

## Shakespeare Among the Moderns: OLLI Course Winter 2018

Tuesdays 1-3 pm. 23 Jan to 25 Feb in University Hall 41B

### Instructor

Hugh Richmond is Professor Emeritus of English at U.C. Berkeley, where he received the campus award for distinguished teaching, with a B.A. from Cambridge and a D.Phil. from Oxford. He has staged thirty plays by Shakespeare and his contemporaries, and created video documentaries on Shakespeare, Chaucer and Milton, in national distribution. He has websites at <http://shakespearestaging.berkeley.edu/> and <http://milton-revealed.berkeley.edu/>. His books include *Shakespeare's Theatre*, *Shakespeare's Political Plays*, *Shakespeare's Sexual Comedy*, and *Shakespeare's Tragedies Reviewed*. His forthcoming book is entitled *Shakespeare Relocated: Studies in Historical Psychology*.

### Theme

The course will discuss six modern plays by major dramatists, discussing how they match and how differ from their Shakespearean precedents:

Shaw's *Pygmalion* (*The Taming of the Shrew*)

Chekhov's *Seagull* (*Hamlet*)

Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (*Much Ado*)

Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (*Hamlet*)

O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* (*Othello*)

Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (*King Lear*)

The approach will stress performance, with audio-visual samples such as Paul Robeson as Othello compared with him as O'Neill's Emperor Jones. And Leslie Howard and Wendy Hillar as Dr. Higgins and Liza in *Pygmalion*, compared with Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton as Katherina and Petruchio, in *The Taming of the Shrew*. The comparisons will explore the characteristics of both Shakespeare and his successors.

### Course objectives and methods:

The juxtapositions will clarify the characters, techniques, and impact of the various dramatists, but also consider the divergence of modern values, social, moral and aesthetic from those of the Renaissance and Reformation, not always favoring our modern points of view! Participants might ideally at some point have read, or watched each modern play, on YouTube or at other performance. Some knowledge of the plot of each play and its familiar Shakespeare precedent will be assumed, but sufficient preparatory data may be acquired from such a source as the Wikipedia accounts offered under each title.

## Sessions

Tuesday Jan 23 Shaw's *Pygmalion* (*The Taming of the Shrew*)

Changes in women's roles in society over the centuries.

Tuesday Jan 30 Chekhov's *Seagull* (*Hamlet*) Family Structure versus Artistic Identity.

Tuesday Feb 6 Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (*Much Ado*) Illusion and Reality.

Tuesday Feb 13 Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (*Hamlet*)

Theatrical conventions and staged personalities.

Tuesday Feb 20 O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* (*Othello*) Black Power

Tuesday Feb 27 Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (*King Lear*) Ultimate values: options in retirement.

## 4. TEXTS AND AUDIOVISUALS

All scripts are available on the Internet at various web sites, one of the more accessible being the Guttenberg to be found at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1745/1745-h/1745-h.htm> There are many reliable very inexpensive paperback editions available from Amazon, E-bay, and most bookshops. Our web-site surveys some relevant Shakespeare audio-visual and bibliographical materials at <http://shakespearestaging.berkeley.edu> and most of the modern scripts are wholly or partly accessible in performances on YouTube.

**5 Instructor** may be contacted at: [hmr@berkeley.edu](mailto:hmr@berkeley.edu)