Proposal Title:
Teaching Shakespeare Using Film

Abstract:
I propose to develop modules on the film adaptation of Shakespeare’s plays, to be used in ENGL 3070 (Shakespeare: Histories), ENGL 3080 (Shakespeare: Comedies), and ENGL 3090 (Shakespeare: Tragedies). One introductory module will cover the history of Shakespearean film adaptation, general issues and challenges in translating material from stage to screen, and basic film terminology. I also plan to develop separate detailed modules on one history play, one tragedy, and one comedy. Each would include a lecture (with film clips allowing students to compare the same scene in multiple films), discussion topics, in-class exercises, and writing assignments. Given that Shakespeare’s plays were written for performance and that there are limited opportunities to take students at ECU to see live theater, film has great potential for use in the classroom and in assignments. Joyner Library now can provide access to many streaming films for students, but to make full use of this resource, I need to develop a more systematic approach to teaching Shakespeare on film in my courses. When they watching film clips in class and full films for homework, students can consider how performances and adaptations function as interpretations and can reflect metacognitively on their own interpretive practices.
1. Purpose/Objective

I propose to develop modules on the film adaptation of Shakespeare’s plays, to be used in ENGL 3070 (Shakespeare: Histories), ENGL 3080 (Shakespeare: Comedies), and ENGL 3090 (Shakespeare: Tragedies). One introductory module will cover the history of Shakespearean film adaptation, general issues and challenges in translating material from stage to screen, and basic film terminology. I also plan to develop separate detailed modules on one history play, one tragedy, and one comedy. Each will include a lecture (with film clips allowing students to compare the same scene in multiple films), discussion topics, in-class exercises, and writing assignments. Joyner Library now can provide access to many streaming films for students, but to make full use of this resource, I need to develop a more systematic approach to teaching Shakespeare on film in my courses. When they watching film clips in class and full films for homework, students can consider how performances and adaptations function as interpretations and can reflect metacognitively on their own interpretive practices. This proposal supports two established student learning outcomes for the courses (see “need and impact” below). Moreover, I propose two additional and more specific student learning outcomes to result from the modules created during this grant period: 1) Students will be able to describe details of films, orally and in writing, using appropriate terminology. 2) Students will be able to analyze, orally and in writing, the decisions film directors make in adapting Shakespearean plays for the screen.

2. Project Description (Approach/Method/Procedure)

I will conduct research on best practices for teaching Shakespeare on film and recent criticism on Shakespearean film adaptations, watch films, and write lectures with film clips, exercises, and assignments.

3. Need and Impact
Shakespeare’s plays pose a special challenge in the classroom. They are not books, and they were not written to be read in solitude. They were written for performance on the stage, but most students taking the English department’s three Shakespeare classes for English, English Secondary Education, and Theater majors will not have the opportunity to see the plays performed onstage as they study them. Film provides an alternative way for students to reflect on Shakespeare’s plays as performance texts, but it must be introduced into the classroom deliberately and systematically, with attention to what makes films films and how filmmakers approach the challenge of adapting highly theatrical source material from the stage to the screen.

In my teaching, I have struggled with how to introduce Shakespeare on film to students with limited knowledge of film. Simply showing film clips in class with minimal context rarely yields deep or productive discussion. I have assigned a film analysis paper in my classes for the past four years, but the results have been uneven, in part because I have not been able to prepare students adequately to use evidence from a film in written arguments. This grant will help me to improve my use of film in the classroom and to rethink the design and scaffolding of my film-based writing assignment.

Impacted courses are the three Shakespearean genre courses. English and English Secondary Education majors are required to take at least one of these courses. Theatre Arts majors have these courses among several literature options, and most take at least one of them. The courses are currently taught at the 4000-level but are in the process of being renumbered to the 3000-level, so in the Fall 2015 catalog they will be listed as ENGL 3070 (Shakespeare: Histories), ENGL 3080 (Shakespeare: Comedies), and ENGL 3090 (Shakespeare: Tragedies).

The modules created under this teaching grant will affect approximately 25% of the classroom instruction in the courses and 40% of the writing assignments in the courses. I teach at least two
sections a year with 35 students in each, for a total of 70 students affected each year. I will also offer to share the modules I develop during the grant period with colleagues who also teach these courses, though they will decide whether to adopt them in their sections. As a department, we teach 175 students per year in these three Shakespeare courses.

This proposal directly advances Student Learning Outcome #4 for the courses: “Students will be able to recognize the range of interpretations of Shakespeare’s texts as expressed in performance.” This outcome requires that I teach students how to think about performance itself as an interpretation akin to their own interpretations of character, plot, and themes developed through close reading techniques. In other words, if one interprets a speech as satirical, then how might this tone be expressed in a film adaptation? What other possibilities for tone exist, and how might alternative performances highlight these possibilities? These are the kinds of questions that film can help students to consider. The proposal also impacts Student Learning Outcome #3 for the courses: “Students will be able to make arguments about literature orally and in writing.” Through the modules developed under this grant, students will learn to analyze film in class discussions and in writing assignments, using films to support their arguments about Shakespearean themes.

4. Schedule of Activities and their Proposed Deadlines (for SS1)

I am requesting a summer stipend to give me time to conduct research on pedagogy, watch 16+ films, and develop learning modules. Given my normal teaching, research, and service load, I cannot conduct this work during the semester in a detailed and systematic way.

Week 1: Review scholarship on pedagogical best practices for incorporating film into Shakespeare classroom and writing assignments and write annotated bibliography with ideas drawn from this scholarship. Review key terminology in film studies. Watch at least four films
based on history plays. **Week 2:** Create introductory module. This module will include a lecture and Powerpoint with embedded film clips, two classroom exercises with group work and discussion, and a short writing exercise. Watch at least two films based on history plays and at least two films based on tragedies. **Week 3:** Read recent criticism of Shakespearean film adaptations, with special focus on adaptations outside the Anglophone world. Watch at least four films based on tragedies. **Week 4:** Create history play module, to include a lecture with film clips from different adaptations, two classroom exercises with group work and discussion, and a film analysis paper assignment. Watch at least two films based on tragedies and two films based on comedies. **Week 5:** Create tragedy module (with same contents as history module). Watch at least four films based on comedies. **Week 6:** Create comedy module (with same contents as history module). Complete any remaining research and watch additional films as needed.

5. Evaluation Plan

I will solicit peer observations from colleagues in Film Studies of at least one class session incorporating a film module in both Fall 2015 and Spring 2016, and will ask the observer to consider especially the following questions: 1) How well did this class employ film terminology? 2) To what extent did film clips generate focused discussion and active learning? 3) What improvements can I make in the ways I talk about film and employ clips for discussion? I will also survey students at the end of the semester, asking them to respond to the following questions: 1) To what extent has watching film clips and full films helped you to understand and interpret Shakespeare’s plays? 2) What was your experience writing the film analysis paper? What challenges did you face? 3) What classroom activities involving film have been most beneficial to your learning? Which have been least beneficial? I will also assess effectiveness based on the quality of the film analysis paper.
Appendix A

Courses taught regularly:

- ENGL 4070/3070 (Shakespeare: Histories)
- ENGL 4080/3080 (Shakespeare: Comedies)
- ENGL 4090/3090 (Shakespeare: Tragedies)
- ENGL 4110 (Topics in English Drama to 1800)
- ENGL 2000 (Interpreting Literature)
- ENGL 1200 (Composition)

Scholarly interests:

My scholarly specialization is Shakespeare and early modern English drama. I am interested especially in sound and performance. In 2012, I published a monograph exploring the audible and cultural effects of foreign languages on the stage, *Europe’s Languages on England’s Stages, 1590-1620* (Ashgate). I have also contributed essays on stage languages to several books.

Another recent publication is an article on the “all that glisters is not gold” proverb from Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* in relation to Martin Frobisher’s arctic voyages. I have contributed essays on stage languages to several books. I am currently working on an article on stage French in Thomas Middleton's *Any Thing for a Quiet Life* and another on Shakespearean allusions and torture in John Dryden’s *Amboyna*. 