

Shakespeare I. Shakespeare and the English Renaissance.

William Shakespeare composed his plays and poems in a climate of plague, religious turmoil, political uncertainty, and expanding notions of what it means to be a human. These conflicts yielded a flowering of creativity never before seen, and the period now known as the English Renaissance was born. This course will introduce you to the poetry and drama of Shakespeare with a focus on those cultural matters that gave rise to some of the most impactful and influential works of literature ever written. We will ask: How do Shakespeare's works uphold or challenge the values of his time? How might a deeper understanding of the historical, social, and material circumstances of early modern people—from their fashions to their legal understandings to their art—enrich our interpretation of Shakespeare's work? How might a careful and close analysis of Shakespeare's language reveal new insights into issues of race, gender, sexuality, and class that mattered as much in the seventeenth century as they do today? In this class we will read six plays by Shakespeare—two comedies, two tragedies, one history, and one play to be chosen by the class collectively—in addition to a selection of his sonnets and poems. You will emerge from this class with a keen understanding of the social life of early modern England and a working knowledge of Shakespeare's language and thematic concerns. As a bonus, in the process you may pick up some sonneteering skills and a recipe or two from early modern cookbooks!

Literary Heritage.

What do time-tested works of literature tell us about the meaning of humanity, society, identity, and culture? In this course, we will explore far-ranging intellectual and philosophical questions by examining works of literature that—for reasons we will interrogate along the way—have stood the test of time. This section of *Literary Heritage* takes up issues relevant to our daily lives while introducing you to the college-level study of literature, focusing specifically on the genres of poetry, drama, fiction, and nonfiction. We will study a range of literary historical periods, cultures, and styles, from the gothic tales of Edgar Allan Poe to the high comedy of Shakespeare and beyond. You will be required to complete formal essays and in-class writing, and you will have the option of developing creative work as well. We will pay particular attention to the political and cultural contexts in which our texts were produced as well as the perseverance and transformation of literary forms, conventions, and themes. You should come prepared with ideas and ready to discuss and investigate the texts with the class.