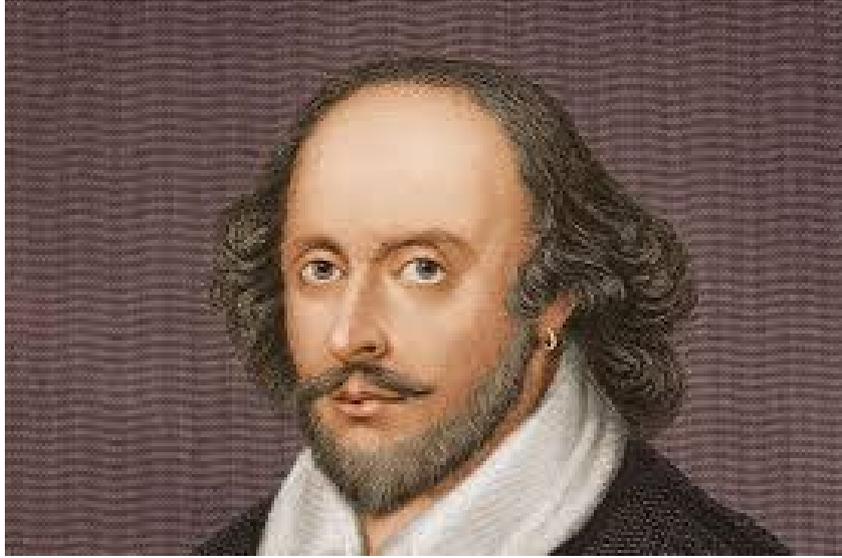


SHAKESPEARE



ON SCREEN

Week One

Welcome to *Shakespeare On Screen*

Week One

Welcome to “Shakespeare On Screen”, a ten-week tour of the myriad ways in which the work of Britain’s most acclaimed, and arguably, greatest playwright has been translated to the screen.

Over the ten weeks of the course, we will be exploring both the traditional and the avant-garde, the reverent and the decidedly irreverent approaches that have been taken to presenting Shakespeare’s work and, in some cases, his life across film and television.

There are more than 400 adaptations of Shakespeare’s plays and we hope that – while we will only be able to explore a percentage of these during the course - you will hopefully inspired to seek out further films yourselves.

I hope that you will enjoy the course and both re-discover some classic films and discover some new favourites along the way.

All the world, after all, is a stage.

From the BFI:

“Unsurprisingly, given his stature as one of the greatest writers in the English language, William Shakespeare (1564-1616) has directly or indirectly inspired a huge number of British films - and an equally wide range of interpretations.

The first Shakespeare film in any country was made in 1899, a simple photographic record of a small part of Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree's stage production of King John. The next three decades would see varied approaches to the challenge of filming Shakespeare in a medium denied the spoken word, from the imaginative tableaux-style mime of Percy Stow's *The Tempest* (1908) to truncated productions of the major tragedies (*Richard III*, 1911; *Hamlet*, 1913). Animator Anson Dyer also

made a number of Shakespeare burlesques, most of which have sadly been lost.

When sound was introduced, British cinema was slow to tackle Shakespeare - the first straight adaptation, *As You Like It*, didn't appear until 1937, and the next one after that was released in 1944, though Laurence Olivier's unashamedly patriotic *Henry V* also turned out to be the first unchallenged British Shakespearean masterpiece. The next decade would see Olivier dominating British Shakespeare film with similarly memorable adaptations of *Hamlet* (1948) and *Richard III* (1955).

From the 1960s, other major directors attempted filmed Shakespeare, with variable results - Tony Richardson's *Hamlet* (1969) essentially aimed a camera at his Roundhouse stage production, Peter Brook's *King Lear* (1970) transplanted the play to wintry Denmark and Roman Polanski's violent, blood-spattered *Macbeth* (1971) matched the pessimism of its era. By contrast, Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* (1968) was a lavish and opulent costume drama, achieving a perfect balance between fidelity to the play and attractiveness to younger audiences.

Shakespeare films became notably more experimental in the 1970s, with Celestino Coronado's avant-garde *Hamlet* (1976) and Derek Jarman's radical reworking of *The Tempest* (1979) paving the way for Peter Greenaway's *Prospero's Books* (1991) and Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1990), inspired by *The Tempest* and *Hamlet* respectively.

More recently, Kenneth Branagh has donned Olivier's mantle on both sides of the camera and has made a number of acclaimed Shakespeare films, from his directorial debut with a rather darker vision of *Henry V* (1989) to the 1930s musical version of *Love's Labour's Lost* (1999) via the first film version of the uncut *Hamlet* (1996).

There have also been a number of modern updates or contemporary stories clearly inspired by Shakespearean themes. *Othello* was particularly fruitful in this respect, inspiring Venetian melodrama *Carnival* (1921, remade 1931), romantic comedy *Men Are Not Gods* (1936) and *All Night*

Long (1961), set amongst the London jazz scene. Gangsters feature in *Joe Macbeth* (1955) and *My Kingdom* (2002, based on *King Lear*), while the second big-screen *As You Like It* (1992) transplanted the play to a run-down London housing estate, with mixed results. But Richard Loncraine and Ian McKellen's daring update of *Richard III* (1995) to an imaginary Fascist Britain was a triumph, showing just how richly imaginative British Shakespeare films can be when they have the courage of their convictions.”

- Michael Brooke

Further Reading:

Interpreting Shakespeare On Screen, Deborah Cartmel

Shakespeare, From Stage to Screen, Sarah Hatchuel

A Concise Companion to Shakespeare on Screen, editor Diane E. Henderson

WEEK ONE FILMS

An Age of Kings (1960)
Michael Hayes

The Hollow Crown (2016)
Rupert Goold, et al.

The Taming of the Shrew (1908)
D.W. Griffith

Kiss Me Kate (1953)
George Sidney

McClintock! (1963)
Andrew McLaglen

The Taming of the Shrew (1980)
Jonathan Miller

10 Things I Hate About You (1999)
Gil Junger

A Spray of Plum Blossoms (1931)
Bu Wancang

Two Gentlemen of Verona (1980)
Don Taylor