

# Shakespeare's *Sonnets*

An Honors (Un)Common Read Course

**IDH2930**

**Section 3135**

Spr 2025, Class #29096

W 9:35-10:25 (3rd Period)

HVR 1 Rm 114

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Office Hours 2-3:00 Wednesday (and by appointment)

## Course Description:

Shakespeare's 154 *Sonnets*, printed in 1609, trace a drama which some have read as autobiographical, but that perhaps more importantly reflect the currents and cross-currents of the age. Works that reflect the forces of cultural and social revolution at the time, the *Sonnets* can be read both as individual lyric poems, and as pieces in a larger argument traced by the entire sequence. The first 126 sonnets portray a poet with deep admiration for a "fair young man," while the final 28 poems comprise the "dark lady" sequence, with satirical poems telling a story of moral and artistic instability. In this course we will closely read all the sonnets, studying Shakespeare's poetic art and his place in Renaissance poetry. We will examine the sonnet as a literary art form and discover Shakespeare's original contributions to the genre.

## Texts:

*Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones, The Arden Shakespeare Third Series, Rev. Ed. (London: Bloomsbury Pub., 2010)

## Course Requirements:

In-Class Participation/Attendance 25%

Longer OED Comments/Replies 35%

Weekly Canvas Comments 40%

## Learning Outcomes:

### Critical Thinking

Students will be able to:

- Identify and analyze key elements, biases and influences that shape William Shakespeare's thought in his poetic writing.
- Approach issues and problems within the study of English Renaissance poetry, especially the Sonnet tradition, from multiple perspectives.

### Communication

Students will be able to:

- Communicate knowledge, thoughts and reasoning regarding the structure and content of Shakespeare's poetry clearly and effectively in written work and in class discussions.

## Course Expectations:

Read all sonnets **by the date assigned** for class discussion. You will access additional required readings in Canvas. I will also provide some reading guides and handouts to guide your reading that will include key terms and concepts we will discuss in class and which you will be expected to know. Every other week you will complete a "Weekly Canvas Comment" of a short paragraph. Once during the semester you will post a longer comments based on five OED definitions of words in the poem to interpret the poem (750-word assignment). See "OED Assignment" below. You should be ready to discuss the sonnets for that day, and to pose questions regarding any confusions or difficulties you have with language, allusions, structure, imagery, argument, etc. Class participation will influence your final grade (for the better or worse in any borderline cases), and you will be evaluated according to your level of preparation for each day's discussion (see "In-Class Participation" below).

## Description of Graded Work

### 1. In-Class Participation and Attendance: 25%

- 15% of your total course grade is based on verbal, in-class discussion participation: an exemplar participant shows evidence of having done the assigned reading before each class, consistently offers thoughtful points and questions for discussion, and listens considerately to other discussants. See participation rubric below.
- 10% of your total course grade is based on attendance. On-time class attendance is required for this component of the course grade. You may have two unexcused absences without any penalty. Starting with the third unexcused absence, each unexcused absence reduces your attendance grade by 2/3: an A

becomes a B+, and so on. Excessive tardy attendance (3 or more) will also reduce your attendance grade: for each 3 tardies, your attendance grade will be reduced by 1/3.

- c. Except for absence because of religious holiday observance, documentation is required for excused absences, per [UF attendance policy](#). If you miss 6 or more classes (excused or not), you will miss material essential for successful comprehension of material in the course.

## 2. OED Assignment (Comments and Replies): 35%

- a. You will post a 750-wd "Longer Comments" on Canvas once during the semester. You will post it in the weekly module on our Canvas page. These will be assigned by sign-up sheet at the beginning of the semester. See details in syllabus below. It will count for 30% of your course grade. See grading rubric below.
- b. You will post one 100-wd "Longer Reply" on Canvas to another student's "OED Comment" one time throughout the semester. Your reply must directly respond to issues raised in the "OED Comment" and this will count for 5% of your course grade. You will post it directly in the reply area to a particular student's post in that week's "OED Comment" discussion in the weekly module on our Canvas page.

## 3. Weekly Canvas Comments: 40%

- a. Every week you will post a Canvas comment on the reading for that day, due Tuesday by noon before our Wednesday class. A short paragraph is sufficient, not over 200 words. You will post these to the weekly module on our Canvas page. You must post even if you are assigned the OED Canvas Comment that week. See details below.

## Weekly Canvas Comments (Due Tuesday by noon)

ALL students are required to post a question or comment on that week's reading on Canvas by Tuesday at noon, including those students assigned to the longer Canvas OED Assignment. Posts should be a brief paragraph, but no longer than 200 words. Your interests and questions will help to structure and focus our discussion for that week, so you may have a particular interest in one sonnet, or compare imagery or arguments across a few sonnets. You may simply pose a question of fact, such as the literal meaning of a phrase. You might also ask a question regarding the meaning of a metaphor. **Late policy:** A **Weekly Canvas Comment** is considered late if it is posted at any time after noon on Tuesday. Late responses (after 12:00) will have a full grade deducted from the grade received for each day the response is late (An A

will be reduced to a B, etc.). You will receive full credit (an "A") for meeting the minimum requirements described above. Points are taken off only for late comments.

## OED Assignment Posts (Due Tuesday by noon) and Replies (Due Wednesday by 8 a.m.)

OED: [Oxford English Dictionary](#) [See Smathers Libraries—Find—Databases—A-Z List of Databases—Oxford English Dictionary]

Each week, 1-2 students will post a **750-word "OED Assignment Comment"** on the reading assigned for that day, which typically consists of 10-15 sonnets: your post however will concern **ONE** sonnet. In your comments **you must offer five definitions of words in that sonnet from the OED**. You may discuss content, subject matter, tone, theme, allusions, argument structure, dramatic scenario, etc. You may also pose a number of questions in your comment, as if you were opening up a discussion at the beginning of a class period.

Your essay should be preceded by a cover sheet that discusses five **words** in your passage in light of OED (Oxford English Dictionary) definitions that might be relevant. This cover sheet gives you an opportunity to collect some of the analytical detail on which your essay will build; therefore, do not merely list an assortment of word definitions. Be selective and show the significance of the material. The essay proper should interpret the sonnet richly and deeply. Reference to the OED is not an end in itself. In discussing any definition, you are not so much interested in a label, e.g., this word means "hatred," for example, but in the precise effect achieved with this particular occurrence of the word.

At the start of your essay, state your interpretation or define the interpretive issue you will be resolving. This could be something as simple as arguing about the implications of an unusual usage of a word in your passage, such as the phrase "just pleasure lost" in Sonnet 121. You might argue whether "just" means "justifiable," "merely," or the pleasure to be taken in being just. Your explanation can then bring in the other words nearby that you define. I am not asking for complex literary criticism: rather, I am looking for careful attention to words and to their connotative and denotative meanings. After your first paragraph, subsequent paragraphs should develop your interpretation in stages, with each stage drawing upon evidence from the text.

When choosing your sonnet, choose one that is challenging and interesting to you. Leaving aside for a moment the "poetic" features of the passage, make sure you understand its language and syntax. When in difficulty, check words in the OED. You can find a copy of the OED online, accessible through the Alden Library website under "databases," and there you can

access the words, with their extended definitions, you find difficult or interesting in your passage. Make sure and check the first date of use for the words. **\*Late policy** for this assignment follows the rules for the policy for **Weekly Canvas Comments**, above.

If you are assigned a **"Longer Reply"** that day, you must post at least **100 words in response** to an **"OED Assignment Comment"** to which you have been assigned. There are no requirements in terms of quoting for the replies, but your reply must directly respond to the issues raised in the student's OED comment. A sign-up sheet for these longer comments and replies will be circulated the first week of class. You will be assigned 1 OED comment and 1 longer replies all semester, and this will comprise 35% of your grade (30% for Comments; 5% for replies).

### **Grading Rubric for Longer OED Comments and \*Replies \*(excepting length and quoting requirements)**

A—At least 750 words; utilizes concepts presented in class and reading, linking them in interesting ways to the topics you raise; uses at least four quotes from the reading assigned that day (you must focus on the sonnet in question, though you can bring in elements from other sonnets); quotes correctly and cites line numbers; provides nuanced readings of quotes in question and offers a carefully structured argument; perfect grammar and spelling.

B—725-750 words; utilizes course material adequately but not excellently, mentioning one or two course concepts; utilizes quotes but may not contextualize them completely or explain relevance to larger argument; less nuance or complexity than an "A" response; one grammar or spelling error.

C—700-600 words; may mention course concepts but does not link them adequately to topic or display relevance to quotes from text; any quotes from text do not clearly support the larger argument; argument is simple and no attempts are made to find patterns in the text; two to three grammar and/or spelling errors

D—Fewer than 600 words; utilizes one course concept but uses it incorrectly; discusses the text too broadly with few specifics; quotes text once; citation form incorrect; no conceptual links between examples in the text.

E—500 words or fewer; no attempt to incorporate course concepts; does not quote text; no argument; grammar and spelling errors throughout.

### **Class Participation**

Grading for class discussion follows a *general* rubric of A=speaking 2-3 times each class period; B=speaking once a class period; C=speaking every other week or so; D=speaking a couple times a semester. F=attending class but not speaking at all. If you have trouble speaking up in

class, feel free to prepare beforehand a question or two to pose during class, and that counts as contributing to productive class discussion.

I will provide on Canvas short "reading guides" and some additional readings to aid in your interpretation of the sonnets. Please come with questions from those readings, and ideally you should prepare answers to the questions posed in the reading guides, as I will call on students for their responses—of course, if you volunteer your answers first, I won't have to call on you ☺. Additionally, you may have a follow-up question to some of the questions I have posed, and those are always welcome.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Reading</u>
Jan. 15	Introduction, and <i>Sonnets</i> 1-11 <u>Canvas:</u> Cruttwell, <i>The Shakespearean Moment</i> (1960), pp. 1-38. Stephen Booth footnotes to <i>Sonnets</i> 1-11
Jan. 22	<i>Sonnets</i> 12-19 <u>Canvas:</u> Booth n.12-19
Jan. 29	<i>Sonnets</i> 20-32 <u>Canvas:</u> Booth n.20-32
Feb. 5	<i>Sonnets</i> 33-47 <u>Canvas:</u> Booth n.33-47
Feb. 12	<i>Sonnets</i> 48-62 <u>Canvas:</u> Booth n.48-62 Vendler, notes to <i>Sonnets</i> 48-62
Feb. 19	<i>Sonnets</i> 63-86 <u>Canvas:</u> Booth n.63-86
Feb. 26	<i>Sonnets</i> 87-94

**Canvas:** Booth n.87-94  
Handout: Reading Guide, Sonnets 87-96

- Mar. 5                    ***Sonnets 95-105***  
**Canvas:** Booth n.95-105
- Mar. 12                  ***Sonnets 106-116***  
**Canvas:** Booth n.106-116
- Mar. 19                  SPRING BREAK
- Mar. 26                  ***Sonnets 117-127***  
**Canvas:** Booth n.117-127
- Apr. 2                    ***Sonnets 128-135***  
**Canvas:** Booth n.128-135
- Apr. 9                    ***Sonnets 136-146***  
**Canvas:** Booth n.136-146  
McDonald, *Shakespeare and the Arts of Language*, pp. 137-  
142
- Apr. 16                  ***Sonnets 147- 154***  
**Canvas:** Booth n.147-154
- Apr. 23                  ***Favorite Sonnet Day***

## VI. Required Policies

### **Grading Policy**

A minimum grade of B is required to earn Academic points towards your Honors Completion Requirements. Once you have earned a final grade in this course, please upload the course information and final grade from your Unofficial Transcript into your Honors Canvas Cohort: Honors Completion module to earn Honors Completion credit.

### **Attendance Policy**

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

### **Students Requiring Accommodation**

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

### **UF Evaluations Process**

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

### **University Honesty Policy**

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor Code <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/> specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

## Campus/Academic Resources:

### Honors Program

The Honors Program office is found at 201 Walker Hall, 352-392-1519. Questions for an Honors advisor can be directed to [advisor@honors.ufl.edu](mailto:advisor@honors.ufl.edu). You may also schedule an Honors advising appointment via Microsoft Bookings at <https://bit.ly/ufhonorsadvising>.

### Counseling and Wellness Center

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/> , 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

### The Writing Studio

The writing studio is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the writing studio online at <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> or in 2215 Turlington Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.

### In-Class Recordings

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To "publish" means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of

action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.