

October 15, 2017

Dear Colleagues,

We are delighted to welcome you to the SAA seminar on Shakespeare and Donne. The seminar filled quickly and is now fully subscribed. As we think you'll agree, it's a very exciting group. The seminar promises an extremely stimulating exchange of ideas. We'll look forward to greeting you all in person at the SAA meeting in Los Angeles in March 28-31.

This seminar will explore new ways of putting John Donne and William Shakespeare in conversation with one another and with us. Just to remind you, here's the official description of the seminar:

Although Shakespeare (1564-1616) and Donne (1572-1631) were almost immediate contemporaries, it is relatively uncommon for critics to situate them side-by-side. One was a man of the theater while the other was a poet and then an acclaimed preacher. This seminar aims to make sense of such a pairing in ways that move beyond the elusive evidence of intertextual connections. After all, Shakespeare and Donne shared cultural and poetic approaches to the same historical moment. They explore the meaning of theatricality in different genres and registers. They employ poetic forms and modes--satire, lyric, soliloquy, elegy--to disparate but complementary effects. They draw on such discourses as law, medicine, philosophy, and theology in divergent but resonant ways. And they reflect, if in varied ways, on pressing issues ranging from melancholy, plague, and self-slaughter to issues of devotion, eroticism, and impersonation. This seminar invites papers that will think through the relationship between Donne and Shakespeare with particular attention to language, rhetoric, and poetics. Participants might consider the following questions as prompts. How do Shakespeare and Donne treat such shared sources as Ovid, Petrarch, or Montaigne? How do they represent animals or the inhabitation of other forms of being? In what ways do they examine issues of sexuality like love, infidelity, jealousy, erotic desire, cross-dressing, or gender impersonation? What sort of epistemological frameworks do they bring to bear on their works? How do they invoke or represent the senses or affect? In what ways do their works use or play off of the materiality of the written word (the book, the letter, the pen)? How do they respond to the pressures of patronage or the life of the courtier?

The main work of our group will be the papers you produce, which will in turn elicit responses from other participants and official respondents. We envision short papers both because the mandated deadline is fairly early this year and because concision will allow us to read, assimilate, and consider in depth the approaches and ideas you offer. Please do keep scrupulously to the page limit (8-10 pages) so that we can consider everyone's ideas with the attention they deserve. This is important for the efficiency of the seminar. We have set up a Dropbox folder, and you should receive the invitation shortly. If you have any difficulties accessing this folder, please let one of us know. We'd

be happy to help.

In what remains of this letter, we will provide you with a few crucial deadlines and a description of how we envision running the seminar.

1. Please respond to this message by October 30 confirming your participation in the seminar and your contact information.
2. We will circulate the list of confirmed seminar members and email addresses to you in early November. By December 1, please respond to the group, offering a short description of yourself and your work on Shakespeare and Donne.
3. We ask that you send us a 300-word abstract of your 8-10 paper by December 11. The abstract will eventually be posted (and after the conference archived) on the SAA website. The abstracts will allow us to gauge the temperature of the group and get a sense of what you are thinking and wanting to discuss. We will then divide the larger group into sub-groups, and everyone will be responsible for generating written feedback and questions for 2-3 members of their sub-group.
4. By December 11 please also send us 3 items of bibliography you want to share with the group. We will compile a bibliography of recent interesting and influential texts that can enrich and extend our conversations.
5. You must submit your paper to us by Tuesday, January 30. This is a strict deadline that is enforced by the SAA trustees. You will not be able to participate in the seminar if we have not received your abstract and paper. This early deadline will ensure that respondents have time to read and respond to the papers and that we can all arrive in Los Angeles having read the papers and that we will all be prepared for what promises to be an enlightening exchange.

Thank you for enrolling in the seminar. We are thrilled to have you and look forward to reading your work and talking with you in Los Angeles.

All best wishes,

Elizabeth D. Harvey  
University of Toronto

Timothy Harrison  
University of Chicago