

**2018 SAA Seminar: First-Generation Shakespeare 1**  
**Leader: Rebecca Olson ([rebecca.olson@oregonstate.edu](mailto:rebecca.olson@oregonstate.edu))**

**Dean Clement**  
[wdclement@gmail.com](mailto:wdclement@gmail.com)

**L(E)arned Empowerment:  
Memorizing Shakespeare for First Generation Students**

This paper explores the practice of memorization and recitation as an approach for teaching Shakespeare to first generation students. Drawing on interviews and questionnaire responses from first generation students in my previous Shakespeare courses, I hit upon the idea of bringing back the somewhat outdated practice of memorization to solve the largest problems facing FG Shakespeare students: intimidation and incomprehension. The paper will further explain how I reached my initial hypothesis, and then relate the outcomes of my classroom experiment, including student grades and reactions to the assignment.

**Kerry Cooke**  
[kcooke@marybaldwin.edu](mailto:kcooke@marybaldwin.edu)

**Exploding the Canon:  
Shakespeare, Representation, and First Generation College Students**

In the essay “Exploding the Canon: Shakespeare, Representation, and First Generation College Students,” I discuss Shakespeare in relation to the (Western) dramatic canon. More specifically, I consider the playwright's traditional place in scholastic curricula as it relates to - and often contrasts with - a diverse (often underprivileged) student body. I argue that by recognizing this disjunction explicitly students are given license and tools to find moments and modes of representation in Shakespeare. With this argument in mind, I offer an exercise designed to (one) prompt class discussion about canonicity, and (two) encourage a conversation about how Shakespeare can represent a diverse constituent.

**Loreen Giese**  
[giese@ohio.edu](mailto:giese@ohio.edu)

**Teaching First-Generation Shakespeareans:  
Lessons from the Classroom**

This paper focuses on how my experiences of translating an on-campus, upper-division Shakespeare class to an online one helped me see how to support more effectively undergraduates in both environments. I started teaching on-campus Shakespeare classes at Ohio University in 1991 and have been offering online Shakespeare classes since 1999 when Ohio University first offered faculty the opportunity to do so. When I began translating the on-campus Shakespeare class to an online one 18 years ago, I was concerned that students who were intimidated already by Shakespeare's iconic status would be more so in an online class since they are working individually and almost

**2018 SAA Seminar: First-Generation Shakespeare 2**  
**Leader: Rebecca Olson ([rebecca.olson@oregonstate.edu](mailto:rebecca.olson@oregonstate.edu))**

always at different times of the day, thereby lacking an immediate academic community with its biweekly meetings that contain spontaneous and free-flowing discussions. This paper first explains the resources and kinds of assignments I used in the online class to encourage and require students to practice close reading and engage with the Shakespeare plays and each other. It then discusses how these online course elements affected my pedagogical practices with the same on-campus class.

Kyle Grady  
[kcgrady@umich.edu](mailto:kcgrady@umich.edu)

This paper considers the importance of valuing classroom contributions by students of color on issues of early modern race. It discusses how students of color – particularly those that identify as first generation – face stereotype threat in the Shakespeare classroom. For some such students, issues of race offer an important point of access to material that can otherwise feel exclusionary. Moreover, those students often hold valuable insights that might otherwise not arise in classroom discussion. Stereotype threat can be compounded in particularly ostracizing ways when such students are implicitly or explicitly made to feel that their views on race are not suited to discussions about early modern England.

Perry Guevara  
[perry.guevara@dominican.edu](mailto:perry.guevara@dominican.edu)

**Caring for Fictive Kin: Shakespeare, Pedagogy, and Migratory Affect**

In this essay, I contemplate what it means to teach Shakespeare to first-generation college students as a first-generation American. Affect theory, specifically the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Carolyn Dinshaw, as well as critical pedagogy, following Paolo Freire and Augusto Boal, sustain this project as an intellectual exercise, but in many ways, “Caring for Fictive Kin” is informed by my lived experience as a queer, biracial son of an immigrant family relocated to the Southeastern United States, a region of the country which, in many ways, has become the proving grounds for the dignity of racial, ethnic, and sexual minorities. The essay begins with an act of remembrance, making “partial touches,” to borrow Dinshaw’s metaphor for queer, transhistorical affect, with Shakespeare’s work as a young, inexperienced reader. I then discuss developing a deep sense of kinship with his stunningly singular outcasts: immigrants, African moors, interracial couples, disobedient women, clowns and fools. Locating in Shakespeare’s plays characters who transgress cultural norms not only provided access to what at first seemed impenetrable literature but also enabled a transnational as well as transhistorical sense of community (pre- and postmodern in Dinshaw’s framework) such that a sexually confused brown boy could “identify” with Desdemona, a white woman of the Venetian noblesse. The essay then turns to pedagogy and, following Sedgwick, reparative strategies of reading that make such touches, however partial, possible for first-generation students, thereby demystifying paranoid approaches to literature and cultivating an ethos of care in the textual encounter. To conclude, I request feedback on

**2018 SAA Seminar: First-Generation Shakespeare 3**  
**Leader: Rebecca Olson ([rebecca.olson@oregonstate.edu](mailto:rebecca.olson@oregonstate.edu))**

an ongoing project that integrates community engagement and place-based learning as a strategy for teaching Shakespeare to a diverse group of students, a quarter of which qualify as first generation.

**Erin Kelly**  
[ekkelly@csuchico.edu](mailto:ekkelly@csuchico.edu)

**Cultural Ownership through Performance: Dramatic Staging and Student-Led Discussion in the Shakespeare Classroom**

As I explained in my email to the seminar in November, I teach a 400-level Shakespeare class every semester at California State University, Chico that is required for just about every major in my department. A regular assignment in this class is an in-class performance of a scene of the student group's choice, followed by a student-led discussion. Students also write a reflection about their individual and group experience. My paper will present an annotated version of my assignment sheet, accompanied by my analysis of a selection of elements of specific in-class performances and student-led discussions as well as portions of my students' written reflections alongside recent work in performance studies.

**Jeanne McCarthy**  
[jmccarth@ggc.edu](mailto:jmccarth@ggc.edu)

**Making the Case for Humanist Pedagogy in a Utilitarian Age**

Performance-oriented assignments that integrate criticism and close-reading techniques draw upon methods used by Renaissance humanist pedagogues working with laborers' children. After all, as Richard Helgerson once argued, many students hold social positions "at once strikingly like" early moderns and which are also "the distant product" of that era. In a final assignment in my Shakespeare course, students perform scenes from plays illustrating some critical cruxes they have read about throughout the semester. They are cast in roles of differing social status and asked to memorize about 150 lines. This approach offers some resistance to the current privileging of career-oriented instruction, "relevance," or "practical research," since such assignments offer less tangible benefits, such as expanding critical thinking, problem-solving, interpretive, and collaborative skills, and awakening the imagination, instilling empathy, liberating one from the confines of one's self, and allowing deeper insights into "self-fashioning," mastery, and what Renaissance pedagogues called "audacity."

**2018 SAA Seminar: First-Generation Shakespeare 4**  
**Leader: Rebecca Olson ([rebecca.olson@oregonstate.edu](mailto:rebecca.olson@oregonstate.edu))**

**Caroline McManus**  
[cmcmanu@calstatela.edu](mailto:cmcmanu@calstatela.edu)

**‘Remember First to Possess His Books’: A Collaborative Model for Reading Shakespeare with First-Generation Students**

“‘Remember First to Possess His Books’: A Collaborative Model for Reading Shakespeare with First-Generation Students” describes the critical close reading exercises I use in an English major “gateway” tutorial and a senior-level Shakespeare class at California State University, Los Angeles. Combining poetic analysis and performance work with several high-impact practices (acknowledging affect’s role in classroom learning, linking contemporary American sociopolitics to Shakespeare’s plays, and inviting metacognitive reflection on *how* and *why* we are individually and collectively reading these texts) encourages first-generation students to lay claim to the post-secondary realm with increased confidence.

**John Mitchell**  
[jamitche@oaklandcc.edu](mailto:jamitche@oaklandcc.edu)

**Rude Mechanicals in the Forest of Arden:  
Community College Students and Shakespeare**

This paper is a small part of a larger project engaged in the ever-growing body of polemic emerging from the so-called crisis in the humanities and the political and economic (impossible to separate them these days) attacks on the very notion of college education for all. The larger project attempts to answer two broad questions: “Why should there be a place for Shakespeare at the two-year college?” (and by implication, for all arts and humanities) and then, “What are the best practices, challenges, and joys associated with this endeavor?” This paper asks a smaller question: “Who is the community college audience for Shakespeare?” Community college students inhabit a liminal space between high school and selective four-year institutions, which requires the judicious use of approaches usually associated with K-12 pedagogy in addition to traditional undergraduate classroom practices to help them navigate their singular challenges. I begin by establishing a practical taxonomy of the students who make up this audience, with attention to those needing more extensive attention. The methodology uses various placement scores, first day surveys, and mid-term individual conferences. Then I develop a tripartite approach to better establishing these students – helping them with the cultural and historical context of Shakespeare’s work, the challenges and joys of Shakespeare’s language, and seeing themselves as both audiences of his plays and “poor players” engaged in performative studies as well.

**2018 SAA Seminar: First-Generation Shakespeare 5**  
**Leader: Rebecca Olson ([rebecca.olson@oregonstate.edu](mailto:rebecca.olson@oregonstate.edu))**

**Cassie Miura**  
[cmerick@umich.edu](mailto:cmerick@umich.edu)

**“Teaching First-Gen Students:  
Bardolatry and the Shakespeare Survey”**

This paper argues that first-generation students bring a new perspective to the study of Shakespeare that instructors can use to foreground important questions of historical reception and canon formation within the Shakespeare Survey. By presenting “Shakespeare” as a cultural product whose value is ultimately determined by present-day readers and viewers, instructors affirm the questions and diverse experiences that first-generation students bring to class. While contemporary stage and screen adaptations of Shakespearean drama often foreground questions of race, gender, and class in productive ways, they still tend to affirm representations of Shakespeare as a universal genius. By contrast, assignments that invite students to pit their own critical estimations of Shakespeare’s plays against those of Milton, Coleridge, Shaw, or Tolstoy can enable students to locate their own perspectives and feelings of admiration or alienation within a historical narrative of Shakespeare’s continually changing legacy.

**Mardy Philippian**  
[philipmd@lewisu.edu](mailto:philipmd@lewisu.edu)

**First-Generation or ‘Upstart Crow’:  
Thinking about Life and Career through Shakespeare’s Biography**

In my essay, I consider how the trajectory of Shakespeare’s life offers a framework for discovering (and understanding) the role that rigorous attention to language might play in the formation of personal and professional goals, a potentially invaluable benefit that undergraduates usually need to be reminded is available to them. If in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, a lack of respect for language was equivalent to a lack of respect for authority, as Catherine Bates, for example, has argued, then perhaps in our own time a lack of respect for language represents a lack of respect for the power of language to shape our realities, be they political, religious, or philosophical. Understanding the relationship between words and ideas is key for first-generation college students if they are to find deep value and meaning in their work as learners and in their post-graduation labors.

**Stephanie Pietros**  
[stephanie.pietros@mountsaintvincent.edu](mailto:stephanie.pietros@mountsaintvincent.edu)

**A Case for Teaching Shakespeare’s Problem Plays to First-Generation Students**

Despite the whittling away of the traditional canon, Shakespeare remains, for better or worse, a cultural icon, albeit a source of frustration and consternation for many students. In my experience, students’ desire to study Shakespeare is to some extent an investment

**2018 SAA Seminar: First-Generation Shakespeare 6**  
**Leader: Rebecca Olson ([rebecca.olson@oregonstate.edu](mailto:rebecca.olson@oregonstate.edu))**

in cultural capital. As one of my students explained, “I think it’s pretty cool if someone asks me what I’m reading, and I reply ‘Shakespeare.’” While I hope my students appreciate Shakespeare, I want to encourage them to engage critically with the plays’ form and content. Although the designation “problem” play is somewhat problematic, in this paper I will explore the value of approaching Shakespeare through the lens of “problems,” especially for high-achieving, first-generation college students.

**Whitney Taylor**  
[whitney.taylor@northwestern.edu](mailto:whitney.taylor@northwestern.edu)

**The Pedagogical Possibilities of Editing Desire in a Digital Text**

In my course on Renaissance drama, "Staging Desire in Renaissance Comedy," the class reads early modern lyric poetry alongside Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis* and four of his comedies. The course’s enrollment has included English majors, theater students who have performed roles from Shakespeare’s works, and students reading Shakespeare for the first time or for the first time in college (and, certainly, some students fall into more than one of these categories). Given these varied levels of preparedness, my second version of the course replaced a literary analysis essay with a digital assignment asking students to edit a scene from one of our plays. In this paper, I will discuss the assignment and explore how students imagining themselves as editors placed them in a position of authority to deepen their engagement with and understanding of the plays. The openness of the assignment, which required students to choose one of our plays, identify a particular audience for their edition (e.g., high schoolers, college students, or a theater group), and write an introduction arguing for their editing choices, allowed students to approach the play in light of their particular strengths or interests, while also requiring them to practice close reading, writing, and research skills. I am especially interested in the possibilities and limits of how putting students in a position of authority, especially in relation to an intimidating author or body of work, might help reach students who come to the classroom with different levels of preparation or previous experience with Shakespeare.

**Catherine E. Thomas**  
[cthomas30@ggc.edu](mailto:cthomas30@ggc.edu)

**“’Tis within ourselves we are thus or thus”: Fostering Self-Efficacy and Growth Mindset in First-Generation Students Through Shakespeare Reading Groups**

While Shakespeare and his works continue to hold a popular reputation as “high culture” artifacts, only understood and appreciated by the highly educated, my project takes as a given that Shakespearean literature is fertile ground for first-generation students’ study early in their college experience. First-gen students, who statistically tend to be ethnically- and racially-diverse, may be underprepared academically and often face a myriad of financial and social challenges. These factors often leave them unsure about their place in higher education institutions (experiencing “imposter syndrome”) and

**2018 SAA Seminar: First-Generation Shakespeare 7**  
**Leader: Rebecca Olson (rebecca.olson@oregonstate.edu)**

wondering about college terms and processes (“the hidden curriculum”). Through this project outline and analysis, I argue that incorporating Shakespeare reading groups into early college experiences for first-gen students will support them in developing a growth mindset, cultivating self-efficacy, and integrating into the college community.