

Shakespeare on Film with Gage Johnston



For modern audiences, Shakespeare lives on the screen as much as on the stage. His plays have proved to be endlessly interpretable, with every age and every artist finding a unique way to bring the plays to life. In this class we will discuss the interpretation of Shakespeare's work as it becomes film. We will consider four plays; *Hamlet*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth*. Each session we will consider two filmed versions of these plays--and compare and contrast the interpretations and the manner these interpretations are underscored with text interpretations, camera shots, setting, actor choice, sound and lighting. In two hours we cannot analyze an entire film, so we will highlight famous scenes, ("to be or not to be" Branagh vs. Gibson) and move from traditional interpretations to looser ones (Branagh's *Hamlet* VS Kurosawa's *Macbeth*--*Throne of Blood*).

All sessions will be held on Zoom and you will receive the link shortly before the first session. All participants are responsible for their own internet connections. All films are available as DVDs or to stream. You may read any edition of the play you choose.

Reading and Watching Schedule:

Wed, April 14

Read: Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

Watch: *Hamlet* (1996, directed by Kenneth Branagh with Branagh as Hamlet)

Hamlet (1990, directed by Franco Zeffirelli with Mel Gibson as Hamlet)

Wed, April 28

Read: Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*

Watch: *Much Ado About Nothing* (1993, directed by Kenneth Branagh)

Much Ado About Nothing (2012, directed by Joss Whedon)

Wed, May 12

Read Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*

Watch: *Romeo and Juliet* (1968, directed by Franco Zeffirelli)

Romeo + Juliet (1996, directed by Baz Luhrmann)

Wed, May 26

Read Shakespeare's *Macbeth*

Watch: *Throne of Blood* (1957, directed by Akira Kurosawa)

Macbeth (2015, directed by Justin Kurzel with Michael Fassbender as Macbeth)



About the instructor:

Gage Johnston has been making films for the past 20 years. FABRIC OF LIFE, three documentaries following women across the globe as they use traditional crafts to transform their communities, is her current project. Her films have screened at numerous festivals both internationally and locally including the Philadelphia Festival of World Cinema and opening the Philadelphia Museum of Art films series in 2006. Her films have been carried on public television and various streaming services. She taught writing and production at Philadelphia's University of the Arts and Scribe Video Center. She has worked in theater in New York and Philadelphia, founding The Red Heel Theater Company and Simply Classic Theater Company, where she focused on both Shakespearean and lesser known classical playwrights. She is the co-host of the biweekly Tudor Time Machine podcast.