

On Trial: Shakespeare and the Law

This course represents a unique collaboration between the School of Law and the Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies at Warwick. The optional half-module, which is available to English students and Law undergraduates, has at its core an interest in exploring the performative links between theatre and law. Trial scenes from three of Shakespeare's plays (*The Winter's Tale*, *Measure for Measure* and *The Merchant of Venice*) are analysed, using theatrical techniques to uncover the legal themes embedded within the texts. The empty space of CAPITAL's rehearsal room is the forum in which students interact with each other, developing into an ensemble through collective engagement with the various exercises they are set. Each three-hour class involves: vocal and physical warm-ups; theatre games; a "chalk and talk" session (in which the substantive law relating to that week's class is communicated and discussed); analysis of Shakespeare's text, in which students rehearse the particular trial scene under discussion; and mock trials (or moots), in which students imagine and enact alternative versions of Shakespeare's trials. In addition to acquiring substantive (and cross-curricular) knowledge of Shakespeare and the law, the students develop important transferable skills of collaboration, negotiation, argument, presentation and performance.