Combining American and British Studies, the seminar will aim for a ‘stereoscopic’ investigation of 'Shakespeare's' shifting cultural, social and political positioning. We will discuss *The Tempest*, *Henry V*, a brief selection of sonnets, and *Romeo and Juliet*. Our main emphasis, however, will not be on close readings of the Shakespearean canon. Rather, we will focus on how that canon — and the figure of 'Shakespeare' in general — has come to be differently constructed, received and functionalized in or between American and British cultural contexts, from the beginning of the twentieth century until the present day.

The topics of discussion will include: the institutionalization of 'Shakespeare' as a mainstay of national culture and nationalist politics on both sides of the Atlantic; the mobilization of his works in times of war; their popularization or transformation on tv and in other commercial media; and the re-writing of Shakespearean plots in contemporary literature, especially in Margaret Atwood's 2016 novel *Hag Seed*, an adaptation of *The Tempest* set in present-day Canada and provocatively commenting on 'prison Shakespeare.' Seminar discussions will also provide insights into the ideological flexibility of academic Shakespeare scholarship. In these ways, we will set out to critically investigate both: partial appropriations of 'Shakespeare' and grand claims for his universal significance.

In the course of the seminar, participants will compile a portfolio (c. 20 pp.); apart from regular seminar contributions (reading responses etc.), each portfolio will include a short project-related scholarly essay.

**GENERAL INTRODUCTORY READING**

a) *Please 'brush up your Shakespeare,' before the beginning of the seminar, here are some important suggestions:*

- Plays and poems by Shakespeare, especially *The Tempest*

  ➔ This is probably still the best comprehensive introduction to 'Shakespeare.' If reading the entire text should be too much, certain sections can be picked according to special interests or requirements.
b) In addition, participants should do some introductory reading and browsing on the topic of 'Shakespeare' in Britain and the USA. To get started, please see the seminar plan as well as the selected bibliography.

c) Obtain a copy of Margaret Atwood, *Hag Seed* (2016), The Hogarth Shakespeare Series (please read until 15/06).

**SEMINAR PLAN**

AR = Assigned reading // FR = Further reading

**20/04 Introduction:**

**Transatlantic Shakespeare**

AR:


**27/04 Shakespeare’s 'transatlantic' (?) play and its reception: The Tempest**

AR:

- Shakespeare, *The Tempest*  
  (Any reliable edition of the text will do; the text in *The Norton Shakespeare* or in the respective volume of *The Arden Shakespeare* is recommended)

**04/05 Institutionalizing/Commercializing Shakespeare (On both sides of the pond)**

AR:

  → PRESENTATION

FR:


18/05 Shakespearean nationalisms

AR:


FR:


01/06 New Shakespeares, new attitudes

AR:


08/06 Popularizing Shakespeare / Educating the audience?

TV and the 'Shakespeare Code'

AR:

  → PRESENTATION

FR:

15/06 Retelling Shakespeare (on neutral territory?):
A Canadian Tempest in the Hogarth Shakespeare Series

AR:

➢ Margaret Atwood, Hag Seed (2016), The Hogarth Shakespeare Series.

PRESENTATION on the Hogarth Shakespeare Series

22.06 Love, after all? – Romeo and Juliet

AR:

➢ Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet


29.06 Bringing it all back home:
Gender, Ethnicity (and popular music) in transatlantic Julias and Romeos

➢ Participants' project PRESENTATIONS on:

❖ West Side Story (first production of the musical: 1957 / film: 1961)
❖ John Madden, dir., Shakespeare in Love (1998)

FR:


06/07 Conclusion: (A new) Shakespearean universalism?

AR:

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


