

Sophister Module Description 2026-27

NOTE: Students who have taken the 5 credit module ENU33014 'Shakespeare in Closeup' should not sign up for this module. The present module replaces ENU33014, as a full-scale 10 credit sophister option.

Full Name: Slow Shakespeare: Reading *Henry V*

Short Name: Slow Shakespeare

Lecturer Name and Email Address: Andy Murphy, andrew.murphy@tcd.ie

ECTS Weighting: 10

Semester Taught MT/HT: MT

Year JS/SS: SS

Module Content:

Description:

This module involves reading a single Shakespeare play -- *Henry V* -- over the course of an entire semester, paying close attention to the tensions, contradictions and complexities of the text. The play will be set in its immediate theatrical context, both as a re-visioning of the anonymous play *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, and in relation to the earlier plays in Shakespeare's second tetralogy (spanning *Richard II* through *2 Henry IV*). A session will be dedicated to the close reading of Shakespeare, with a particular focus on language and, especially, iambic pentameter. The play itself will be read act-by-act on a weekly basis and each week will include a workshop session in which students will need to consider performance choices in relation to specific problematic scenes, together with acting out versions of the scenes (no acting experience will be necessary -- the performances will be purely for illustrative purposes). The module will conclude by considering a shortened version of the play from Shakespeare's own time and we will also view and discuss a video of the 2022 production at the Donmar Warehouse in London. Assessment will be by research project, with the topic chosen by students themselves.

Provisional schedule:

The module will be taught in 22 1 hour sessions, as follows:

1. Introduction to the module
2. Preliminary discussion of *Henry V*
3. Literary Background: Anon, *Famous Victories*
4. Discussion of *Famous Victories*

5. Shakespearean Background: The Second Tetralogy
6. Discussion of selections from *Richard II*, *1 Henry IV*, *2 Henry IV*
7. Reading Shakespeare: The Verse
8. Acting Shakespeare: Considerations and practicalities
9. Act I discussion session
10. Act I performance workshop
11. Act II discussion session
12. Act II performance workshop
13. Act III discussion session
14. Act III performance workshop
15. Act IV discussion session
16. Act IV performance workshop
17. Act V discussion session
18. Act V performance workshop
19. What Happened Next? The Quarto Text
20. Quarto text performance workshop
21. Discussion of the Donmar Warehouse *Henry V*
22. Wrap up

Learning Outcomes:

1. From studying a single Shakespeare play in close detail students will gain a thorough understanding of the play's immediate and long term contexts.
2. Students will come to an understanding of how source texts were assimilated and transformed by Shakespeare.
3. Students will gain an understanding of the varying ways in which the text has been deployed, politically and culturally, over an extended period of time.
4. Students will explore the logistical issues presented by the play and the manner in which these issues have been addressed both on stage and on screen.

Learning Aims:

1. This module will foster independent thought among students and prepare them for carrying out primary research.
2. Students will come to understand how the reception of literary texts shifts over time and the role of political, historical and cultural factors in this process.
3. Students will learn how to use online resources to access and work with primary materials.
4. Students will be able to plan and conduct original research and present the findings of that research in a confident and compelling manner.

Assessment Details:

- Number of Components: 1
- Name/Type of Component(s): Research project
- Word Count of Component(s): 4,000 words
- Percentage Value of Component(s): 100%

Preliminary Reading List:

William Shakespeare, *Henry V* -- in any good, contemporary scholarly edition

William Shakespeare, selections from *Richard II*, *1 Henry IV*, *2 Henry IV* -- provided on Blackboard

Anon, *Famous Victories of Henry V* -- available in a modernised edition online via Internet Shakespeare Editions website

First Quarto text of *Henry V*

Please note:

- Curricular information is subject to change.
- Information is displayed only for guidance purposes, relates to the current academic year only and is subject to change.