

Shakespeare's Sonnets and Plays

Time: Summer 2026. Tuesdays 10:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. (May 26 – July 31).

Location: MAB2, 4350 S. Maryland Pkwy.

Instructor: Alfred J. Drake, Ph.D.

Email: ajdrake@ajdrake.com | **Web:** <https://www.ajdrake.com/shakespeare>

Suggested Texts (*Editions can sometimes be bought used at lower cost.)

Shakespeare. *Sonnets and Poems*. Folger/Simon & Schuster, 2006. ISBN-13: 978-0743273282

Shakespeare. *Love's Labor's Lost*. Folger/Simon & Schuster, 2020. ISBN-13: 978-1982164959.

Shakespeare. *Antony and Cleopatra*. Folger/Simon & Schuster, 2020. ISBN-13: 978-1982157340.

Shakespeare. *Henry VIII*. Folger/Simon & Schuster, 2021. ISBN-13: 978-1982170158.

Shakespeare. *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. Folger/Simon & Schuster, 2021. ISBN-13: 978-1982170165.

Course Description: We will examine Shakespeare sonnets and plays that tend towards the experimental and exploratory. The highly wrought, “sugared” style of the sonnets and their treatment of romantic and sexual love will be our starting point, and then we will move on to one of Shakespeare’s wittiest and most linguistically challenging plays, *Love's Labor's Lost*. From there, with *Antony and Cleopatra* it's on to the playwright's staging of history's most famous doomed couple—a play that tries to transcend its tragic frame and join the romance genre of Shakespeare's last years. We will finish with the bittersweet history play *Henry VIII*, in which a conniving, determined king betrays a queen he knows to be above reproach, and with one of Shakespeare's most experimental plays, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, a chivalric romance that takes its outlines from Geoffrey Chaucer's “The Knight's Tale” in *The Canterbury Tales*.

Schedule (Subject to change)

| | | |
|----------------|----------------|--|
| Week 1 | May. 26 | Introduction to Shakespeare and the course |
| Week 2 | June 02 | Selected <i>Sonnets</i> |
| Week 3 | June 09 | <i>Love's Labor's Lost</i> , Acts 1-2 |
| Week 4 | June 16 | <i>Love's Labor's Lost</i> , Acts 3-5 |
| Week 5 | June 23 | <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> , Acts 1-2 |
| Week 6 | June 30 | <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> , Acts 3-5 |
| Week 7 | July 07 | <i>Henry VIII</i> , Acts 1-2 |
| Week 8 | July 14 | <i>Henry VIII</i> , Acts 3-5 |
| Week 9 | July 21 | <i>The Two Noble Kinsmen</i> , Acts 1-2 |
| Week 10 | July 28 | <i>The Two Noble Kinsmen</i> , Acts 3-5 |