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Rapaporte Seminars
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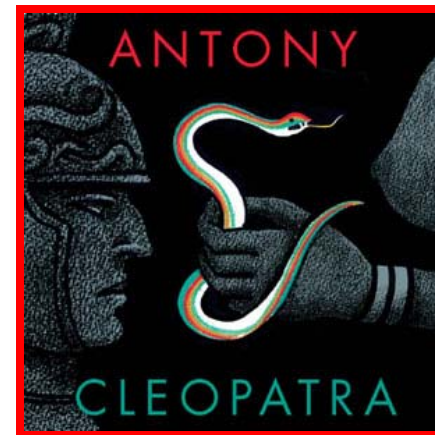
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Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Brandeis

∞ BOLLI ∞

Presents

ANTONY and CLEOPATRA



Faculty

William Flesch, Ph.D.
Professor of English
Brandeis University

January 4 - January 8
9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Hassenfeld

William Flesch, Ph.D.

William Flesch, Ph.D., is a professor of English at Brandeis, where he teaches courses on Shakespeare as well as the history of poetry. He is the author of “The Facts on File Companion to 19th Century English Poetry” (October, 2009), as well as of “Comeuppance: Costly Signaling, Altruistic Punishment and Other Biological Components of Fiction” (2008). Among his many other publications are “Generosity and the Limits of Authority: Shakespeare, Herbert, Milton” (Cornell University Press, 1992), “Keats Reading Shakespeare,” “Quoting Poetry,” “Vicarious Experience in Shakespeare's Sonnet” and “Helen Vendler's The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets,” as well as articles for the Boston Globe Ideas section. He is the recipient of three teaching awards at Brandeis and Cornell and a National Endowment of the Humanities Fellowship. “Billy” has led four previous Rapaport Seminars: Brandeis at BOLLI on King Lear, Hamlet, The Merchant of Venice and The Winter’s Tale to rave reviews.

Course Description

Tragedy in Shakespeare is usually a lonely business. The tragic hero is isolated from everything that matters to him or her and is confronted by the emptiness of the universe. But Shakespeare kept experimenting with tragedies in which the main figures are not all alone, but choose each other rather than making peace with the public world. The two greatest of these experiments are *Macbeth* and *Antony and Cleopatra* (the second written right after the first). Antony and Cleopatra presents a deep and powerful challenge to its audience: do they understand each other and rightly choose each other over all the world? Or is their relationship based on manipulation and misunderstanding? Or is there a way in which these are the same thing? Can their love be anything but tragic? Is tragedy the condition for their love? *Antony and Cleopatra* is Shakespeare's culminating meditation on love and friendship, on public and private experience. It asks the question what is to be valued in life, why, and perhaps most importantly, *how*? We'll go through the play one act per day, considering two of Shakespeare's greatest characters, and thinking also about the way they considered each other.