Spring 2020 Course Description

Instructor: Morey
Course: ENGL/FILM 356
Title: Literature and Film

Description: While this course is not explicitly about adaptation as such, we will read five or six Shakespeare plays (chosen from among Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, Romeo and Juliet, The Taming of the Shrew, The Tempest, and King Lear) and then view multiple film treatments of each of them in order to create a laboratory for the examination of how Shakespeare has been rethought and reworked in film. We will not be examining film theater (although I will ask you to acquaint yourself with at least one instance of this for reference); nor will we view television adaptations. The focus will be on specifically cinematic treatments of the plays; we will view films drawn from a range of genres (e.g. musicals [Kiss Me Kate, West Side Story], animations [Gnomeo and Juliet], samurai films [Throne of Blood], crime films, [Scotland PA]), etc. We will consider how and with what consequences Shakespeare’s language is retained, replaced, or abandoned; how his plots and characters are reshaped for particular ends or within specific national traditions of filmmaking; how Shakespeare’s plays function across a range of genres and adaptational circumstances. For example, Hamlet has attracted at least two westerns and two international crime films, while Romeo and Juliet is currently frequently adapted with a gay subtext; there are national cycles in the patterns and frequency with which Shakespeare’s plays appear on film that we may want to consider. Finally, we will think about why Shakespeare’s plays seem so readily to serve as the backdrop for teen films both comic (10 Things I Hate about You) and tragic (O.).

Proposed Readings: