

HERTOG 2022 HUMANITIES SEMINAR

SHAKESPEARE'S *HENRY V*

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Henry V, like its hero, is a lot more subtle than it first appears – and more deceptive, too. In this seminar, we will explore what one of Shakespeare's most famous plays has to teach us about the acquisition and use of power. It will explore some questions of political morality and consider the ways in which kings are, and are not, like the rest of us.

Books:

- William Shakespeare, ed. T.W. Craik, *King Henry V* (The Arden Shakespeare, 1995)

If you wish to dig a bit deeper, [The Globe Guide to Shakespeare](#) is the best all-around introduction to Shakespeare and his works; a close runner-up is Michael Dobson and Stanley Wells, eds., [The Oxford Guide to Shakespeare](#). Peter Saccio's [Shakespeare's English Kings](#) can give you all the historical background you might want.

For this seminar, though, all you need to do is read the play itself. I suggest two readings, one before we meet and the other as structured below. You will see things in the second reading that you will not see on the first.

Recommended Viewing: You may wish to see one or two of the movies that have been made of the play, most notably the [Laurence Olivier \(1944\)](#) and [Kenneth Branagh \(1989\)](#) versions.

Depending on interest, we can organize a class viewing; your TA will poll you to determine the best dates and times.

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

Monday, January 3, 2022

2:00 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. ET

Session I: A Muse of Fire

Readings:

- Acts I and II

Topics:

- What did Shakespeare know about politics?
- Henry's backstory

Discussion Questions:

1. Why and to what purpose does Shakespeare use the device of the Chorus?
2. How do the domestic discontents of Henry's realm shape his decision for war?
3. Why does Henry set up the three conspirators rather than simply arrest them?

Wednesday, January 5, 2022

2:00 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. ET

Session II: In Liberty of Bloody Hand

Readings:

- Acts III and IV

Topics:

- The power of rhetoric
- The burdens of kingship

Discussion Questions:

1. What does his action at Harfleur teach us about Henry?
2. Is Henry's soliloquy in 4.1. a just reflection on his responsibility for the war?
3. What makes the St. Crispin's Day speech (4.3.) so effective?

Friday, January 7, 2022

2:00 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. ET

Session III: This Star of England

Readings:

- Act V

Topics:

- Politics as seduction
- Politics as stagecraft

Discussion Questions:

1. How does Henry negotiate with the French King and court?
2. Why does his seduction of Kate succeed?
3. And again, the Chorus. Why do we believe it? Or do we? Should we?