

Co-leaders:

Marianne Montgomery
East Carolina University
montgomerym@ecu.edu

Gitanjali Shahani
San Francisco State University
gshahani@sfsu.edu

Respondents:

Kim Hall
Barnard College
khal@barnard.edu

Virginia Mason Vaughan
Clark University
vvaughan@clarku.edu

Workshop description:

This pedagogically-oriented workshop builds on the three 2013 SAA panels on race in the early modern period. The questions generated by these panels (both during the sessions and on social media) seem especially relevant in the wake of last year's events in Ferguson, the #blacklivesmatter movements across the country, and religious and ethnic conflicts globally. Our workshop offers participants the opportunity to revisit these questions and conversations in order to provide new perspectives on issues related to teaching race and Shakespeare in the 21st century classroom.

Critical work in the past decade on global traffic, colonial encounters, geohumoralism, and intersecting categories of difference has deepened our understanding of the complexity of racialized discourses in the early modern period, but how can we best teach this complexity? How might we complicate students' responses to black lives in the Shakespearean text, whether Othello or Cleopatra or Morocco or the nameless Ethiopes in many a speech? What pedagogical strategies might we use to help students so that they can both understand the past more deeply and recognize privilege, injustice, inequality, and racism in the present? What is gained by historicizing race, and what historical contexts, archival materials, and critical readings are most useful in teaching? What presentist approaches might be helpful? How might Shakespeare speak to contemporary debates about racial violence, immigration, surveillance, and justice?

We invite participants to offer local and global perspectives from within and outside the U.S. Contributions might consider how the teaching of Shakespeare and race is inflected both regionally and nationally. For example, they may take up regional differences within the U.S. (urban/rural, North/South). They may examine Shakespeare in the context of histories of slavery, segregation, and colonialism in different historical and geographical contexts.

Participants will share short essays, lesson plans, digital modules, lecture outlines, assignments, or other pedagogical materials in advance of the workshop. Our objective will be to develop teaching strategies that help students become better readers of Shakespearean texts and the global political contexts in which they circulate.

Participants and Project Abstracts:

Jonathan Burton

Whittier College

jburton@whittier.edu

I plan to share with the group a sequence of assignments that I created that allow students to use digital tools to address questions of race in Shakespeare and to encourage deeper, more nuanced close readings of texts (both plays and film). These twin objectives arose from of my experience of reading student papers that came up short in their analyses of race in early modern literature in two significant ways. First, my students' understanding of race tends to draw from a specifically American formulation of racism that is not merely anachronistic for the study of Shakespeare but is also insufficient to the nexus of racial ideologies active in contemporary American life. Second, where I want my students to recognize drama as a genre that is inherently kinetic, they are inclined to focus on a single moment and thereby petrify a play into a static icon of racial practice that overlooks the flexible morphologies of racism. My "Digital Titus" project employed live-tweeting and social annotation to deepen student responses to race and agitate conclusions that fail to account for the resilience of racial structures and vocabularies whose objective basis is regularly troubled in early modern drama. The assignment was only a partial success and I want to use our workshop as an opportunity to assess what worked and what did not. Therefore I plan to submit a brief reflection on the assignment as well as instructions and prompts for the live tweeting, social annotation and essay components.

Brinda Charry

Keene State College

bcharry@keene.edu

This brief reflective essay will explore the complexities of a presentist approach in the teaching of Race in the Renaissance. Presentism, broadly defined, involves the application of concepts and experiences of the present to studying and teaching the past. On the one hand it can be argued that presentism lacks in scholarly and pedagogical rigor. After all an approach that uses materials, theories, and knowledges not available to Renaissance writers and audiences is, one can say, somewhat dubious at best and misguided and distorting at the worst. On the other hand every teacher knows that present-day experiences and concerns are what make texts "relatable" to students. It is the bait teachers use to draw our students into exploring a past that is both long-gone and alien. This becomes especially true in the teaching of race. Is it possible to conceive of past experiences of racial difference except through present-day lenses? Is it even right (i.e. ethical) to do so? I hope to examine the challenges faced by teachers who try to balance the study of past experiences and modern concerns, who want both rigor and relatability.

Vanessa Corredera

Andrews University

correder@andrews.edu

During the Fall of 2015, I taught a graduate seminar on Race and Renaissance Drama. One of the aims of this course was to put early modern constructions of Otherness in conversation with current discussions/constructions of Otherness in order to pursue the following questions: How do we define Otherness? How do we define race?; Would you consideration constructions of otherness in Renaissance drama to be matters of race?; Do we agree that constructions of Otherness in the Renaissance were, in fact, fluid? If so, would we characterize constructions of Otherness today as

fluid, or not? How significant is religion to this fluidity? Does religion play as significant a factor in our constructions of Otherness today?; What do we gain by placing early modern texts in conversation with contemporary discussions of race? What are the limits of this applicability?; How does whiteness figure in the construction of the English “self” and “Other”? How do these constructions echo or differ from current constructions of the racial “self” and “Other” both in the U.S. and internationally? Andrews University is in an unusual position in that we have one of the most diverse student bodies in the U.S., and yet students feel that issues of diversity are not addressed significantly enough on campus. Though I aimed to provide appropriate knowledge about Renaissance history, Renaissance drama, and Renaissance race, I also strived to craft a course that would not only engage with these issues, but also facilitate smarter, more informed student conversations about the racial construction of self and Other. By attending this workshop, I seek to leave with ideas and tools that can make this course a bit more innovative or edgy, as in many ways it was quite traditional. I also look forward to conversations about what’s next in terms of ideas, approaches, or texts in the Renaissance Race classroom.

Evelyn Gajowski
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
shakespeare@unlv.nevada.edu

Why is our class viewing a film of *Othello* featuring a white actor as Othello? Why aren’t we viewing a film with a black actor?

--undergraduate student, Introduction to Shakespeare, UC Santa Cruz, 1990

UNLV ranked 2nd most diverse campus in the nation: UNLV jumps from 6th to 2nd place on *U.S. News & World Report’s* annual list for ‘best ethnic diversity,’ maintaining a spot in the top 10 for the 5th consecutive year.

--UNLV Newscenter, 9 Sept. 2015

Drawing on intersections of pedagogy and performance, on the one hand, and race and gender, on the other, I plan to write and share a brief semi-academic, semi-reflective hybrid piece on my own ever-evolving pedagogical practices. I also plan to share syllabi and other course materials from several graduate seminars and undergraduate courses that I regularly teach: Studies in Shakespeare (ENG 725); Shakespeare: Tragedies (ENG 434A); Shakespeare: Comedies (ENG 434B); and Gender and Renaissance Literature (ENG 441B). And I very much look forward to the opportunity to learn from fellow seminar participants regarding their pedagogical philosophies, strategies, and projects.

The two above quotations serve as pedagogical touchstones in my teaching career as a feminist, presentist Shakespearean, particularly given the transformation of student racial and ethnic demographics in my classrooms in recent years. I recall that the first quotation, asked of me in a lecture hall full of undergraduates a quarter of a century ago, struck me like a slap in the face. The student was referring to Jonathan Miller’s BBC version of *Othello* starring Anthony Hopkins. I don’t recall how I responded to the student’s question. I may have said something such as “because there aren’t any films with black actors.” Or, I may have stood there in slack-jawed silence. The second quotation, from our contemporary moment, strikes me as a statistical journalistic confirmation of years of intuitive pedagogical practices that (I discovered long ago) have happened to dovetail with those that Gerald Graff has famously theorized and articulated.

When considering intersections of gender and race in performance and in the classroom, the following questions arise: “Does one (have to) occur at the expense of the other?” “If so, why?” For example, when Oliver Parker’s cinematic text of *Othello* became available in the mid-1990s, I enthusiastically adopted it for use in several courses. With Laurence Fishburne embodying Othello,

the film initially seemed to serve as a decent response to the concerns my UC Santa Cruz student had articulated a few years earlier. Yet the cinematic text also deletes a high number of Desdemona's and Emilia's lines, including the latter's big speech attacking the double standard in the willow-song scene (4.3), diminishing the significance of their characters, as students regularly point out when they comparatively analyze it and Shakespeare's dramatic text. Why is this the case?

Too, when I experienced Iqbal Khan's RSC production of *Othello* in Stratford-upon-Avon, England, last summer, I was, of course, struck by Lucian Msamati's embodiment of Iago. I was particularly looking forward to this production, having been privy to backstage gossip that Hugh Quarshie had refused to accept the role of Othello unless a person of color was cast as Iago. The resulting casting choices provided the benefit of avoiding the spectre of a white man manipulating a black man on stage for five acts. And Joanna Vanderham played a strong Desdemona who was a subject, not an object. Yet the curtain call was unsettling. In an uncanny visual echo of their exchange of vows at the conclusion of 3.3, Quarshie's Othello and Msamati's Iago held hands, front and center, and took bows together. Vanderham's Desdemona was relegated to the second or third row of actors – ghettoized with Ayesha Dharker's Emilia and Scarlett Brookes's Bianca. As a feminist Shakespearean who has been preoccupied with gender issues in this tragedy, this simple decision struck me as a theoretically and ideologically regressive gesture, a throwback to a bygone (pre-feminist) era when critics debated the question of which character was responsible for the tragedy – Othello or Iago – and ignored the significance of female characters, the issue of patriarchal marriage, the power of misogynistic discourse and concepts of military honor that feminist critics have labored to problematize since the 1970s and 1980s.

Both Parker's cinematic text and Khan's RSC production raise the following questions: "Why does a production of *Othello* that emphasizes race issues occur at the expense of gender issues?" "Does this have to be the case?" "Are race and gender a zero-sum game?" I've discussed these questions with a couple of Shakespeare colleagues involved in the RSC production in different ways (Jyotsna Singh and Celia Daileader) but have by no means resolved them.

Douglas E. Green
Augsburg College
green@augsborg.edu

I've been teaching the general Shakespeare survey for many years, during which my classes have changed with the population of our inner-city campus, situated in one of the largest Somali communities in the country. So I'd like to reflect on how my encounters with students in the Shakespeare classroom have been shaping the way that I think about and study and perform Shakespeare with them. Because I'm something of a presentist, I'm curious about helping students see how performance and the history of performance affects our sense of what we mean by Shakespeare. In contrast to the original mode of production, female and black actors have shaped our sense of the meaning of plays like *Othello* over several centuries. Since performing a scene from one of the plays (usually a late romance) is a major assignment, I'd like students to think about how their own backgrounds and experiences, dress and customs, intersect and transform the play and scene they work with. Is this a worthy aim? And if so, how can the experience be enhanced? I've looked at some of these issues from an institutional perspective in article for Andrew Hartley's recent collection *Shakespeare on the University Stage* and to some degree in Twin Cities productions during 2014-15 in a forthcoming article for *Shakespeare Bulletin*. In some ways, I've been moving slowly from the larger settings in which I work (city and campus) to the classroom itself. I'm grateful for the opportunity to learn from and share with others.

Benjamin Hilb
University of South Florida
benjamin.hilb@gmail.com

My materials include a course syllabus, a PowerPoint, and a short essay. The syllabus is for a seminar on “Shakespeare’s Others,” which explores the dynamic construction and function of otherness in several of Shakespeare’s plays with particular attention to race, gender, and sexuality. The PowerPoint, titled “Othello, Language, and Race,” introduces students to early modern racial dynamics in Othello via historical context and key quotations. The essay, “Shakespeare, Race, Pedagogy: Thoughts and Feelings,” discusses the affective dimension of teaching Shakespeare and race, asking how we might cope with intensities of feeling on hotly debated, politically sensitive topics; and suggesting what we might glean from the pedagogical dynamics instated by and between Caliban, Miranda, and Prospero.

Sujata Iyengar
University of Georgia
iyengar@uga.edu

I would like to talk about and share materials from my current project teaching Shakespeare in a service-learning class that takes English and Education undergraduates and graduate students from the University of Georgia into a local public middle school to work with 8th graders and their teachers on their “Shakespeare” unit (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*); workshop a syllabus I’m developing for upper-division undergraduates and graduates on Shakespeare through Multicultural American Literature; and brainstorm techniques for talking about race and other sensitive topics in our current era of Campus Carry legislation. In particular I would like to discuss techniques for online teaching of multicultural materials, since teaching online (however little some of us might like the prospect) does seem to offer some prospect of diversifying our student bodies.

Mira A. Kafantaris
Ohio State University
kafantaris.6@osu.edu

The materials I plan to submit to the workshop stem from one of the courses I teach at The Ohio State University, a First-Year Composition course entitled “Interracial Romance from Shakespeare to Spike Lee.” I plan to present a short reflective essay on how this course introduces and examines the constructions of racial thought from the early modern period to the present day to a group of 18-year-olds from various cultural backgrounds. I will dwell on various themes and concepts such as white womanhood, fear of miscegenation, black sexuality, the white savior complex, police brutality, and immigration that reverberate in early modern texts such as *Othello* and speak powerfully to modern concerns. I will outline the pedagogical rewards as well as challenges of opening up the conversation about race and diversity within the framework of a composition course. I’ll share with the group a course syllabus, a sampling of class activities and assigned readings, and several outlines of lesson plans.

Nedda Mehdizadeh
University of California, Los Angeles
nmehdiz@ucla.edu

Much of my scholarship and pedagogy (and I imagine this is true for most of us) centers on issues of race and ethnicity. My goal in the classroom is to facilitate lively discussions between students that not only bring awareness to some of the guiding questions about what we mean by "race" and "ethnicity" in the first place but also encourage them to consider their own place within a larger discussion about such topics. Recently UCLA has voted to implement an ethnic diversity requirement for undergraduates, and this new curricular agenda has me thinking more about the language used by institutions to "promote" diversity and what happens when it is (or fails to be) put into practice. For this workshop, I would like to think through questions about the limitations of this kind of language (e.g. "now that we have a diversity initiative, we've done enough, right?"), how to inspire our students to be aware of and to be active in critical discussions about race, ethnicity, diversity, travel, encounter, and the like so that such a requirement becomes only a stepping stone toward deeper critical inquiry, and how we educators might most effectively guide them toward relevant, suggestive, thought-provoking materials in order to ignite this kind of interest.

This winter, I will be designing and teaching a new course in Writing Programs that uses literature to teach writing. The concept of my class is to bring a variety of voices into a dynamic discussion about encounter, travel, identity, and of course race and ethnicity. For example, the unit of the course that is most relevant to our workshop is one that will pair Shakespeare's *Othello* with Djanet Sears' *Harlem Duet*. My hope is that by including the voice of a playwright who is traditionally seen as a minority figure (a woman of color), the conversation about race in *Othello* will continue to grow and develop. What happens when one adapts a work of literature like *Othello*? And in the way Sears does, specifically? How does Sears' perspective, the play's new setting, the consideration of Othello's life before Desdemona, etc affect our understanding of the tragic hero? Of race? Of how students think about these topics? Of an educator's approach to teaching such matters? What I plan to contribute in February is a reflection of my experience teaching this unit, as well as to include notes, lesson plans, or assignments I thought particularly successful (or unsuccessful!).

Sara Morrison
William Jewell College
morrison@william.jewell.edu

The materials I plan to submit to the workshop are drawn primarily from a course that I teach in William Jewell College's general education program, Critical Thought and Inquiry (CTI), entitled Religions in Early Modern Drama. Since the course is part of the CTI curriculum and not housed in my home department (English), the students who enroll in the course represent a broad range of majors. All courses in the CTI program interrogate questions of ontology, epistemology, and ethics; these guiding questions integrate seamlessly into considerations of early modern dramatic representations of race and ethnicity. The course syllabus currently includes Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*; Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, *The Jew of Malta*, and *Tamburlaine, Part 1*; Robert Greene, *Selimus, Emperor of the Turks*; Robert Daborne, *A Christian Turned Turk*; and, Philip Massinger, *The Renegado*. In an effort to vary the readings, I would like to incorporate Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* and perhaps other plays into the course. These primary texts and the various secondary texts that accompany them encourage students to engage in questions about the materiality of bodies and identity, religious conversion, the intersectionality of identity, and the significant cultural implications of dramatic representation. The materials I plan to submit include such things as the course syllabus, a sampling of assignments, including some that are road-tested

and others that are in the planning stage, and a brief reflection essay on the course. I look forward to sharing ideas with workshop participants about strategies for engaging students in discussions about early modern discourses of race and shaping those discussions with both archival resources and twenty-first century digital technologies.

Jennifer Park
UNC Chapel Hill
jennifer.m.park@gmail.com

I plan to share with the workshop group a teaching module for a course I am developing on Food, Recipes, Race, and Shakespeare. Materials I hope to contribute are a teaching plan or overview and some ideas for readings and activities. This module aims to bring together a number of primary and secondary sources and to put them in dialogue, to sketch out for students a network of early modern ideas about bodies and difference—more specifically to introduce students to the visceral implications of racial fluidity, porous bodies, foreign “dangerous” foods in Shakespeare’s England and to engage them in the process of constructing a set of productive questions to apply to the works of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. This particular module will focus on Shakespeare’s Cleopatra; readings and activities will engage students in historical and archival research and its racial implications for contemporary and future performances/productions.

Jessica Anne Walker
Alabama A&M University
jessawalk@gmail.com

As a white professor at an open-admissions HBCU (historically black college/university), exploring race in the Shakespeare classroom comes with unique challenges and rewards. My students are familiar with the effects of racism and eager to discuss issues of race in literature; however, because many of them are first-generation college students from academically weak backgrounds, they often lack familiarity with many cultural contexts related to race in early modern Europe. Some of the issues that I hope to explore through our workshop include: similarities/differences between conceptions of race and racism in early modern Europe vs. contemporary America; how to help students shift/expand their understanding of what these concepts mean; familiarizing academically underprepared students with important contexts that help them understand early modern race issues--knowledge about history, culture, religion, etc.; how African-American students’ experiences help them connect to issues in Shakespeare’s texts that are not necessarily race-related in their original context-- self-fashioning, family allegiances, justice/revenge; making connections between Shakespearean texts and contemporary race issues such as the #BlackLivesMatter movement; continually working on my approach as an instructor as I strive to address sensitive issues in a helpful, compassionate manner. Materials may include: handouts/lecture material to help familiarize students with cultural contexts when first encountering a text; short writing assignments (pre-discussion reading questions, post-reading responses); group work/group projects (Shakespeare, race, and justice; Shakespeare on film); suggestions for paper topics; reflective essay on my experiences, methods, etc.

Cordelia Zukerman
University of Michigan
czukerma@umich.edu

As an early career postdoc, I have not yet taught *Othello*. I therefore created lesson plans for teaching *Othello* to a 300- or 400-level discussion class over the course of three class periods. The materials I

ask students to engage with, in addition to Shakespeare's text, include Kim Hall's "Introduction" from *Things of Darkness*; a small section of Emily Bartels' *Speaking of the Moor*; materials from the Bedford/St. Martin's edition of *Othello: Texts and Contexts* (ed. Kim Hall); and scenes from the Royal Shakespeare Company's 2015 production of *Othello* (dir. Iqbal Khan), which had a multicultural cast, including a black Iago. Discussion questions and class activities ask students to use close textual analysis and performance analysis to explore constructions of race in Shakespeare's day and our own. As I designed the lesson plans, I realized that an investigation of race in the play should also involve delving into questions of gender, sexuality, disability, and religion, since all of these issues are deeply intertwined in the play. Analyzing these issues in relation to each other should help students develop a fuller understanding of the play's complexities as well as a nuanced approach to questions of identity and motivation.