Shakespeare Comedy
Autumn 2009
(A Tentative Syllabus)

I. **Teacher:** 林明澤
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II. **Class Hours:**
   13:10 ~ 15:00 on every Wednesday & 13:10 ~ 14:00 every Thursday
   I am thinking about the possibility of giving additional lecture hour if we are short of time before the end of the semester.

III. **Class Schedule:**
   Sept. 16th Introduction to the course
   Sept. 17th Overview: Shakespeare
   Sept. 23rd As You Like It
   Sept. 24th As You Like It
   Sept. 30th As You Like It
   Oct. 1st As You Like It
   Oct. 7th As You Like It
   Oct. 8th As You Like It
   Oct. 14th Twelfth Night
   Oct. 15th Twelfth Night
   Oct. 21st Twelfth Night
   Oct. 22nd Twelfth Night
   Oct. 28th Twelfth Night
   Oct. 29th Twelfth Night
   Nov. 4th Twelfth Night
   Nov. 5th Twelfth Night
   Nov. 11th (School Anniversary)
   Nov. 12th (Reserved)

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1 There is a complication to this one-hour session as far as its scheduling is concerned. According to our school’s new course scheduling guideline, this session should be placed at the time slot of 16:10~17:00. This arrangement is totally unacceptable to me and many other students who want to take this course. Therefore, I move it to Thursday afternoon. This rescheduling, however, will not be recognized by the school authorities unless everyone who takes this course signs an agreement to this change. I must adamantly proclaim that you must agree at this rescheduling if you want to take this course. There is simply no way to do the one-hour session on late Friday afternoon.
Nov. 18th  Mid-term Test
Nov. 19th  The Taming of the Shrew
Nov. 25th  The Taming of the Shrew
Nov. 26th  The Taming of the Shrew
Dec. 2nd   The Taming of the Shrew
Dec. 3rd   The Taming of the Shrew
Dec. 9th   The Taming of the Shrew
Dec. 10th  The Taming of the Shrew
Dec. 16th  The Taming of the Shrew
Dec. 17th  The Merchant of Venice
Dec. 23rd  The Merchant of Venice
Dec. 24th  The Merchant of Venice
Dec. 30th  The Merchant of Venice
Dec. 31st  The Merchant of Venice
Jan. 6th   The Merchant of Venice
Jan. 7th   The Merchant of Venice
Jan. 13th  The Merchant of Venice
Jan. 14th  Final Test

IV. Material:

1. The two books we will use for the course are As You Like It and Four Great Comedies, which in one volume contains The Taming of the Shrew, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Twelfth Night, and The Merchant of Venice. Because I decide not to discuss A Midsummer Night's Dream and the four-play-in-one volume will not be imported into Taiwan until the beginning of October, I pick for the class As You Like It and start the course with it. In total, the two books should cost about 300 N.T.

2. Instead of a bulky collection of Shakespeare’s complete works, separate copies of his plays will be used for class discussion. Signet edition, academically acceptable, inexpensive and conveniently portable, seems to be a better choice in view of the present circumstances. Two volumes of the edition that we will use for the semester are available at Caves Books, Ltd. (敦煌書局; phone number: 06-2296347). The books have been ordered for you to get a group discount. Since my class discussion involves close reading of a play, I refer to the text by page number very often; so I suggest that each student get a Signet copy of the play. Although you should understand that one edition of a Shakespeare play is usually different from another edition of the same play, the differences may not be so great as to make you unable to follow my class discussions. If you don’t want to spend the money on books, you can still use other editions of the play.

3. The choice of the Signet edition strikes a balance between usually conflicting concerns
of scholarly quality and financial cost. The edition of each play includes a long overview of Shakespeare scholarship, followed by an adequate introduction to the play, text with clear glosses, ending with commentaries by well-known Shakespeare scholars. Best of all, each copy costs around 150 N.T.D. In a word, the edition is suitable and economical at the same time.

4. For those who are interested in further study of Shakespeare’s plays, there are a lot of academically respectable editions for choice. For example, many major publishers like Norton, Routledge, Oxford, Cambridge, etc. publish collections of the Bard’s complete works. For separate volumes of the playwright’s works, I prefer the Arden edition, which is highly scholarly and which I use for preparing class lectures. These editions, I believe, should be available either in our library or in both major bookstores featuring imported English literature books, like 書林 and 敦煌.

V. How I Do the Class::

1. Class activities consist primarily of three parts: first, quiz on a play to be discussed; second, film adaptation of the play; third, my lecture (mostly in English).

2. Discussion of a play begins with a quiz containing questions related to textual details like plot, character, setting, etc. to make sure that you know enough about the play when you show up for class.

3. A film adaptation of the play is shown to the students to let you know the differences between a play script and its production in the movie. These differences will be discussed in class to enhance your consciousness and understanding of the dramatic nature of the texts you “read.” To save precious class hours for discussions of the plays, these movies, however, will not be shown in class. Instead, a three-hour extra session on a weekday night will be arranged for the movie whenever a new play is to be discussed. You are not required to come for the movie, and I am willing to lend you my DVD copy of the film. Make sure that you don’t lose or damage the DVD; otherwise, you have to find me a new copy.

4. My approach in class lecture is primarily thematic: that is, I pick up themes and issues commonly discussed about the play and draw on textual evidence to make my points. Most teaching materials, prepared in digital formats like Word or PowerPoint, will be posted on a webpage created on the school’s on-line teaching platform, Moodle (http://moodle.ncku.edu.tw). You may find them valuable in preparing for class activities and tests.

5. Ideally, it takes six or seven meetings to finish a play. Of course I won’t read the play line by line from the beginning to the end, but I will pick out important passages and analyze them quite thoroughly.
VI. **Requirements:**

1. Writing at the turn of the seventeenth century, Shakespeare used a kind of English language which we usually find quaint, difficult, and sometimes inaccessible. However, it is your obligation to read through his plays line by line, though it may task your brain to figure out the meanings. Fortunately, every edition of a Shakespeare’s play includes explanatory notes or glosses to help modern readers understand his language. If you still find such assistance insufficient for you to handle the text successfully, you can easily find resources (books or websites) providing information on plot synopsis, character profiles, odds-and-ends, etc. There are indeed Chinese translations of Shakespeare’s oeuvre. The best-known ones are done by 梁實秋 and 朱生豪, and recently scholars in China also retranslate some of Shakespeare’s plays; most of these texts are available in our library. However, they are probably useful only for the purpose of consultation while you are reading the English originals.

2. Since this academic year, I make it a rule that students who take this course must take the English Literature survey course (Part I) offered in this department or be equipped with sufficient knowledge of the historical, cultural background of the Elizabethan and Jacobean ages.

3. To ensure that you come to class with some knowledge about the play we’re discussing, a quiz will be given when we start discussing it. This quiz will consist of about twenty Yes/No, multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank questions on various details of the text. Since there will not be many such quizzes in each semester, their scores will take up relatively high percentage of the final score.

4. Each student is encouraged to join general discussion held in the forum set up on the course website. You are welcomed to come up there to join discussions related to the course work; I will hang around, too, reading your discussion or even joining it. Students who do meaningful or interesting discussions there will earn extra credits for their final scores.

5. Two major tests, mid-term and final, will be held in this semester. Each test will consist of short essay questions related to themes and issues discussed in class as well as Yes/No, multiple-choice, and fill-in-the-blank questions derived from class discussion.

6. Class attendance is monitored with a system of signing in: in most classes a roster will be circulated among you to sign for presence. Each absence will make you lose points in the final grade. If you are found absent, without taking official leaves, for eight times, you’ll be barred from taking one test.

7. You are not required to write a research paper for this course. However, some of you may feel so inspired by Shakespeare’s plays that you want to write a research paper; or you may simply have the need to produce a paper on literary studies. If you write such a paper, I will read and grade it. However, you should talk your
topic with me before you move on to the writing. Unless you write pretty well, this paper will not help a lot with your final score.

V. Evaluation:
1. One word of warning for those who want “easy credits” from this course: Some of you take this course because of my reputed leniency to poor students in my “English Literature” course, but I am reluctant to fail them because it is a required course, which they have to pass whether they like it or not. On the other hand, “Shakespeare Studies” is an elective course; you choose it only because you like it and believe you can handle it. Therefore, all the “benefits” you were familiar with in my “English Literature” course will not be granted here; in other words, don’t expect tests with full scores more than 120 points, some of the quiz scores ignored in calculating the final scores, bad attendance records ignored without affecting the final scores, etc. You should come to this course only because you want to appreciate one of the most precious facets of Western cultural legacy.

2. Though the ratio may vary, it goes generally like this: the quiz scores should take up 30 percent, the performance 10 percent, and the tests 60 percent of your final score.

Postscript:
1. If you already registered for the course during the summer break, it means that your personal data are already filed into the course webpage. However, the data are usually in default setting and may not be up-to-date; for example, the email address listed there may not be the one where you usually pick up mails. In a word, you need to update your personal data on the webpage—at least to make sure that you get email announcements from me.