ENGL 2507  
Spring 2020  
Prof. Adriana Streifer  
Podcast Assignment  
Due: Tuesday, 4/28/20, via Collab Assignments, by the start of class

Preparatory Assignments:

- Make sure you’ve listened to the podcasts assigned to *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, and *Measure for Measure*. Listen to them again to refresh your memory.
- Prior to class on 4/23, generate a list of “thorny problems” or difficult questions. Bring this list to class.
- Also prior to class on 4/23, think about why you care about your selected play. Why does it speak to you, and is there anything generalizable about your connections to the play that may also speak to others?

**Why am I doing this?**  
Humans are naturally curious beings. We like to learn things, especially when learning takes the form of entertainment. Museums, books, public lectures, journalism, documentary film and TV shows, radio, podcasts – none of these would be popular if people were uninterested in learning. Unfortunately, sometimes school neglects to tap into this natural curiosity, and we forget the significance of what we study beyond the narrow confines of the classroom.

Writing and recording a podcast will give you a chance to think about why what we are reading matters. In particular, it provides the opportunity to think about why Renaissance drama might matter to people who are not Shakespeare scholars, but who nevertheless are curious about how old ideas relate to and influence new ideas, and how where we are today is informed by where we’ve come from. One of the primary learning goals in this course is to be able to explain to others how theater can shape, critique or reflect a culture’s worldview and assumptions. Creating an authentic, publicly accessible podcast will allow you to explain to others, in a way that resonates with non-experts, why these plays matter to you, and why they should matter to them.

**What am I going to do?**  
You will write and record a 5-7 minute podcast about one of the plays we have read this semester. When you finish the assignment, you will submit both a transcript of your podcast, and the recording. Your podcast should make connections between 1) the play you’ve selected; 2) one or more of the course themes of identity, selfhood, and otherness; 3) and some aspect of our current cultural, social, historical, or political moment. As you select a topic and draft your transcript, use one or more of the following questions as a guide:

- How does your selected play represent the experiences of being an insider or outsider?
- How are your play’s representations of identity, selfhood, and otherness similar to or different from the expectations and experiences of contemporary audiences?
- Why might readers/audiences today benefit from reading or seeing a production of this play?
- What do you want a general audience to know about this play? How do you want your audience to be impacted by engaging with this play?
Although the podcast will not take the structure of a traditional academic essay, it should still present an argument. Rather than presenting the argument in thesis form, the argument may be more implicit, more personal, and more creative than one you would write in a traditional essay. A good podcast will convince listeners that some aspect of your chosen play renders it worthy of our attention because of its continuing relevance and ability to help us think and learn about the issues you’ve selected to discuss.

Tips for success:

- Before you jump straight into writing, start by re-reading and reflecting. What grabs your attention about the play you selected? Can you phrase your interest in terms of a knotty problem or difficult question? Does the play relate to something in your own experience that has to do with identity, belonging, or otherness? What are your reasons for caring about this play and this topic? Your reasons don’t have to be my reasons – the goal is to discover reasons that are authentic to you and that motivate you to communicate them to others beyond the class.
  - As you reflect, connect your reflections to the text. Bookmark quotations or scenes that resonate particularly well with your topic.
- You can’t possibly talk about the entire play in 5-7 minutes, so you’ll have to make careful selections. What will you pay attention to? Which scenes or quotations best relate to your overarching concerns? Limiting the scope of your investigation before you begin writing (or in the early stages of writing) will help you produce a focused, polished podcast.
- Practice your podcast by reading it aloud, for length, pacing, and your own comfort level with the recording experience.
- Listen to one or more episodes of “Lend Me Your Ears.” This excellent podcast on Shakespeare and politics will give you a great sense of how to build connections between old texts and modern concerns. Your own podcast will not be as long, and does not carry the same expectations for research, interviews, or high-quality sound effects, but “Lend me Your Ears” is a great place to go for inspiration.
  - Lend Me Your Ears has episodes on Othello and Measure for Measure. If you select one of these plays for your podcast, you face the challenge of making sure that your own original thought shines through.
- Record multiple drafts of your podcast. Get feedback on the audio version and makes changes and re-record if necessary.
- Have a friend or family member who has no affiliation with this class listen to your podcast, in order to gauge its appeal to a non-expert audience. Did this person find it comprehensible without a background in the course material? Did they find your recording entertaining and worthwhile to listen to? Revise using their feedback.

How will I know I have succeeded? You will meet expectations on the podcast assignment if you follow the criteria in the rubric, below.

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<tr>
<th>Basics</th>
<th>5-7 minutes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recording does not need to be high quality, but it should be audible and intelligible</td>
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<td></td>
<td>You may interview someone on your podcast and/or include sound effects, if you think either of these options would support your goals.</td>
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| Content | • Plot summary is included when relevant and necessary  
• The podcast demonstrates an accurate factual understanding of the selected play |
| Relevance | • The podcast makes meaningful connections between the selected play and one or more contemporary topics  
• The podcast explains why the play offers a useful framework for understanding these contemporary topics  
• The podcast is mostly pitched appropriately to a non-academic (but intelligent) audience without a background in Shakespeare |
| Analysis and Evidence | • The podcast references textual evidence when relevant, either by paraphrase or direct quotation  
• Claims about the play are almost always grounded in reasonable interpretations of textual evidence  
• The podcast mostly avoids making sweeping generalizations |
| Listening Experience | • The podcast mostly succeeds in taking a narrative approach – it tells a story and is entertaining  
• Quotation length is listener-friendly (i.e. not too long) and read in a listener-friendly manner (that is, slower than you will think you need to)  
• Optional: any sound effects complement the podcast's goals |
| Clarity and Language | • Sentences are almost always well-suited to an audio format. In other words, sentences tend to be shorter, and connections across sentences and paragraphs are reiterated to make them as obvious as possible  
• Your language avoids jargon whenever possible, and defines terms carefully when necessary |