
Shakespeare: The Wars of the Roses

OSHER 885-001**Dates:** Tuesdays: September 1 – October 6**Time:** 9:30 am – 11:00 am**Location:** Online via Zoom**Instructor:** Charles Boynton**Course Description:**

Shakespeare wrote two 'tetralogies' of history plays about the ascendance of the Tudor family to the crown of England, ending with the rise to power of Queen Elizabeth 1. Shakespeare lived during her reign and the 'King' plays were written in celebration of her governing.

Shakespeare wrote his two tetralogies in reverse chronological history. This course examines his plays with the 'correct' chronology. The course is labeled the 'Wars of The Roses' to provide easy recall as to the time period the plays are focused on. The historic time of the 'Wars of the Roses' is given to the period 1455-1485. The combatants in these contests who vied for supremacy of ruling England were the English house of 'Plantagenet' successors, the Houses of York and Lancaster. (This set of contests occurred at the end of the historic 100 Year Wars between the French House, Valois, the English House, Plantagenet, for supremacy in ruling France).

In this course we will examine closely the plays, reading them, analyzing them, in light of the actual historic time on which Shakespeare based the plays, in light of then-current living conditions in London, to give us a sense of the actual day to day living conditions in which Shakespeare wrote, and provide a base off of which the balance of the other 'King' plays can be approached.

Course Overview:

- Week 1:** Introduction and Richard II.
- Week 2:** Henry IV Part One.
- Week 3:** Henry IV Part Two.
- Week 4:** Henry V.



Week 5: Henry VI Part Three.

Week 6: Richard III.

Prior to each session class members will be sent information suitable for preparation for the discussion. There will be readings from each play. It is best that each class member has access to written editions to each of the 6 plays. If a class member does not have access to written copies of each play (or any of them) that member will be emailed the reading she or he would make well in advance as to allow that member to better understand the reading, why it is important to the play, what are the particular aspects of Shakespeare's writings which are demonstrated by this reading.