# History of European Theatre (English)

## Prof. Arturo Cattaneo

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

In the first part, the course aims for students to learn how to examine an Elizabethan play in terms of text, structure and staging, through the analysis of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. It also provides basic knowledge of Elizabethan theatre as a literary, social and cultural phenomenon, and forerunner of the modern entertainment industry.

The second part of the course will examine the modern rewriting of *Hamlet* by Tom Stoppard in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, in a cultural climate of late theatre of the absurd, and a post-modern rewriting for the cinema, also by Stoppard, of *Romeo and Juliet*: *Shakespeare in Love* (a screenplay that in turn became a play): the goal is to show the malleability and adaptability of the theatrical text to new media forms.

***COURSE CONTENT***

Elizabethan theatre as a cultural and social phenomenon – theatre buildings, companies, actors, audiences, the relationship between ‘power’ and theatre – the revenge tragedy in Elizabethan theatre – *Hamlet*: dating, the printed texts, the sources – The structure of the work and its timing – The characters and their dramatic relationships – Madness in *Hamlet* – The relationship between the son and the father/father(s) and mother – Psychoanalytic interpretations of *Hamlet* – Suicide: Hamlet and Ophelia – The crime staged: the ‘theatre within theatre’ – Hamlet at the root of modern tragedy – *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*: Rewriting *Hamlet* between the theatre of the absurd and pop culture of the 1960s – Questioning the protagonist and dramatic action in Tom Stoppard – The modern playwright; between stage and screen: Stoppard between Shakespeare and Steven Spielberg – Post-modern cross-pollination in *Shakespeare in Love*: how to rewrite *Romeo and Juliet* as an auteur blockbuster.

***READING LIST***

N.B. The texts on the syllabus may be examined either in their original version or in Italian translation, depending on the language level of the students. Details of any additional reading material on the authors and works on the syllabus will be provided in lectures, and in any case always indicated in the lecturer’s virtual classroom and on Blackboard.

W. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, edited by G.R. Hibbard, Oxford World’s Classics, Oxford University Press

W. Shakespeare, *Amleto*, translated by Agostino Lombardo, Feltrinelli

W. Shakespeare, *Amleto*, editing, introduction and notes by Keir Elam, BUR (Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli)

T. Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, Faber & Faber

T. Stoppard, *Rosencrantz e Guildenstern sono morti*, Sellerio

T. Stoppard And M. Norman, *Shakespeare in Love*, Faber & Faber

P. Bertinetti, *Il teatro inglese. Storia e capolavori*, Einaudi

A. Cattaneo, *A Short History of English Literature*, Mondadori, 2011 or 2019.

***TEACHING METHOD***

The course lasts for one semester (three hours of lectures per week). During lectures, copies of texts and images that are difficult to obtain will be distributed and made available on Blackboard and in the lecturer’s virtual classroom. There will also be screenings of important scenes from the works on the syllabus.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

An oral exam at the end of the course. Students must demonstrate that they can interpret the texts on the syllabus and put them in context. They should also be able to connect them with each other, making use of their acquired knowledge of history and theatre theory.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

The course is aimed mainly at students of the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy. Students do not require in-depth prior knowledge of English theatre, as the course is designed to be an introduction to the topic, focusing on two crucial moments in its history. Students are however strongly encouraged to read the parts of the textbooks that relate to Elizabethan theatre and the topics on the syllabus in advance. Students must acquire copies of the texts on the syllabus before the start of lectures.

Attending students must comply with the rules of conduct laid down in the Code of Ethics of the Catholic University, which they accepted upon enrolment and are obliged to consult (the Code can be consulted online).

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG, or on the Faculty notice board.