

## Engl 7232/8232-Shakespeare's Tragedies: The Ends of Life Course Description

The year 2016 marks the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of William Shakespeare's death. This anniversary provides an opportunity to reflect on some significant ideas that Shakespeare's works call to our attention. In this course, we will read Shakespeare's tragedies—including *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Timon of Athens*, among others—as aesthetic objects that are structured by the presence of death. Accordingly, we will concentrate on some of the following issues:

- representations of death in Shakespeare's work
- forms of life
- what it meant to live a meaningful life in Shakespeare's England and in Shakespeare's plays
- how the end of life determines, structures, or informs the earlier life
- life-writing: what it means to write the life in relation to the (known) end
- the promised end: how eschatology informs Shakespeare's work
- biopolitics

In thinking about such issues, we will read secondary works by critics including Philip Ariès, Giorgio Agamben, Julia Reinhardt Lupton, Stephan Greenblatt, Keith Thomas, etc.

Textbook: *The Norton Shakespeare: Tragedies*.