3; Criticism: Hyman,

"Teaching Titus Andronicus When Sexual Violence is on the World Stage"

# Week 5 (cont):

(Th) March 4 **Group A:** 1:30-2:05PM **:: Group B:** 2:10-2:45PM

Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, Acts 4-5; Listen: Black Lives Matter in *Titus Andronicus* Criticism: Oakley-Brown, "Titus Andronicus and the Sexual Politics of Translation"

#### Week 6:

(T) March 9: Discussion of Taymor Titus

Stallings, "Daphne"; Boland, "Daphne"; Rilke, "Early Apollo"

\*Due: Paper 1 (6-8pp.)

(Th) March 11: **Group A:** 1:30-2:05PM **:: Group B:** 2:10-2:45PM

Ovid: Book 8 (esp. Daedalus and Icarus, Philemon and Baucus, Ceres sends famine)

#### Week 7: THE ART OF METAMORPHOSIS

(T) March 16: \*\*\* Special event: Meeting with Professor Wolfe's "Ovid and the Renaissance" class

W. H. Auden, "Musee des Beaux Arts"; Barolsky, "As in Ovid, So in Renaissance Art"; Criticism: Christopher Allen, "Ovid and Art"; Cunningham, "Why ekphrasis" Bernini, *Apollo and Daphne*: https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2006/sep/16/art

Botticelli, Birth of Venus and Primavera

Browse: Ovid Illustrated: The Reception of Ovid's Metamorphoses in Image and Text

(Th) March 18: **Group A:** 1:30-2:05PM **:: Group B:** 2:10-2:45PM

Shakespeare, "The Rape of Lucrece"

Gildea, "The Living Image: Aesthetic Action in The Rape of Lucrece"

\*Due: all students need to have earned 20 "student choice" points by this date

#### Week 8: DESIRE

(T) March 23: No Classes (Oberlin mini-break)

(Th) March 25 **Group A:** 1:30-2:05PM :: **Group B:** 2:10-2:45PM

Shakespeare: sonnets 1, 15, \*18, 19, \*20, 29, 55, 73, 87, 106, 116, \*126, \*129, 130, 144

Sidney: Sonnet 1 from Astrophil and Stella

Andrew Marvell, "The Garden"

\*All students need to have earned 20 student choice points by this date

## Week 9: FORBIDDEN DESIRE

(T) March 30: Ovid: Book 9 (optional, but read Iphis & Ianthe); Book 10 (especially Pygmalion; Myrrha);

Frank Bidart, "In the Middle Hour of the Night"; Rilke, "Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes."

Criticism: Knox, "The Song of Orpheus"

(Th) April 1: **Group A:** 1:30-2:05PM **:: Group B:** 2:10-2:45PM

Mary Zimmerman, Metamorphoses: A Play

#### Week 10: HISTORY AS MYTH

(T) April 6: Ovid, Book 11; Shakespeare, Cymbeline (Acts 1-2)

(Th) April 8: **Group A:** 1:30-2:05PM :: **Group B:** 2:10-2:45PM

Shakespeare, Cymbeline (Act 3)

#### Week 11: METAMORPHOSES of METAMORPHOSES!

(T) April 13 Ovid, Book 12; Shakespeare, Cymbeline Act 4-5

Translation symposium

(Th) April 15: No class: wellness day

#### Week 12: METAMORPHOSIS AND TRAUMA

(T) April 20 Seo-Young Chu, "A Refuge for Jae-in Doe: Fugues in the Key of English Major"

https://entropymag.org/a-refuge-for-jae-in-doe-fugues-in-the-key-of-english-major/

(Th) April 22 **Group A:** 1:30-2:05PM **:: Group B:** 2:10-2:45PM

Paisley Rekdal, Nightingale (selections)

## **WEEK 13: DEATH AND REBIRTH**

(T) April 27 Shakespeare, The Winter's Tale, Acts 1-4

Ovid, Book 13

(Th) April 29 **Group A:** 1:30-2:05PM **:: Group B:** 2:10-2:45PM

Shakespeare: The Winter's Tale, Act 5

Criticism: Enterline, "The Rhetoric of Animation in The Winter's Tale"

#### Week 14-15: CLOSURE

(T) May 4: Ovid: Books 14-15

Pater: Conclusion to The Renaissance

Starks-Estes, "Coda: Philomela's Song: Transformations of Ovid"

\*Penultimate due date—everything due by this date except for whatever you choose as

your final project, which will be due May 12

(W) May 12 Final exam for those choosing to take one (9-11AM)

11AM Research paper due (for those choosing this assignment) or whatever your final work is

\*Accounting sheet due (all students)

\*Please note that this is the registrar's deadline. No work can be received after this time without an

approved incomplete. Only one assignment can be turned in on this date.

# **HONOR CODE:**

Please be aware of Oberlin College's **honor code**, which this class will closely observe. You will show your understanding of the policy by writing and signing the honor code ("I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment") at the bottom of every assignment. No work will be accepted without your affirmation of this pledge. Please especially note the strictures against PLAGIARISM, which means using not just precise language, but also concepts from another source without attribution. Since academic integrity is the foundation of all true intellectual exchange, any evidence of plagiarism on the part of a student will result in a minimum penalty of an "F" for the essay in question and a citation; PENALTY MAY ALSO INCLUDE A GRADE OF "F" FOR THE COURSE. If you have any questions about proper citation, please ask! A final thought: never "fudge" when it comes to matters of integrity.

For more information about the Honor System please see: www.oberlin.edu/students.links-life/rules-regs.html