

Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur

Proposal for a New Course

1. Course No: **PHI 7****

2. Course Title: **Shakespeare and Philosophy**

3. Per Week Lectures: **3** (L), Tutorial: N.A. (T), Laboratory: N.A. (P), Additional Hours [0-2]: N.A. (A).

Credits (3*L+2*T+P+A): **9** Duration of Course: **Full Semester** / ~~Modular~~

4. Proposing Department/IDP: **Humanities and Social Sciences**

Other Departments/IDPs which may be interested in the proposed course: --

Other faculty members interested in teaching the proposed course: --

5. Proposing Instructor(s): **Prashant Bagad**

6. Course Description:

A) Objectives:

This course analyses some plays of Shakespeare from a philosophical perspective. Shakespeare's plays are rich not only dramatically or literarily but also philosophically. That doesn't simply mean that they include, illustrate or embody philosophical ideas or that their poetic dimension is a dress of thought. Rather, the art of Shakespeare broadens our ken. His plays become philosophical clearings where we can reflect on enduring human concerns such as freedom and fate, individuality and society, longing and limits, enjoyment and suffering, sympathy and indifference, language and world, nature and artifice. The course attempts to see the aesthetic light that Shakespeare's plays can shed on philosophising. The course principally considers four plays: *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Merchant of Venice*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. The course draws on engagements of philosophers, literary critics, and writers with Shakespeare's plays.

B) Contents (preferably in the form of 5 to 10 broad titles):

1. Prologue: D. H. Lawrence, “When I Read Shakespeare”. Jeffrey Archer, “A Gentleman and a Scholar”. Anthony Burgess, “The Muse”. (2 lectures)
2. Shakespeare’s art: drama, poetry, storytelling, philosophy (2 lectures)
3. Aristotle’s *Poetics* and the poetics of Shakespeare’s plays (8 lectures)
4. Collingwood’s and Tolstoy’s critiques of Shakespeare (2 lectures)
5. Shakespearean tragedy and comedy (4 lectures)
6. Shakespeare: language and world (4 lectures)
7. Shakespeare: self, subjectivity, identity (5 lectures)
8. Shakespeare and Montaigne: essay, thinking, ‘I’ (2 lectures)
9. Shakespeare: believing, doubting, knowing (4 lectures)
10. Shakespeare: desire, love, sex, society (5 lectures)
11. Shakespeare: aesthetic autonomy and limits (2 lectures)

C) Pre-requisites, if any (examples: a- PSO201A, or b- PSO201A or equivalent): None

D) Short summary for including in the Courses of Study Booklet:

This course analyses some plays of Shakespeare from philosophical points of view. It principally considers *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Merchant of Venice*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. Shakespeare’s plays offer a philosophical space where we can reflect on enduring human concerns such as freedom and fate, individuality and society, longing and limits, enjoyment and suffering, sympathy and indifference, language and world, nature and artifice. The course examines the poetics of his plays; the nature of tragedy and comedy; the light they shed on self, subjectivity, knowledge, the relationship of language and world.

7. Recommended books:

Plays of Shakespeare

Shakespeare's plays in any standard editions such as Arden, Oxford or Penguin.

Introductions to Shakespeare

Callaghan, Dymrna. *Who Was William Shakespeare?: An Introduction to the Life and Works*. Wiley-Blackwell: Malden, 2013.

Edmondson, Paul. *Shakespeare*. Profile Books: London, 2015.

Smith, Emma. *This is Shakespeare: How to Read the World's Greatest Playwright*. Pelican: London, 2019.

Royle, Nicholas. *How to Read Shakespeare*. Granta Books: London, 2015.

Shakespeare's Life

Bate, Jonathan. *Soul of the Age: The Life, Mind and World of William Shakespeare*. Penguin Books: London, 2009.

Bryson, Bill. *Shakespeare: The World as a Stage*. Harper Press: London, 2009.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Will in the World: How Shakespeare became Shakespeare*. W. W. Norton and Company: New York, 2004.

Shakespeare's World

Chute, Marchette. *Shakespeare of London*. E. P. Dutton Co.: New York, 1949.

MacGregor, Neil. *Shakespeare's Restless World*. Allen Lane and British Museum: London, 2012.

Wells, Stanley. *Shakespeare for All Time*. Macmillan: London, 2002.

Wright, Louis. *Shakespeare for Everyman*. Washington Square Press: New York, 1964.

'Very Short Introductions' to Shakespeare's Writings

Es, Bart van. *Shakespeare's Comedies: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2016.

Greer, Germaine. *Shakespeare: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2002.

Post, Jonathan. *Shakespeare's Sonnets and Poems: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2017.

Wells, Stanley. *Shakespeare's Tragedies: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2017.

Wells, Stanley. *Shakespeare: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2015.

Companions

De Grazia, Margaret and Wells, Stanley (eds.) *New Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2010.

McEachern, Claire. *Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Tragedy* (second edition). Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2013.

Wells, Stanley and Orlin, Lena (eds.). *Shakespeare: An Oxford Guide*. Oxford University Press: New Delhi, 2003.

Books with Essays on Individual Plays

Bloom, Harold. *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*. Riverhead Books: New York, 1998.

Brooke, Stopford. *Ten More Plays of Shakespeare*. Constable: London, 1913.

Garber, Marjorie. *Shakespeare After All*. Anchor Books: New York, 2004.

Goddard, Harold. *Meaning of Shakespeare* (two volumes). University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1951.

Granville-Barker, Harley. *Prefaces to Shakespeare: Volumes 1 and 4*, Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1946/1978 and 1963.

Tanner, Tony. *Prefaces to Shakespeare*. Harvard University Press: Harvard, 2012.

Shakespeare the Thinker

Bevington, David. *Shakespeare's Ideas: More Things in Heaven and Earth*. Wiley-Blackwell: Chichester, 2008.

Holbrook, Peter. *Shakespeare's Individualism*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2010.

Lupton, Julia. *Thinking with Shakespeare: Essays on Politics and Life*. Chicago University Press: Chicago, 2011.

Maguire, Laurie. *Studying Shakespeare: A Guide to the Plays*. Blackwell: London, 2003.

O'Toole, Fintan. *Shakespeare is Hard, but So is Life*. Granta Books: London, 2002.

Philosophical Explorations

Alfano, Chiara. *Derrida Reads Shakespeare*. Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 2020.

Bates, Jennifer and Wilson, Richard (eds.). *Shakespeare and Continental Philosophy*. Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 2014.

Bates, Jennifer. *Hegel and Shakespeare on Moral Imagination*. State University of New York Press: Albany, 2010.

Bourne, Craig and Bourne, Emily (eds.). *Routledge Companion to Shakespeare and Philosophy*. Routledge: London, 2019.

Cavell, Stanley. *Disowning Knowledge in Seven Plays of Shakespeare* (updated edition). Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2003.

Collingwood, R. G. *Principles of Art*. Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1938.

Joughin, John (ed.). *Philosophical Shakespeares*. Routledge: London, 2000.

Heller, Agnes. *Time is Out of Joint: Shakespeare as Philosopher of History*. Rowman and Littlefield: Lanham, 2002.

Kottman, Paul (ed.). *Philosophers on Shakespeare*. Stanford University Press: Stanford, 2009.

McGinn, Colin. *Shakespeare's Philosophy*. Harper: New York, 2006.

Nuttal, A. D. *Shakespeare the Thinker*. Yale University Press: New Haven, 2007.

Nuttal, A. D. *Mimesis: Shakespeare and the Representation of Reality*. Yale University Press: New Haven, 2007.

Pascucci, Margherita. *Philosophical Readings of Shakespeare*. Palgrave Macmillan: New York, 2013.

Rothleder, Dianne. *Fraught Decisions in Plato and Shakespeare*. Rowman and Littlefield: Lanham, 2021.

Saval, Peter Kishore. *Reading Shakespeare through Philosophy*. Routledge: London, 2014.

Stewart, Stanley. *Shakespeare and Philosophy*. Routledge: New York, 2009.

Weitz, Morris. *Hamlet and the Philosophy of Literary Criticism*. Meridian Books: Cleveland, 1966.

Weitz, Morris. *Philosophy in Literature: Shakespeare, Voltaire, Tolstoy and Proust*. Wayne State University Press: Detroit, 1963.

Witmore, Michael. *Shakespearean Metaphysics*. Continuum: London, 2018.

Womersley, David. *Thinking through Shakespeare*. Princeton University Press: Princeton, 2026.

Zamir, Tzachi (ed.). *Shakespeare's Hamlet: Philosophical Perspectives*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2018.

Zamir, Tzachi. *Double Vision: Moral Philosophy and Shakespearean Drama*. Princeton University Press: Princeton, 2007.

Literary Criticism

Barton, John. *Playing Shakespeare: An Actor's Guide*. Anchor Books: New York, 1984.

Bradley, A. C. *Shakespearean Tragedy*. Penguin: London, 1991.

Carson, Susannah (ed.). *Living with Shakespeare: Essays by Writers, Actors, and Directors*. Vintage Books: New York, 2013.

Eagleton, Terry. *William Shakespeare*. Basil Blackwell: Oxford, 1986.

Empson, William. *Essays on Shakespeare*. Edited by David Pirie. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1986.

Frye, Northrop. *Northrop Frye on Shakespeare*. Edited by Robert Sandler. Yale University Press, New Haven, 1986.

Garber, Marjorie. *Shakespeare and Modern Culture*. Anchor Books: New York, 2009.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Shakespeare's Freedom*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 2010.

Hopkins, Lisa. *Beginning Shakespeare*. Viva Books: New Delhi, 2010.

Johnson, Samuel. *Samuel Johnson on Shakespeare*. Edited by H. R. Woudhuysen. Penguin: London, 1989.

Jones, John. *Shakespeare at Work*. Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1995.

Josipovici, Gabriel. *Hamlet: Fold on Fold*. Yale University Press: New Haven, 2016.

Kermode, Frank. *Shakespeare's Language*. Allen Lane: London, 2000.

McDonald, Russ (ed.). *Shakespeare: An Anthology of Criticism 1945-2000*. Blackwell: Malden, 2004.

Partridge, Eric. *Shakespeare's Bawdy* (third edition). Routledge: London, 1968.

Shaw, Bernard. *Shaw on Shakespeare*. Edited by Edwin Wilson. Penguin: New York, 1961.

Wilson Knight, G. *Wheel of Fire: Interpretations of Shakespearean Tragedy*. Routledge: London, 1989 (1930).

Writers on Shakespeare

Auden, W. H. *Lectures on Shakespeare*. Edited by Arthur Kirsch. Princeton University Press: Princeton, 2019.

Coleridge, Samuel. *Coleridge on Shakespeare*. Edited by Terence Hawkes. Penguin: London, 1969.

Hazlitt, William. *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*. Edited by J. H. Lobban. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2009.

Hughes, Ted. *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being*. Faber: London, 1992.

Hugo, Victor. *William Shakespeare*. George Routledge: London, 1910.

Leinwand, Theodore. *The Great William: Writers Reading Shakespeare*. Chicago University Press: Chicago, 2016.

Sitwell, Edith. *Notebook on William Shakespeare*. Macmillan: London, 1962.

Tolstoy, Leo. *Tolstoy on Shakespeare: An Essay on Shakespeare*. Translated by V Tchertkoff and I.F.M. Funk and Wagnalls Company: New York, 1906.

Shakespeare and Postcolonialism

Loomba, Ania. *Shakespeare, Race and Colonialism*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2002.

Singh, Jyotsna. *Shakespeare and Postcolonial Theory*. Arden Shakespeare: London, 2019.

Shakespeare and India

Nagarajan, S. and Viswanathan, S. (eds.). *Shakespeare in India*. Oxford University Press: Delhi, 1987.

Trivedi, Poonam and Bartholomeusz (eds.). *India's Shakespeare: Translation, Interpretation and Performance*. Pearson: New Delhi, 2005.

8. Any other remarks: --



Dated: 7 October 2026

Proposer: **Prashant Bagad**



Dated: 8 October 2026

DPGC Convener: Thounaojam Somokanta

The course is approved / not approved

Chair, SPGC

Dated: