

HERTOG 2020 SUMMER COURSES

SHAKESPEARE'S PRINCE & TYRANT

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Shakespeare took care to define the political and religious contexts of his plays and shows deep insight in how these factors affect the human character and define human possibilities. In studying *Macbeth* and *Henry V*, we will consider Shakespeare's depiction of tyranny and kingship. In addition, we will note that his treatment of princely rule broaches many of the themes that Machiavelli discusses in *The Prince*. Thus, the playwright challenges us to consider how he might be testing the provocative claims of the notorious "Machiavel." Our discussions will explore the following themes: the necessary qualities for a successful king, appearance vs. truth, the ability of human beings to conquer fortune, the virtues necessary for successful rule, the different demands of rulers in pagan and Christian times, and the role of war in domestic politics.

Books:

- *Macbeth* (Signet Classics, 1998)
- *Henry V* (Signet Classics, 1998)
- Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey Mansfield (University of Chicago Press, 1998)

Discussion Papers: Each fellow will be responsible for completing a brief discussion paper (1-2 pages, single-spaced). See below for your assignment. The papers are due the day before the session by **5 PM ET**. They should be posted on Slack and will be part of the assigned readings for the session. Paper-writers should be ready to briefly present their ideas during the seminar.

Resources

To learn more about the ideas and figures discussed in this course, we encourage you to explore a project supported by the Hertog Foundation: **The Great Thinkers** (<http://thegreatthinkers.org/>) and **Contemporary Thinkers** (<http://contemporarythinkers.org/>) websites. These sites are aimed at introducing important thinkers in Western thought, with a particular emphasis on politics and philosophy.

Relevant pages include John Locke, The Federalist, and Tocqueville (on The Great Thinkers), and Walter Berns, Herbert Storing, Martin Diamond, and Harry Jaffa (on Contemporary Thinkers).

Tuesday, June 30, 2020

10:00 a.m. to Noon ET **Introduction to Shakespeare as a Political Thinker**

Readings:

- *Macbeth*, Acts I–II
- *The Prince*, Chs. 1, 4, 14, and 17

Reading Questions & Writing Prompts:

Macbeth, Act I

1. What is the status of the witches in the play? Should they be read as figments of Macbeth's imagination? What seem to be their interests and character? What power do the witches seem to possess? Why does Macbeth take the witches so seriously?
2. How are we introduced to Macbeth? What are his outstanding attributes?
3. What are the indications of the condition of the realm under Duncan's rule? How do the thanes serve the realm and how might they threaten it? In light of Chapters 1 and 4 of *The Prince*, evaluate the political condition of Scotland.
4. What kind of king is Duncan? Evaluate his judgment on the basis of the decisions he makes. Assess the benefits and defects of elected versus hereditary kingship.
5. In light of Chapters 14 and 17 of *The Prince*, consider how Machiavelli might evaluate Duncan with respect to his use of arms and the basis for his rule in love rather than fear.
6. Why might Duncan decide to name his son as heir at the point he does?
7. Why does Macbeth write to Lady Macbeth when he does? What is revealed of their relationship in that letter?
8. How does Banquo regard the witches and their claims for him?
9. What are Lady Macbeth's characteristics? How does she regard her husband?
10. What reasons does Macbeth adduce against the murder? How and why does he change his mind?
11. Why does Macbeth want to be king? What does he appear to disregard in desiring to be king?
12. How does Macbeth regard the life to come? What is he attempting to gain in his earthly life?

Macbeth, Act II

1. What might be the significance of the exchange between Banquo and Macbeth at the beginning of Scene 1?
2. What is the status of the dagger that Macbeth sees before him? How is its status different from the appearance of the three witches in the previous Act?
3. What is the significance of the reference to Tarquin (2.1.55)?
4. What are the religious elements in Act 2 and what do they signify?
5. The flight of Duncan's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, suggests to others their complicity in their father's murder. Why do they flee and what do their actions suggest about the murder?

Thursday, July 2, 2020

10:00 a.m. to Noon ET

***Macbeth* Acts III & IV**

Readings:

- *Macbeth*, Acts III–IV
- *The Prince*, Chs. 8, 15–18

Reading Questions & Writing Prompts:

Macbeth, Act III

1. Assess Banquo's reflections at the beginning of Scene 1.
2. How does Macbeth make it evident that he is plotting against Banquo?
3. What dissatisfaction does Macbeth give voice to regarding his rule? How might that dissatisfaction provide insight into tyranny more generally?
4. Macbeth asks the murderers if they are "gospelled." Shakespeare coins the word. What does Macbeth mean by the word? What does Macbeth imply here about the relation between Christianity and politics? What might it signify about the status of Christianity in Scotland?
5. Note the ways in which Macbeth is haunted by the possibility of an afterlife.
6. Why is Hecate angry at the witches? Consider what she might mean by the claim that "security" is the "chiefest enemy" of "mortals." How might the pursuit of safety determine Macbeth's actions?
7. What does the conversation between Lennox and the Lord reveal about life in a tyranny?

Macbeth, Act IV

1. What revelations do the witches give to Macbeth? How might they be said to be contradictory? How does Macbeth ultimately understand them?
2. What is the situation of Macduff's wife and son? How do each react to it? Be alert to the religious significance of their words.
3. Why is Malcolm suspicious of Macduff's motives in coming to England?
4. Notice that Malcolm asks Macduff why he left his wife and child behind. Why did Macduff leave them unprotected as he did?
5. Why does Malcolm test Macduff the way he does? What issues does the exchange reveal that have been neglected by Macbeth? Note and consider the various kingly virtues Malcolm posits. Compare them to Machiavelli's treatment of virtue in Chapters 8 and 15–18 of *The Prince*.
6. In what ways does Malcolm reveal himself to be different from his father?
7. Why does Ross lie about the fate of Macduff's family and why does he reveal the truth when he does?

Monday, July 6, 2020

10:00 a.m. to Noon ET

Macbeth Act V & Henry V Act I

Readings:

- *Macbeth, Act V*
- *Henry V, Act I*
- *The Prince, Chs. 6, 11, 18, 21, and 25*

Reading Questions & Writing Prompts:

Macbeth, Act V

1. Why won't the Gentlewoman reveal what she has heard Lady Macbeth say in her sleep?
2. What seems to trouble Lady Macbeth in particular? What does the doctor conclude?
3. What has become of Macbeth's rule? How has his reign been undermined?

4. Why is Macbeth so confident as Scene 3 begins? What is the possible significance of the fact that he now has a servant named “Seyton”?
5. How does Macbeth react to his wife’s death? Why does he react in this way?
6. What seems to be the play’s position on tyrannicide?
7. What role have the witches played in the manner of Macbeth’s downfall?
8. How might the downfall of Macbeth reflect on Machiavelli’s injunction in Chapter 25 of *The Prince* to conquer fortune?

Henry V, Act I

1. What themes does the Prologue introduce? Notice that each succeeding act begins with the Chorus. Why might this play have a chorus, whereas his other history plays do not?
2. What is the specific concern of Canterbury regarding the bill under consideration in Parliament?
3. What do Ely and Canterbury say of the king’s youth?
4. What motivation do the Churchmen have to support the king’s claim to the lands of France?
5. Henry speaks of the consequences of the decision regarding his claim in France. What are they?
6. Speculate on who is ultimately in control of these decisions. Why might Henry proceed in the way that he does?
7. Compare the condition of the kingdom in this play to that of Scotland under Duncan.
8. Consider Chapters 6, 11, 18 and 21 of *The Prince* in light of the relation between the Church and the monarchy.
9. What preparation does Henry have to make before embarking for France?
10. How and why does the Dauphin insult Henry?

Wednesday, July 8, 2020

10:00 a.m. to Noon ET ***Henry V* Acts II & III**

Readings:

- *Henry V*, Acts II–III
- *The Prince*, Ch. 9

Reading Questions & Writing Prompts:

Henry V, Act II

1. The Chorus refers to Henry as “the mirror of all Christian kings.” What does this mean? How do we evaluate this statement?
2. Consider the ways in which England is united and the ways that it is divided.
3. What are the ordinary English people like? Keep in mind that Prince Hal kept company with many of these same characters as a youth. (Their antics are depicted in *King Henry IV, Parts i and ii*.) What might he have learned from them? What does Machiavelli indicate about the characteristics of the great and the people in Chapter 9 of *The Prince*? Is Shakespeare’s depiction of the classes compatible with Machiavelli’s claims? (Continue to consider these issues throughout the play.)
4. How does Henry handle the conspirators? In what ways might his approach be termed Machiavellian?

5. Falstaff's death is reported in the third scene. What should we make of his former association with the king and his manner of death in this play?
6. What are the differing opinions that the French have of Henry? What type of ruler would the Dauphin make? How might he be said to be a foil for Henry?

Henry V, Act III

1. Henry addresses his troops at the beginning of this scene. What is his view of the differing conduct required during war and peace? What would be the difficulties in maintaining this distinction consistently in political life? What are the claims that he makes regarding the nobles and the common people of England?
2. Again, consider the differences and similarities between the nobles and the people.
3. What are the tensions among the nationalities of the invading army? How might those tensions be soothed?
4. MacMorris often swears by "Chrish." Where is the irony in his oaths?
5. Evaluate the threats that King Henry makes before Harfleur. What is their significance? How might they be palliated?
6. What does the French scene between Katherine and Alice add to the drama?
7. What type of military discipline does Henry enforce and why does he do so? What is the purpose of his "mercy"?
8. How does Shakespeare's depiction of the French army differ from that of the English? What do those differences suggest about the two nations?

Friday, July 10, 2020

10:00 a.m. to Noon ET *Henry V* Acts IV–V & Conclusions

Readings:

- *Henry V*, Acts IV–V

Reading Questions & Writing Prompts:

Henry V, Act IV

1. What does Henry achieve by going disguised among the common soldiers? Notice that the Chorus's description of the event is different from the action of the play. What do we make of this discrepancy?
2. What is the nature of the disagreement between Williams and the disguised Henry? What is at stake in the dispute? How does Henry respond to it? What does that response suggest about his kingship?
3. Reflect on Henry's soliloquy after his visit to his troops. What are the responsibilities of a king according to Henry? What does Henry mean by "idol Ceremony"? What are the factors that suggest that these reflections are genuine? In what ways might these reflections be incomplete?
4. What is the significance of Henry praying to the "God of battles"? What does his prayer suggest about the status of his kingship?
5. How do the attitudes of the English and French before the battle differ, and why?
6. Henry's speech before the Battle of Agincourt is justly famous as a patriotic rallying cry. Where does its appeal lie? Identify Christian, pagan, and Machiavellian themes in it. What does it reveal about the type of kingship Henry is attempting to establish?

7. Notice that after Henry learns that the French have reinforced their troops, he calls for his own to kill their prisoners. What does this suggest about Henry's manner of waging war? He also calls for the death of the prisoners in the next scene. What are the motivations for this second order? Why might Shakespeare have shown Henry giving the order twice?
8. On what basis does Fluellen compare Henry to Alexander the Great?
9. Why does Henry play the trick on Fluellen and Williams? What is the result of it?
10. Why does Henry attribute the victory to God? Compare that assertion to his speech before the battle.

Henry V, Act V

1. In what ways is Henry's return to London akin to a Roman triumph? How does it differ? How does the Chorus's presentation of Henry differ from the one that emerges from the drama?
2. What does the dispute between Pistol and Fluellen reveal about the continuing issues confronting Henry's rule?
3. What are the claims that can be made for peace?
4. How and why does Harry court Katherine? Where is the comedy in their exchange? Where are the tensions? What does this scene reveal about Harry's invasion of France?
5. What are Harry's plans for their marriage?
6. What does the Epilogue reveal about Henry's aspirations and—perhaps—about Shakespeare's view of politics?
7. How do we evaluate Henry's rule? What are the differences between kingship and tyranny?