University of Birmingham

MA Shakespeare Studies

This programme, delivered by and taught at the **Shakespeare Institute (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/shakespeare)** in Stratford-upon-Avon, offers an unrivalled opportunity for the study of Shakespeare at postgraduate level. It develops a critical but appreciative understanding of Shakespeare's contribution to literary and theatrical history, and the place his works occupy in today's cultural landscape. The programme has gained a strong reputation both in Britain and abroad. It has proved invaluable for students heading towards a variety of careers, and it provides a solid foundation for research at a higher level.

Course fact file

Type of Course: Taught

Study Options: Full time, part time

Duration: 12 months full-time on campus; 24-36 months part-time on campus

Start date: September

Contact

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School of English, Drama and American & Canadian Studies (/schools/edacs/index.aspx)

Shakespeare Institute (/schools/edacs/departments/shakespeare/index.aspx)

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Details

The dynamism of Shakespeare studies owes much to the sheer diversity of critical, theatrical, and historical approaches. It offers sustained study in a variety of fields, drawing on the special interests of a dedicated team of Shakespeare scholars.

You will study five core modules (full descriptions below):

- Plays and Poems of Shakespeare A
- Plays and Poems of Shakespeare B
- Textual Studies in Shakespeare
- Research Skills in Shakespeare
- History of Shakespeare in Performance OR Shakespeare's Legacy

You will also choose one optional module from a range of Shakespeare Institute modules.

Each module is assessed by one 4,000-word essay with the exception of: Research Skills which is assessed by 2–3 shorter assignments; and Shakespeare and Theatre Practice which is assessed by either two performance assignments and a 2,000-word research paper, or by one 4,000-word research paper. You will also submit a 15,000-word dissertation at the end of the programme. The dissertation will focus on a relevant topic of your choice, agreed with your supervisor earlier in the year.

You will also attend Thursday Seminars held once a week during term-time at the Shakespeare Institute which feature papers presented by a range of established visiting scholars as well as Institute and University of Birmingham staff.

Visiting the Shakespeare Institute

We welcome prospective students to visit the Shakespeare Institute. Our next open afternoons are expected to take place on **12 November 2015 (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/edacs/departments/shakespeare/events/2015/open-afternoon.aspx)** and **4 February 2016 (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/edacs/departments/shakespeare/events/2016/open-aftenoon-february.aspx)** .

- **View our interactive virtual tour of the Shakespeare Institute (/schools/edacs/departments/shakespeare/virtual-tour.aspx)**
- **Watch our videos about the Shakespeare Institute, our specialist library and student life in Stratford-upon-Avon (/schools/edacs/departments/shakespeare/videos.aspx)**

Modules

You will study the following four core modules:

Plays and Poems A

Students are encouraged to engage with, and to see the relationship between, the plays and poems Shakespeare wrote in the sixteenth century, in which the dominant genres were comedies and histories, with tragedy an emergent presence towards the end. The module will cover the first half of Shakespeare's career in chronological order, from 1591 to 1600. Learning is via student presentation and response, with a preliminary lecture on each study day. This module can be studied as a standalone module or with Play and Poems B.

Plays and Poems B

Students are encouraged to engage with, and to see the relationship between, the plays and poems Shakespeare wrote in the seventeenth century, in which the dominant genres were tragedies and tragicomedies. The module will cover the second half of Shakespeare's career in chronological order, from 1601 - 1613. Learning is via student presentation and response, with a preliminary lecture on each study day. (Plays and Poems A is the pre-requisite module for Plays and Poems B.)

Textual Studies in Shakespeare

What do we mean when we refer to 'the text of Shakespeare'? This module investigates the production of the text in the theatre and in print, explores controversies surrounding the interpretation of this material, and introduces students to the techniques of editing. Topics include: the relationship between a modern edition of a play and the earliest printed texts; the nature of the printing process that first made the plays available to readers of books; the characteristics of Shakespeare's dramatic composition; the treatment of the text in the theatre (including censorship, revision and adaptation); and Shakespeare as a collaborator. Plays studied usually include: *Hamlet*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Sir Thomas More*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard II*, *King Lear*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *Timon of Athens*.

Research Skills in Shakespeare

Classes introduce the research techniques applicable in the fields associated with Shakespeare studies, and explore the rich resources available through the University and in Stratford-upon-Avon. This knowledge is applied in a Bibliographical Essay, which provides preparation for the dissertation. These modules will provide a thorough grounding in the study of Shakespeare's works.

- Your fifth core module, in performance studies, offers a choice between:

History of Shakespeare in Performance

This module will consider trends of acting and directing Shakespeare from the Restoration to the present day, and will exploit the Stratford archives to undertake studies of individual actors and directors from the eighteenth century onwards. Subjects of study might include Colley Cibber, David Garrick, Henry Irving and Ellen Terry, Laurence Olivier, Peter Brook, John Barton and Sam Mendes. There will be opportunities to analyse and interpret primary evidence and to consider the cultural context(s) of performance. Plays studied will include *Richard III*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

OR

Shakespeare's Legacy

This module considers the adaptation and appropriation of Shakespeare's plays, persona, and possessions from 1660 to the present day, paying particular attention to how changes and developments in theatre practice, aesthetic tastes, social concerns, political events, the heritage industry, and commercial markets have shaped the history of Shakespeare's 'afterlife'. The module looks at trends broadly chronologically, focusing on particular examples as it traces how the plays (and other Shakespeariana) were received and reinterpreted in light of different artistic, intellectual, and commercial movements from the late seventeenth to early twenty-first centuries. The distinction between 'adaptations', 'appropriations', 'translations', and 'versions' will be questioned, and students will be invited to consider the extent to which the different adaptations they read or see rely upon the original Shakespearian text for context and meaning.

- You will also study one optional module – either a second performance studies module (above) or another Shakespeare Institute module:

History of Shakespeare Criticism

This module will combine a historical overview of the main developments in Shakespeare criticism from the 1590s to the present with detailed investigation of key texts, covering: the canonisation of Shakespeare; character criticism; biographical criticism; imagery and symbolist criticism; critical study of the plays as created artifacts; the relationship between criticism and performance; historicist criticism; and new critical approaches. You will read weekly set texts for discussion in seminar, and a weekly lecture will place these texts in their historical context. You will be expected to undertake independent reading around the topics after the seminar discussion, guided by topic-specific reading lists which are circulated each week.

Early Modern Drama: Middleton and Jonson

This module will introduce and contextualise two of the most significant dramatists working in the same period as Shakespeare. Each week you will focus on a pair of plays, usually one by Jonson and one by Middleton. Seminars will focus on student presentations, usually two in each class, each of which will place one of the plays in a broader dramatic and/or cultural context, and/or engage in close analysis of key passages. Special classes will identify the plays as intersections between dramatists and theatre companies, engage with issues relating to dramatic language and technique, and explore issues of textual circulation and canon formation.

Shakespeare's Craftsmanship

This module is intended to convey, from a variety of standpoints, a sense of how Shakespeare worked. We will explore a selection of plays from across his career in order to highlight the fluidity of his creativity in terms of such elements as language, structure, mood, adaptation of source material, and how they are made to function in innovative ways alongside the more pragmatic considerations of live performance in the early modern theatre. Alongside these historical, textual, and dramaturgical issues we will also consider how such questions of craft may influence performance practice today.

Shakespeare and Theatre Practice

This module will provide you with experiential knowledge that will inform the way that you interrogate and interpret performance evidence in a variety of media. Through a series of workshops and performance assignments, students will explore three different systematic approaches to performing the language of Shakespeare: the first approach is rooted in the verse and text work of John Barton, Peter Hall, and Giles Block; the second approach explores the legacy of Stanislavski in the Shakespearean work of 20th/21st century practitioners in Europe and the United States; the third approach brings the devising techniques of prominent physical theatre practitioners to a creative examination of Shakespeare's text.

Please note that availability of optional modules may vary from year to year.

- On successful completion of the six taught modules, you will enrol on the dissertation:

Dissertation

In this module you will undertake a substantial piece of independent research. This may be based on - but will extend - work undertaken for previous modules in the programme. There should be some element of originality in the research and the research may make a contribution to the field of study. You will report the research in a dissertation of 15,000 words (in appropriate academic English). In designing, carrying out and writing up the study, you will be supported by a supervisor.

Fees and funding

We charge an annual tuition fee. Fees for 2015/16 are as follows:

- Home / EU: £6,210 full-time; £3,105 part-time
- Overseas: £14,140 full-time

For part-time students, the above fee quoted is for year one only and tuition fees will also be payable in year two of your programme.

Eligibility for Home/EU or Overseas fees can be verified with Admissions. Learn more about **fees for international students (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/International/students/finance/fees.aspx)**

Tuition fees can either be paid in full or by instalments. Learn more about **postgraduate tuition fees and funding (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/postgraduate/pgt-fees/index.aspx)** .

Scholarships and studentships

Scholarships to cover fees and/or maintenance costs may be available. To discover whether you are eligible for any award across the University, and to start your funding application, please visit the University's **Postgraduate Funding Database (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/fees/funding/FundingFilter.aspx)** .

International students can often gain funding through overseas research scholarships, Commonwealth scholarships or their home government.

Birmingham Masters Scholarship Scheme

For 2015 entry the University has **224 new £10,000 scholarships available for Masters students from under-represented groups (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/postgraduate/funding/Birmingham-Masters-Scholarship-Scheme.aspx)** . These scholarships have been jointly funded by the British Government; the allocation of the awards, which is the fourth highest in the UK, further cements Birmingham?s place amongst the very best higher education institutions for postgraduate study. The application deadline is 31 July 2015.

Entry requirements

In addition to the usual supporting documents, when you apply for this course we ask you to submit an example of your written work; this will preferably be an essay on Shakespeare, of about 2,000 words. If you do not have a piece of work that is of the right length it is better to send something that is longer rather than shorter so that we have a better chance to assess your critical writing on a literary topic.

Not everyone has written at any length on Shakespeare at the time they apply, and we are therefore prepared to assess an applicant's work on another literary topic if necessary. Ideally this would be based on a comparable subject (e.g. on drama, or on another author of Shakespeare's time), but of course you will also want to choose something that gives a fair representation of your work. If you would like to discuss which piece to send, please contact **Professor John Jowett (mailto:)** directly.

Learn more about **entry requirements (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-pg/index.aspx)**

International students

Academic requirements

We accept a range of qualifications; our **country pages (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/international/students/country/index.aspx)** show you what qualifications we accept from your country.

English language requirements

You can satisfy our English language requirements in two ways:

- by holding an **English language qualification (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-pg/international/index.aspx)** to the right level
- by taking and successfully completing one of our **English courses for international students (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-pg/international/english-courses.aspx)**

How to apply

Before you make your application

You may wish to **register your interest with us (https://bham.hobsons.co.uk/emtinterestpage.aspx?ip=postgraduate)** to receive regular news and updates on postgraduate life within this Department and the wider University.

Making your application

When clicking on the Apply Now button you will be directed to an application specifically designed for the programme you wish to apply for where you will create an account with the University application system and submit your application and supporting documents online. Further information regarding how to apply online can be found on the **How to apply pages (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/courses/postgraduate/apply-pg/index.aspx)**

Apply now (https://pga.bham.ac.uk/lpages/CAL060.htm)

Learning and teaching

Full-time students attend formal seminars totalling 5-8 hours per week. In addition, all students are expected to attend the weekly Thursday Seminar for all Institute members. Please note that this programme is only available on campus, and cannot be studied by distance learning.

The programme allows access to the unique Shakespearian resources of the **Shakespeare Institute Library (http://www.shakespeare.bham.ac.uk/research/collections.shtml)** , the Library of the Shakespeare Centre that curates the archives of the RSC, and the **Royal Shakespeare Company (http://www.rsc.org.uk/home/default.aspx)** . Study materials for this programme are enhanced by the close ties that the Shakespeare Institute has with the **Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (http://www.shakespeare.org.uk)** , the Royal Shakespeare Company, and the archives associated with both of these institutions.

You will also become part of, and contribute to, the vibrant international community of the College of Arts and Law Graduate School, which offers dedicated research resources and a supportive working environment. Our team of academic and operational staff are on hand to offer support and advice to all postgraduate students within the College.

Support with academic writing

As a postgraduate student in the College of Arts and Law, you have access to the **Academic Writing Advisory Service (AWAS) (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/colleges/artslaw/student-experience/opportunities/awas/index.aspx)** which aims to help your transition from undergraduate to taught Masters level, or back into academia after time away. The service offers guidance on writing assignments and dissertations for your MA/MSc programme with individual support from an academic writing advisor via tutorials, email and the provision of online materials.

International students can access support through the **English for International Students Unit (EISU) (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/eisu/insessional/index.aspx)** .

Employability

The University of Birmingham has been ranked 8th in the UK and 60th in the world for post-qualification employability in the latest global survey of universities commissioned by the International Herald Tribune.

Your degree will provide excellent preparation for employment and this will be further enhanced by the employability skills training offered through the College of Arts and Law Graduate School.

Postgraduates at the Shakespeare Institute are able to develop a broad range of creative, research and theatre skills, as well as in-depth subject knowledge.

In 2013, 99% of our postgraduates were in work and/or further study six months after graduation.

In recent years, our postgraduates have successfully entered a variety of sectors from teaching in secondary and higher education to performing arts, publishing, museums and library and archive work. Employers that graduates have gone on to work for include: Imperial College London; National Trust; Royal Shakespeare Company; Shakespeare Birthplace Trust; The Grove Theatre; and University of Bristol.

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