

# TH256-15 Adapting Shakespeare for Performance

**24/25**

**Department**

SCAPVC - Theatre and Performance Studies

**Level**

Undergraduate Level 2

**Module leader**

Ronan Hatfull

**Credit value**

15

**Module duration**

10 weeks

**Assessment**

100% coursework

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

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## Description

### Introductory description

Adapting Shakespeare for Performance is a practice-based module that invites students to engage in the adaptation process and produce their own creative responses to the plays of William Shakespeare. This module will challenge students to produce their own interpretation of plays which have helped shape how adaptation is received and practiced. An intrinsic part of Shakespeare's legacy is the adaptation of his work on stage, page and screen. Shakespeare himself was a consummate adapter, drawing on pre-existing literary and theatrical materials and re-working these for his audiences, for whom his plays were a form of popular entertainment. How is Shakespeare reconceptualised in the context of popular culture and what methods do modern artists use to render his work accessible? This module will challenge the perception of what can be perceived as an adaptation of Shakespeare and each 180-minute workshop will involve practical exploration of different media, including poetry, prose, film, television and theatre. Students will be asked to create a three-minute mini-adaptation/pitch in response to each week's material and asked to present this at the following seminar. Using this accumulative creative material and case studies as models, the module will culminate with the creation of group adaptations, which will be rehearsed in Weeks 8 and 9 and presented during Week 10. In addition, each student will create an Artistic Dossier/Critical Review of their adaptation.

## Module aims

Adapting Shakespeare for Performance will enable students to understand how adaptation functions as a creative process. Shakespearean adaptation is such an archetypal subset of adaptation that the practical and theoretical skills gained on through this module will be applicable to students should they wish to adapt theatrical work beyond Shakespeare, from the plays of his contemporaries to modern directors and writers who draw inspiration from his work. The module aims to introduce students to the range of ways in which Shakespeare has been adapted in the twenty-first century in order to help them understand the playwright's continued relevance in modern popular culture and inspire them as creative artists. It also seeks to help them understand key motivations for adapting texts which have accrued significant cultural capital throughout history, be these artistic, celebratory, commercial or parodic. Shakespeare's plays further offer the opportunity to explore how the approach to adaptation differs depending on the source text's genre and, through the exploration of four key examples, this module aims to challenge students to question why particular plays are categorised as comedy, tragedy or history and what adaptive surgery adapters undertake when they adhere to or defy the generic expectations of their audiences.

## Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Why do the plays of Shakespeare continue to be re-contextualised, reduced and remixed? An intrinsic part of Shakespeare's legacy is the adaptation of his work on stage and screen. The playwright himself was a consummate adapter, drawing on pre-existing materials and re-working these for his audiences, for whom his plays were a form of popular entertainment. How has Shakespeare been re-conceptualised in the context of modern culture and which methods have artists used to render his work accessible? This module will challenge your perception of what can be perceived as an adaptation of Shakespeare and each seminar will involve practical exploration of diverse artists, including comedians, filmmakers, theatre companies and musicians. You'll engage in the adaptation process and produce your own creative responses to Shakespeare's work.

## Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the principles of Shakespearean adaptation for performance from a range of source materials (seeing the 'play' in the source)
- Demonstrate an understanding of the principles of dramatic structure, character development, conflict, and theatrical environment ('special world')
- Understand how genre affects the processes and products of adaptation
- Create adaptations for performance from a different genre, art form or historical event (knowing what makes performance unique)
- Conduct background research necessary to develop an adaptation
- Work collaboratively in developing an adaptation

- Show the critical ability to consult a range of source materials

## Indicative reading list

### Week 1

- Hytner, Nicholas, dir. (2019) *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Bridge Theatre.
- "They Really Did That to Othello" (2013) in Key and Peele.
- "Shakespeare in the Slums" (1986) in Saturday Night Live.
- "Substitute Teacher" (2017) in Saturday Night Live.

### Week 2

- Carroll, Tim, dir. (2013) *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare's Globe.
- Fickman, Andy (2006) *She's the Man*, Paramount Pictures.

### Week 3

- Doran, Gregory, dir. (2012) *Julius Caesar*, Illuminations and BBC.
- Lloyd, Phyllida, dir. (2016) *The Donmar Warehouse's All-Female Shakespeare Trilogy: Julius Caesar*, Donmar Warehouse

### Week 4

- Goold, Rupert, dir. (2010), *Macbeth*, Illuminations and BBC.
- Kerr, David, dir. (2014), "The Understudy" in *Inside No. 9*, BBC.
- Lawrence, Sam, dir. (2017), *Macbeth*, Partners Rapt.

### Week 5

- Eyre, Richard, dir. (2012) *The Hollow Crown, Series 1, Henry IV – Part 1*, BBC.
- Champion, Emily and Ronan Hatfull, dir. (2022) *Henry the Thorth*, Partners Rapt.
- Thorn, Abigail (2022) *The Prince*.

### Week 7

- Crouch, Tim, (2010), *I, Malvolio*, London: Oberon Books.
- Crouch, Tim, dir. (2016), *The Complete Deaths*, Spymonkey.

### Week 8

- Impromptu Shakespeare, "Impromptu Shakespeare Trailer".
- Ronan Hatfull, Rebecca MacMillan and Tom Wilkinson, "A Bit Lit Episode 136: Impromptu Shakespeare".

### Week 9

- Martin, Reed and Austin Tichenor (2018), *William Shakespeare's Long Lost First Play* (abridged), New York: Broadway Play Publishing Inc.

## Week 10

- No reading.

## International

The module explores adaptations from across Britain, North America and Asia.

## Subject specific skills

- To work effectively as a creative ensemble
- To gain an overview of Shakespeare's dramatic work
- To understand how Shakespeare has been adapted in different media
- To perform, design and produce adaptations of canonical work
- To research and write creative responses to pre-existing texts
- To develop their skills as actors by performing extracts from Shakespeare and adaptations of his work

## Transferable skills

- Public speaking in each seminar
  - Group work through assessment and collaborative exercises in each seminar
  - Creating pitches for their adaptations
  - Leadership through directing, design and collaboration
  - Creative writing through the process of storyboarding and scripting their final adaptations
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## Study

### Study time

Type	Required
Project supervision	6 sessions of 1 hour (4%)
Practical classes	9 sessions of 3 hours (18%)
Private study	47 hours (31%)
Assessment	70 hours (47%)
Total	150 hours

### Private study description

Students will be required to undertake 3 hours of workshop preparation per week in the form of reading and viewing. They are also required to rehearse in preparation for their practical assessment.

## Costs

Category	Description	Funded by	Cost to student
Other		Student	

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## Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

### Assessment group A1

	Weighting	Study time
Performance Exam	60%	30 hours
The performances will be devised in groups of 3-6 students. The performance will take the form of an adaptation of one or a combination of the Shakespeare plays studied on the module. It can be scripted or without words and may take the form of a live performance, recorded film or combine the two forms. The performance will be 30 minutes long.		
Portfolio	40%	40 hours
The portfolio has three entries, each one based on the performance adaptation. The portfolio should be 2000 words.		

The portfolio should include the following entries:

1. Justification of the source material. The student should think about why they and their group has chosen their specific play(s).
2. Documentation of the student's role and responsibilities in the adaptation's development process, the challenges faced therein, and their accomplishments. The student may choose to include material from any mini-adaptations created throughout the module. The student should also outline four to five key differences between the source material and their planned adaptation. They may choose a preferred format for presenting this mapping (e.g. prose, two columns, mind map, storyboard).
3. Reflection on the student's journey throughout the module and the development of their personal development.

### Feedback on assessment

Student will receive written feedback on both assessments and the opportunity to have a 1-2-1 tutorial to discuss this feedback or any aspect of the assessment process.

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## Availability

### Courses

This module is Core for:

- Year 2 of UTHA-W422 Undergraduate Theatre and Performance Studies (with Intercalated Year)

This module is Optional for:

- Year 2 of UTHA-QW34 Undergraduate English and Theatre Studies
- UTHA-W421 Undergraduate Theatre and Performance Studies
  - Year 2 of W421 Theatre and Performance Studies
  - Year 2 of W421 Theatre and Performance Studies

This module is Option list C for:

- UTHA-W421 Undergraduate Theatre and Performance Studies
  - Year 2 of W421 Theatre and Performance Studies
  - Year 2 of W421 Theatre and Performance Studies