

Provincial Shakespeare

October 16, 2018

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the SAA seminar on “Provincial Shakespeare”! We look forward to working with you over the next few months and to meeting you in Washington, DC. As you will see from the attached list of participants, we are a strong and diverse group, and we anticipate an exciting and productive seminar. This letter provides a more detailed description of the seminar topic, essay guidelines, and deadlines leading up to the conference, which will take place from April 17-20, 2018.

Topic

This seminar reclaims the provincial as a theoretical framework. Resisting the tendency to see Shakespeare as cosmopolitan or global, we ask seminar participants to consider how the lens of provinciality might contribute to Shakespeare studies and, in turn, how the special case of Shakespeare might inform critical investigations of the provincial. We begin by asking: How do we define “provincial”? What are its benefits and limitations? Are the local, vernacular, and marginal constitutive of the provincial—or alternatives to it? Looking beyond definitions, our seminar invites transhistorical and transgeographical approaches to interrogate Shakespeare’s treatments of the provincial and the ways that Shakespeare is analyzed, taught, performed, and adapted. Claims to Shakespeare’s universality elide provincial aspects of the plays and transfigure them into signs of an abstracted (white, male, English-speaking) humanity. Our seminar aims to identify and examine provincial forms of knowledge in the plays, discovering what Shakespeare can tell us about the limits of cosmopolitanism and the power of the provincial.

Papers

We invite participants to craft **short, focused position papers of no more than 2000 words** that provoke new ways of thinking provincially about Shakespeare. Papers might explore the provincial in early modern drama and theater history, in and beyond England; as a vector for intersectional analysis of Shakespeare and race, gender, religion, sexuality, language, disability, and social class; in mobilizing Shakespeare for political action and social justice; or the pedagogy, performance, and adaptation of Shakespeare in provincial spaces, like prisons and rural schools. Ideally, papers will address one or more of the questions posed in the seminar description—“How do we define ‘provincial’? What are its benefits and limitations? Are the local, vernacular, and marginal constitutive of the provincial—or alternatives to it?”—in their explorations of specific topics related to the seminar’s broader theoretical framework.

Deadlines

When you receive this letter, please email Kate (Katherine.Gillen@tamusa.edu) and Marissa (marissag@unm.edu) right away to confirm that your contact information is

correct and that you are able to participate in the seminar.

By December 1, please send Kate and Marissa a **paper title** and an **abstract** of 250 words that explains your main points and how they relate to the larger themes of the seminar. In addition, please send Kate and Marissa **two sources** that you would like us to add to a collective bibliography that we will compile and make available to the group.

By February 1, please email your **position paper** (of no more than 2000 words) to Kate and Marissa. Submitting papers by this date will ensure that we meet the SAA's deadline. Kate and Marissa will then distribute papers via Google Docs or, at seminar members' request, via email so everyone has adequate time to read and engage with one another's work.

In early March, each seminar member will offer feedback on a small group of essays. We'll give more details about these responses and other possible online discussions as things progress.

Welcome once again! Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions. We look forward to our conversations and hope to hear from you soon.

All best wishes,

Kate and Marissa

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