

METHODS FOR A GLOBAL SHAKESPEARE PEDAGOGY

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Courses focused on the subarea of Shakespeare studies termed “global Shakespeare”, have been for some time making their way into the offerings of university departments worldwide. These courses will usually be offered as themed seminars for more advanced undergraduate or sometimes postgraduate (graduate in the US terminology) students, alongside courses such as “Shakespeare and Gender”, “Shakespeare in Performance”, or “Shakespeare on Film”. While global Shakespeare courses will typically share some of the methodological features and pedagogical challenges with these courses, they also present a distinct set of challenges specific to the multilingual, multicultural, and multimedia nature of the materials that they by their very nature cover. This article undertakes a systematic examination of the considerations and challenges involved in constructing and teaching a global Shakespeare course. It is structured around discussions of three related methodological issues which anyone involved in the planning, delivering, or assessing of such a course will face: what role the original Shakespeare plays will play in it; what materials will be included/excluded under the aegis of “global Shakespeare”; and how materials in languages other than English will be incorporated and taught.

МЕТОДИКА НАВЧАННЯ ГЛОБАЛЬНОЇ ШЕКСПІРІВСЬКОЇ ПЕДАГОГІКИ

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Курси у підгалузі шекспірознавства, яка отримала назву «глобальний Шекспір», вже певний час торують шлях через навчальні програми факультетів в університетах по всьому світу. Такі дисципліни зазвичай пропонуються як тематичні семінари для більш просунутих студентів, а також й аспірантів, поряд із такими курсами, як «Шекспір і гендер», «Шекспір у виставах» або «Шекспір у кіно». Зазначені курси мають не тільки певні методологічні особливості та педагогічні труднощі, а й пов'язані із викликами, які торкаються багатомовного, мультикультурного та мультимедійного контенту матеріалів, які вони охоплюють. У цій статті здійснено системний огляд міркувань і викликів, пов'язаних із розробкою та викладанням курсу «Глобальний Шекспір». Структура цього курсу охоплює дискусії щодо трьох взаємопов'язаних методологічних питань, які стосуються планування, викладання чи оцінювання такого курсу: яку роль у ньому відіграватимуть оригінальні п'єси Шекспіра; які матеріали будуть включені/виключені у межах тематики курсу «Глобальний Шекспір»; а також які матеріали іншими мовами, окрім англійської, будуть включені та викладатимуться у цьому курсі.

Introduction. Global Shakespeare courses have been on offer for some time in These courses are typically conceived as themed seminars for more advanced undergraduates or masters or doctoral level students, alongside specialized courses focused on different aspects of identity politics in the Shakespearean oeuvre (such as “Shakespeare and Race”, or “Shakespeare and Sexuality”) or on the plays’ afterlife on stage and screen (such as «Shakespeare on Film», «Shakespeare in Performance»). Some works that have been considered part of the global Shakespeare canon have, of course, also made their way into more general Shakespeare courses – Akira Kurosawa’s cinematic adaptations of *King Lear* and *Macbeth* relocated into Samurai-era Japan, *Ran* (1985) and *Throne of Blood* (1957), or Aimé Césaire’s post-colonial rewriting of *The Tempest*, *Une Tempête* (1969), constitute perhaps the best examples of this phenomenon.

The presence of global Shakespeare in curricular offerings is clearly connected to the rise of global Shakespeare scholarship. Many of the scholars who produce publications about global Shakespeare also teach globally themed Shakespeare courses. From around 2010 onward, job advertisement for academics whose research as well as teaching activities are expected to encompass global Shakespeare started to appear. Institutions that have in recent years advertised such positions include American University in Cairo, National University of Ireland Maynooth, NUY Abu Dhabi, The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Mount Holyoke College, Queen Mary University in London, University of California San Diego, and University of California Santa Cruz. Yet while research-wise, global Shakespeare may very well be one of the most active and rapidly expanding of the various subfields within Shakespeare studies, with proliferation of scholarly publications on virtually all kinds of global Shakespeare materials, comparably little has been written about the pedagogical side of global Shakespeare.

Only one book that can be described as dealing specifically with the topic of global Shakespeare pedagogy has been published so far, *Teaching Shakespeare Beyond the Centre: Australasian Perspectives*. In this edited volume, “chapters based on local history and practice, largely but not exclusively in Australia and New Zealand, raise questions and present diverse models for further exploration in the use, teaching, and learning of Shakespeare... anywhere in the world” (Flaherty et al., 2013, p. 2). The remaining examples of scholarship on global Shakespeare pedagogy are variously subsumed into longer publication with a broader focus on Shakespearean performance or adaptation studies. Douglas M. Lanier in «‘I’ll Teach You Differences’: Genre Literacy, Critical

Pedagogy, and Screen Shakespeare» discusses the issue of genre in the teaching of several Anglophone Shakespeare films which frequently feature on global Shakespeare syllabi although the chapter itself does not directly consider the films’ global dimensions (2011). Todd Landon Barnes in “Hip Hop *Macbeth*, ‘Digitized Blackness’, and the New Millennial Minstrel: Illegal Culture Sharing in the Virtual Classroom” outlines helpful techniques for teaching Shakespearean adaptations dealing with racial inequalities in the United States, which can be to some extent extrapolated to global Shakespeare pedagogy as well. Ayanna Thompson’s and Laura Turchi’s *Teaching Shakespeare with a Purpose* touches on the challenges of cultural and linguistic translation when bringing Shakespeare to students whose own cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the United States are far removed from the culture and language of early modern England (2016). *Global Shakespeare Studies and Social Justice*, edited by Chris Thurman and Sandra Young, includes some consideration of how the diverse adaptations discussed throughout the volume can be approached in a classroom setting (2023). *Contemporary Readings in Global Performances of Shakespeare*, edited by Alexa Joubin, is a companion devoted to the study and teaching of global Shakespeare, primarily in the sense that many of the chapters can be assigned as readings to both undergraduate and postgraduate students (2024). Finally, the MIT Global Shakespeare portal, curated by Alexa Joubin and Peter Donaldson since 2010, which offers a vast open access repository of recordings of both stage and film adaptations from around the world, also includes some resources that can be used in educational settings (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2025).

The relative shortage of pedagogically oriented scholarship is not exclusive to the global Shakespeare subfield, as work on topics related to pedagogy constitutes only a small minority of the bulk of publications within anglophone literary studies. Teaching of global Shakespeare, however, presents major challenges connected to the multilingual, multicultural, and multimedia nature of its subject matter. While some of these difficulties are shared with other literature courses whose focus is likewise cross-historical, comparative, and/or multi-generic, others are either unique or at least more amplified in the milieu of a global Shakespeare course. The main culprit for the pedagogical challenges posed by global Shakespeare is the combined force of two factors which have majorly contributed to the very formation and prominence of this subfield: the rapid expansion coupled with continuous diversification of the global Shakespeare archive on the one hand and the extreme canonicity or familiarity of the early modern texts that this archive grows from on

the other. The existence of various stakeholders in both the originary early modern archive and the global archive that subsequently emerged (and is still emerging) complicates the situation further.

Material and Methods. Although the theoretical issues at play are complex and fascinating, this essay is interested in the practical implications of the unique and challenging nature of the global Shakespeare subfield for those who teach it. To counter the tendency of the earlier scholarship towards geographical specificity, I want to identify and analyze the general processes involved in teaching global Shakespeare. My discussion will address the methodological issues of constructing and delivering a global Shakespeare course, though I hope that this article will be relevant for any course in which the question of Shakespeare's global contexts arises. The essay identifies three interrelated methodological issues which anyone setting out to teach global Shakespeare will face and explores a range of possible responses to them:

Which materials will count as *global* and will the syllabus include productions, films, and/or textual adaptations in English (and if yes to what extent)?

What place (if any) will the early modern English play-texts (i.e. the actual Shakespeare plays) have in the course?

How can the course facilitate the students' encounters with the original foreign languages of the films or adaptations? Should these languages be incorporated into the course and if yes how?

Discussion and Results

1. How to define the «global» in a global Shakespeare course?

While certain titles readily represent the kind of material one expects to find on a global Shakespeare-themed syllabus—for instance, the already mentioned films by Kurosawa, or the more recent *Banquet* (Chinese adaptation of *Hamlet* in the style of martial arts films, directed by Feng Xiaogang, 2006) or *Haider* (adaptation of *Hamlet* in the style of Bollywood musical films, set in 1990s Kashmir, directed by Vishal Bhardwaj, 2014), it is surprisingly difficult to define what precisely the attribute «global» denotes in the context of global Shakespeare studies and pedagogy. In some contexts «global Shakespeare» means «non-Anglophone Shakespeare» and the obfuscating shift in nomenclature hints at a desire to avoid the negative exclusive valence of the more concrete term in favour of the more open-ended inclusive connotations of the term «global». It is true that the majority of items included on any global Shakespeare course will often already be non-Anglophone and the absence of Anglophone material can encourage the students to see Shakespeare's work in a radically new light. The non-Anglophone approach can also be particularly rewarding where students with some knowledge of the languages that the assigned material is in are

taking the course or where the students have a more general interest in translation since these students may be in a particularly good position to analyze and otherwise appreciate the relationship between the Shakespeare source play and its rendition in the target language. As the main drawback of the non-Anglophone approach, students will miss out on important and interesting material, such as the groundbreaking *Othello* production directed by Janet Suzman at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg in 1988, which defied the apartheid laws by casting a black actor (John Kani) as Othello while everyone else in the cast was white, or James Ivory's iconic film *Shakespeare Wallah* (1965), which dramatizes the struggles of a touring Shakespeare company in the newly independent India. Because of their immediate connections to the post and neo-colonial settings across the former British Empire, these Anglophone adaptations can provide crucial insights into how Shakespeare's plays have travelled beyond England and how the present phenomenon of global Shakespeare has evolved. A course that chooses to steer completely clear of Anglophone productions and films will inevitably circumvent this important portion of the history of global Shakespeare. If a language-based organizing principle is to play a role in a global Shakespeare course design, instead of applying the Anglophone/non-Anglophone binary, productions and films in English can be presented as one of the linguistic subgroups that the course material naturally falls into, along with productions and films in Chinese, Spanish, French, and so on. «Shakespeare in language X» units could even constitute the main building blocks of a syllabus or they can function as more informal groupings that will be considered in the class discussion or various assignments.

A geographically driven definition of global Shakespeare may sound just as problematic and restrictive as the language-based one. It is, after all, the crossing and blurring rather than the setting and drawing of boundaries, which has crucially aided in the formation and rise of the field now known as global Shakespeare. There are many artists who produce material readily identifiable as falling under the aegis of global Shakespeare, who are affiliated with multiple geographical regions: such as the theatre director Mahmood Karimi Hakak, originally from Iran but working in the United States for over two decades and producing plays in both English and Persian, or Denton Chikura and Tonderai Munievu, originally from Zimbabwe but now based in the United Kingdom, who have acted in Shakespearean productions in their native Shona language as well as in English. There are, moreover, films such as Michael Radford's *The Merchant of Venice* (2004), listed in film databases as having been co-produced by the United States,

United Kingdom, Italy, and Luxembourg, which defy precise geographical classifications as they are quite literally global in their multiple affiliations. Geography can nonetheless provide the key to a constructive approach to selecting the material for inclusion on a global Shakespeare course, as long as the concept of geography enlisted for the task is an inclusive and versatile one. To be true to its «global» designation, a global Shakespeare syllabus should feature a variety of titles from across the globe. A selection of titles representing the world's major geographical regions will communicate the message that Shakespeare's works have a truly global reach. Organizing the whole course primarily around such geopolitical entities (e.g. Latin America, Middle East, East-Central Europe) means that the individual units comprising the course can readily accommodate secondary readings on the historical and cultural dynamics that have impacted the respective productions and films. Superimposing a map illustrating where in the world Shakespeare is performed, filmed, published, and translated uncovers what Alexa Joubin has termed "blind spots", with little to no Shakespeare-related activity. These blind spot regions include much of Sub-Saharan Africa, with the exceptions of South Africa and Zimbabwe, parts of Central Asia and the Middle East, and most of the islands in the Pacific Ocean, with the exception of New Zealand (2014). Many of these blind spots have nevertheless been shrinking and disappearing in recent years, sometimes because Shakespeare has started to be newly performed (or translated or otherwise interacted with) in these regions but mostly because Shakespeare scholars in the West have started to search more intensely and more imaginatively for manifestations of Shakespeare farther afield than they used to do. Katherine Hennessey's work on Shakespeare in Yemen, for instance, offers an inspiring example of this kind of work.

The rapidly evolving digital technology has been making films and recorded stage productions globally available through online platforms. In this climate, a global Shakespeare course with a truly global coverage is very much a possibility and the variety of the materials available means that this possibility can take on many different shapes. At the same time, the wealth of available material can make the task of teaching a truly global Shakespeare course somewhat daunting and the danger that students will complete it feeling that they have barely scratched the surface is a very real one. The main challenge is then to design and deliver a course in such a way that students come away from it with a sense that they have engaged with a set of highlights thoughtfully and strategically assembled from a rich body of material, which they can ideally continue to explore in academic as well as

non-academic settings even after they have finished the course. If the course develops in the students a sense that global Shakespeare material comprises a complex and dynamic body of work which can at the same time be plotted onto various kinds of maps (for instance geopolitical, linguistic, historical) the students will hopefully be less likely to feel lost, in the respective course and beyond, in this fascinating field.

2. What to do with Shakespeare's original play texts?

Most Shakespeare courses will involve some examination and requalification of the notion of Shakespeare's original text, but in global Shakespeare courses this concept is somewhat less problematic--the «original» text will be any of the extant early modern variants or more often its modernized edited version. The differences between the quarto and folio versions, although substantial by some other measures, tend to be dwarfed by the much more salient contrasts arising between the early modern (modernized or non-modernized) English text and the «global» version with its different language, medium, or cultural/historical context. Instead of the usual decision which edition of the plays to assign, an instructor of a global Shakespeare course more urgently faces the more fundamental question of whether to put the «original» plays on the syllabus at all and, if yes, then how to position them in the course in relation to their «global» counterparts.

The most readily available option is to assign the original play texts along with the respective global adaptations. This type of global Shakespeare course design can lend itself to pedagogically productive and innovative practices. It enables students to appreciate the adaptation as a multilayered historically grounded process. To facilitate this dynamic, the course can incorporate information on the adaptation's relationship with the Shakespeare text. This information is sometimes available in a format that can be readily assigned as secondary reading or viewing. Moreover, many of the films and stage productions commercially available in DVD editions or on online platforms now include interviews or commentaries by directors, producers, actors, or dramaturges, which will often discuss the decisions made in the process of moving the play from page to stage or screen. For students who have themselves read the plays in preparation for covering the adaptations, these insights can serve as a gateway to examining and analyzing how the text is reworked in the adapted version. The comparative work can then take many shapes both in and outside the classroom and can involve elements of close reading as well as attention to more global shifts on the levels of genre, tone, or pace. From an administrative perspective,

including the Shakespeare plays on the syllabus often means that the course will be perceived as more traditionally literary, which can be useful where a conservatively minded administration needs to be satisfied or where students preferring canonical texts need to be attracted to the course. Although in theory many kinds of productive comparative analysis can be done when working with the original plays and their global adaptation side by side, the original play texts can end up dominating the discussion, especially if the students are more familiar and comfortable with a Shakespeare play as a subject of literary analysis than with the less orthodox formats assumed by many of the global adaptations. Similarly, a focus on comparing the adaptations with their source plays can direct attention away from comparisons among the different global adaptations. This approach risks emphasizing the «Shakespeare» in «global Shakespeare» over the «global» component.

Depending on the aims of the course, alternatives to assigning the original play texts offer themselves. The instructor can choose global adaptations based on plays that the students are likely to be already familiar with and draw on this background knowledge of the plays throughout the course. This solution works best where students with similar backgrounds (for instance those, who have taken the same Shakespeare survey course earlier) enroll in a global Shakespeare seminar or where the mechanics of course scheduling and registration mean that they can be expected to do a substantial amount of reading prior to embarking on the global Shakespeare course. Another option that falls between a full presence or complete absence of the original play-texts in a course involves incorporating strategically chosen scenes or passages from the original plays either directly into the syllabus or into various classroom exercises. The instructor can identify passages which will lend themselves to productive comparisons and contrasts with the reworked versions. As an even more radical departure from a more traditional Shakespeare course, a course can present the global adaptations as entities in their own right, without an emphasis on the need to be familiar with the original Shakespeare plays. It is worth remembering that this is routinely done with many other items covered in English courses, as we readily ask students to read works by writers such as Chaucer and Shakespeare without assigning the sources on which their texts are based.

Regardless of the presence or absence of the original play texts in a global Shakespeare course, the course should ideally incorporate some discussion of the theoretical implications of the relationship between sources and adaptations. Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation*, for instance, offers rich material that can be assigned for this purpose (2006). While none of

Hutcheon's chapters focus on Shakespeare, the book features multiple examples of adaptations in different media based on Shakespeare's plays. Through its inclusion of Shakespeare's plays along with numerous other examples of adaptations, the book very usefully illustrates how reworkings of Shakespeare are part of the larger complex phenomenon of adaptation. A selection from earlier as well as more recent criticism and theory dealing with the concepts of authorship, originality, translation, and adaptation can also work well, especially in settings where students would otherwise not get a chance to read this material. If such a theoretical induction is scheduled early in the course, the students can then apply the points they learn from it to the material covered in the rest of the course.

3. What to do with multiple languages?

Most global Shakespeare courses will include a substantial amount of non-Anglophone material. A sample of syllabi I located online on average called for students to view and/or read material originally produced in six languages. This makes it virtually impossible for either the students or the instructors to be familiar with the full range of the original languages of the materials the course will feature. This reality naturally presents a methodological challenge otherwise uncommon in courses taught in English Departments. Depending on the specific student population and the instructor's own background, it is often possible to draw on the knowledge of the individual participants and use it strategically in class discussions or presentations. If the logistics of course design and student enrollment allow, the instructor can even include items on the syllabus with view to the languages that the students taking the course will know. In settings where few or none of the students have the requisite linguistic backgrounds, the course should still incorporate some information about the relevant languages. The most pertinent topics in this area include: the history of Shakespearean translations into that language, an overview of the concrete challenges that the language presents to a translator working from an early modern English source text, and the properties of the specific translation being studied. Carefully chosen and presented examples that will incorporate words, phrases, or whole sentence of the other languages will help to bring the process of translating to life for the students. The difficulties posed to translators by proper names, the challenges of retaining or abandoning particular verse forms, or the options for dealing with the you/thou distinction exemplify some of the problems which can be meaningfully illustrated through a comparison between the early modern English source text and its translation. Ensuring that issues of language will have a substantial presence in the course will help prevent the balance of the course focus shifting overwhelmingly

towards visual aspects of the productions and films studied. On a more practical note, the students should also be warned that, while the English subtitles (and less commonly dubbing), through which they will usually be accessing the assigned non-Anglophone films and productions, enable a non-speaker to follow the plot, they rarely convey the register, tone, poetry, and other finer features of the original.

Conclusions. It is easy to get absorbed in the various technical, methodological, linguistic, and other issues that teaching a global Shakespeare course entails and lose sight of the larger picture that global Shakespeare pedagogy ultimately fits into. The phenomenon of global Shakespeare can be seen in part as an institutional response to the increasingly diverse backgrounds of the students in the classroom. I believe that while instructors of global Shakespeare courses should be aware of the kinds of problems and pitfalls I have been discussing, I would like to end by reaffirming my belief in the pedagogical possibilities of global Shakespeare. Global Shakespeare inevitably brings teachers face to face with their own ignorance. This ignorance can nevertheless be pedagogically very much productive because it provides an opportunity for us to genuinely learn from our students, who can in many cases help supply the inevitable gaps in our knowledge of the historical, cultural, or linguistic contexts relevant to the diverse material covered on a particular course. Global Shakespeare by its very nature encourages teachers to involve students in active and collaborative learning.

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Отримано: 19.03.2025

Прийнято: 10.04.2025