Screening Literature: Shakespeare on Film
(Polanski, Stoppard, Kurosawa)

Directed by Professor Dragan Kujundzic
LIT 3400

The course will address the relationship between literature and cinema, based on the works on William Shakespeare. Close readings (of both plays and films to be screened) of Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear, The Merchant of Venice among others, will be conducted, and compared with various filmic adaptations, most notably by those of Roman Polanski (Macbeth), Tom Stoppard (Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead), and Akira Kurosawa (Throne of Blood, Ran). Particular attention will be given (discussed and screened in the class) to other successful transpositions of Shakespeare’s plays on film, as well as the Macbeth rendering as comedy, Scotland, PA. The primary critical text will be How to Read Shakespeare by Nicholas Royle.

“As I hope to make clear, one of the most immediate and profound things about Shakespeare’s work is the sense of his love of language—a sense of playing with words and of the amazing, terrifying things that they can do. Words in Shakespeare seem to take on an autonomous life or machine-like power. They are like little search engines, medling imps, strange creatures with wills of their own.”

—Nicholas Royle, How to Read Shakespeare

“Yet Shakespeare seems equally adaptable to cinema; many would agree with Lawrence Olivier, who has repeatedly implied that Shakespeare would have written films, if only he had the chance.”

—Deborah Cartmell, Interpreting Shakespeare on Screen