

Workshop leaders (also writing papers)

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Learning Life Lessons from Shakespeare Online  
SAA Workshop Proposal  
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The artifact I propose to use in our workshop is the syllabus from a new general education course I have developed, entitled "University Foundations 100: Life Lessons from Shakespeare." The course is taught in two different formats, but I will focus on the fully online version of the course, which I teach in a 5-week summer session.

The course comes with many challenges: 1) it is a required general education class, which means that many students are already resistant to it; 2) students come into the class with a wide range of interest and experience levels: some have studied and performed Shakespeare for years, while others have no experience or negative experiences that have left them feeling like Shakespeare is too difficult for them to understand; 3) the 5-week condensed format means that students must devote significant time to the course and try to learn a lot in a short period; 4) the focus on life lessons might discourage close reading or analysis, especially if students only look for what seems relevant to them.

These challenges are balanced by some powerful benefits: 1) since it is an online course, it can leverage technology in a variety of different ways, especially for performance assignments; 2) students are generally only taking a maximum of one other class during the five weeks, so they can focus much of their time and attention on our class; 3) the focus

on distilling life lessons tends to ease some of the students' anxiety about Shakespeare and empower them to direct their energies toward personal application of ideas from the plays.

For the workshop, I will share the whole syllabus, but will focus my attention on the projects that are intended to help students gain confidence in their study of Shakespeare and learn how to apply the plays to their own lives, including the commonplace book assignment, creative rewritings of scenes, and life lessons presentation. I share these in the hope that they will be useful for others, but also to spark conversation about the costs and benefits of assignments like this, especially in relation to students' later interaction with Shakespeare.

The source I would like to share is *Shakespeare Saved My Life: Ten Years in Solitary With the Bard* by Laura Bates (Sourcebooks, 2013). This book provides a powerful example to my students of the effect that Shakespeare can have on people's lives and reinforces the life lessons approach we are taking in the class.

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Elizabeth Hutcheon

Huntingdon College

SAA 2022: Shakespeare in the General Education Classroom

Proposal: Teaching *Hamlet* in the Gen Ed Literature Survey

At Huntingdon College I teach ENGL 202: Survey of Literary Genres, which is part of the college's core curriculum. It is the only literature-focused course all students are required to take, so it ticks a lot of boxes. We use an anthology of readings, and in the drama section my colleagues often teach modern works like *Fences*, *Trifles*, and *A Raisin in the Sun*.

In 2019 I published an article in *Shakespeare and the 99%* that talked about teaching Shakespeare to working class students and tried to untangle some of our understandings of cultural capital and the role of teaching Shakespeare in the contemporary classroom. In that piece I argue that teaching Shakespeare allows students to see "the ways the mastery of language and rhetoric provides certain kinds of real social and political power while at the same time understanding that the wielding of this power comes at a cost, excluding other voices."

I realized that I should practice what I preach and start teaching *Hamlet* to the general education population. How hard can it be?

Super hard, it turns out. The artifact I'd like to share with the seminar is an assignment I've developed that asks students to film a scene from *Hamlet* and then write a close reading/reflective essay on the text and experience.

I had a series of goals when I came up with this assignment: I wanted students to engage with the Shakespearean text in an active way, I wanted to liven up the end of the semester, and I wanted students to have a chance to stretch the creative side of their brains.

ENGL 202 is a sophomore-level course that fulfills the literature component of the general education requirement. It is populated by non-majors and non-honor students (we have a different gen ed course for them), which at Huntingdon means a lot of sports studies, business, and criminal justice majors. Very few students complete the assigned readings, so during most class sessions I assign handouts that require students to go back through the texts, finding quotations and evidence for various claims.

Assigning *Hamlet* at the end of the semester is challenging for this group. The student population is pretty bifurcated; a few students will have read it already in high school (and rely on that prior knowledge), while many struggle with the difficulty of the language. We spend two weeks working through the text as a class before they start working on the movie project. Even this does not feel like enough time; I have to really focus class discussion and skill development on close reading specific scenes (I.i, Hamlet's response to the player's speech, Claudius' prayer, etc.) rather than providing a fully comprehensive coverage of the play. I show clips of the Branagh, Hawke, and Tennant productions to emphasize different interpretive possibilities.

I'm curious to see what you all think of the assignment; my sense is that it looks pretty good on paper, but I'm getting fairly mediocre results, both in terms of the quality of the films (which are not graded) and quality of the essays, even though students often say that making the movie really helped them understand the play better. I love the assignment, and, more importantly, students really *remember* the project and the experience, but I want to think about ways to revise the assignment to enable students to produce stronger work.

Sharon O'Dair, *Class, Critics, and Shakespeare: Bottom Lines on the Culture Wars* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000),

Elizabeth Hutcheon, "Literature and Cultural Capital in Early Modern and Contemporary Pedagogy" in *Shakespeare and the 99%: Literary Studies, the Profession, and the Production of Inequity*, ed. Sharon O'Dair and Timothy Francisco (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 101-19.

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Melissa Jones (Professor of English/WGST)  
Emilee Breitner (EMU Student)  
28 February 2022

#### Shakespeare/Yoga: Cognitive Stretches and Limber Reading Practices

"So do you have students do a Downward Dog while reading Shakespeare?" I was asked this question a couple of weeks ago at a university-wide teaching conference. It's a pretty common question by now. My answer: "yes and no."

Studies in the science of learning demonstrate the impact that stress has on students' ability to process and retain information (Vogel and Schwabe, 2016), and research in the neuroscience of emotions underscores the connections between cognitive and emotional functions (Immordino-Yang and Damasio, 2007). These studies additionally reveal that students under stress often experience college-level reading and writing expectations physiologically in the same way that humans experience trauma. Summing up this dynamic, Mays Imad notes, "when we experience trauma, whether consciously or subconsciously, the limbic system (emotions) hijacks the cerebral cortex (reason)." Learning, "which requires the expenditure of energy, becomes physiologically less of a priority to our brain."

In the wake of the global pandemic, it seems reasonable to anticipate that our students might be experiencing this sort of trauma-reaction even more frequently than normal, which might in part explain the increased expressions of frustration, levels of failure, and attrition we have been seeing amongst students and faculty alike. Numerous studies of have come out in recent years suggesting that yoga offers one method for addressing trauma because it begins from the assumption that the mind and the body are integrally connected, and to expand and refine the one, an individual would need at the same time to take into consideration the needs of the other. "Shakespeare/Yoga" is designed with this context and insight in mind, recognizing that many students who come to Shakespeare carry with them heightened levels of stress and trepidation at the prospect of tackling these plays, in part because of Shakespeare's overdetermined place in the U.S. educational system and in part because the language itself is alienating to a modern reader. Sure, the words are all familiar, but the nuances of early modern diction, syntax, and grammar make the meaning unfamiliar.

The design of my current section of LITR 314W: "Development of British Literature" (Winter, 2022) highlights ways that contemporary discourses of "yoga" overlap with historical developments in British literature and the canon of Western philosophy. Therefore first thing I explain to skeptics is that the modern word "yoga" derives from the Sanskrit root "*yuj*," "to join" and/or "to unite," and it implies harmony through the conjoining of mind and body in movement, and in stillness. "Yoga/Shakespeare" leans into this spirit, reaching toward the poetic ideal of the artful paradox by yoking together seemingly unlike things to create a pleasing dissonance that activates the senses as it feels towards new meaning. A deep, not unpleasing stretch might ask students to set their own meditations on the movements of their Shakespeare minds and yoga bodies alongside John Donne's well-known metaphysical fluctuations, "Batter my heart, three person'd God, for you/ As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;/ That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend/ Your force to break,

blow, burn, and make me new.”

“When I started trying to do yoga, I stopped worrying about Shakespeare because the yoga seemed more strange,” my student Emilee explained to faculty colleagues at the conference that I mention above. At the end of the day, “Shakespeare/Yoga,” explores what happens when we integrate select practices from the broad realm of movement and mindfulness studies known as “yoga” into college-level Shakespeare curriculum, beginning with the assumption that teaching today's students to read Shakespeare with mastery involves first teaching them to let go of the anxiety-producing belief that in order to have meaning language must operate in a straightforward, narrative, and transparent way. For, as those of us who reach early modern literature have always known, in Shakespeare's time, the best literature was intended to stretch the limits of the imagination by engaging the body, mind, and the senses simultaneously. Poetic meter dictated the reader's inhalations and exhalations; metaphor tricked a body's sense of perspective by yoking together objects in surprising ways; and word-sounds lulled the ear into feelings that exceeded reason.

So, in answer to the question about whether we read Shakespeare in Downward Dog, the answer continues to be (or not to be): yes and no.

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Jesus Montaña

General Education Shakespeare Artifact Proposal

Two recent developments propel my project: 1, my institution is currently revising the General Education program, thus adding the possibility that classes in which the past and the present merge become integral for moving forward in more just and equitable ways, and 2, low enrollment in Humanities courses and the state of Michigan “moving” literature classes taught in English to the Ed Dept where these courses will be pedagogical in focus. This means that less and less students will find training in literary studies, or, if Shakespeare and literary adaptations/appropriations can be repurposed in General Ed, that more and more students will be able learn how literature is made of literature. My hope is for the latter.

In spring 2021, I taught a Global Shakespeares course that invited students to study Shakespeare alongside diverse YA novels (*If You Come Softly*, *Long Way Down*, *Before We Were Free*, and *The Fault in Our Stars*). My strategy was for the students to interrogate Shakespearean plays (*Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, and *Julius Caesar*) that they (likely) would have studied in high school. In this way, students would be asked to look back at their formative years to assess how far they had come (as readers and as people), which I hoped would launch them as they moved forward. The class drew a diverse audience and represented several majors. The class was “sold” primarily to the Ed Dept as a way of readying their students for their careers. Several future teachers took the course. To a great extent, it was successful. By looking at works they already knew (and by using *myShakespeare*), students dove deeper into Shakespeare. The novels, in particular, drove conversations about current DEI topics and issues.

My proposal for this seminar is to retool this course from an upper division, discipline specific course, to one for first- and second-year students in our Gen Ed program. I foresee many opportunities for fostering DEI dialogues, including spaces in which students can engage with anti-racist critical concepts and pedagogy. At the same time, I also feel that several areas were missing. Ecology and justice, most notably, need attention. This is to say that while colonialism impacted race and ethnicity, oppressions of people go hand in hand with environmental devastation, in this case brought about by pernicious beliefs revolving around wealth accumulation and resource extraction, or settler colonialism mentalities. What I propose, by examining *A Midsummer Night's Dream* alongside Anne-Marie McLemore's short story, “King of the Fairies”, in which the “Indian boy” is a girl stolen from her Aztec world, is a way for students to engage with Early Modern ecological ideas alongside modern notions of humans and their environments. My goal is for students to understand how relationships with nature involve relationships between people. Put another way, I believe that from such dialogues that involve race formation and ecological understandings can emerge alternative and better epistemologies of ecology and justice.

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Sara Morrison

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SAA 2022: Shakespeare in the General Education Classroom

Proposal: Reconstructing and Scaffolding Assignments in Shakespeare and Film (working title)

At William Jewell College, I teach between two and three courses per year in our Critical Thought and Inquiry (CTI) program, which is our general education curriculum. The CTI program has three levels, with Level II comprised of interdisciplinary courses in four areas: Culture and Traditions, Power and Justice, Science and Technology, and Sacred and Secular.

Students are exempt from the area that is most closely associated with their major, so English majors are exempt from Culture and Traditions. This means that students who take Shakespeare and Film in Culture and Traditions are students from across the curriculum and typically outside the major. (Students may take courses in the area from which they are exempt as electives, so it's not uncommon for there to be English majors in my Shakespeare and Film course, though the majority are from other majors.) The concluding assignment in this course is a group project that asks students to create an original adaptation of one of the plays assigned for the course. Despite some students' initial fears about engaging in a creative project, student feedback and reflections on this assignment are typically positive, revealing their interest in realizing their intellectual and creative potential around such an endeavor. Some groups approach the plays straightforwardly, creating what might be called "faithful" adaptations, and others rework them, focusing on social justice matters and contemporary concerns through such media as TikTok vignettes, text messages that narrate silent films, or podcasts with video and sound streaming simultaneously. And, inevitably, some films are more successful than others.

These final projects are preceded by a variety of other kinds of assignments, including the analytic essay. My goals for this workshop are to rework the assignments leading toward the final adaptation project in order to scaffold that project, building on previous assignments. (This might also lead to reconstructing that final project as well.) This will involve not only reworking the nature or focus of the earlier assignments but also to revisit student learning objectives and think beyond the traditional essay. This involves not only the value of the humanities for engaging students in vital social justice matters, increasing their understanding of the function of art in expressing, resisting, reimagining culture and its ideologies, appreciating the relationship of history to present, among others, but also the ways in which they might think cross-disciplinarily, considering what they're learning in connection with their major course of study. As an example of this, last term, I taught a course on revenge and justice in CTI, Level II, in which we read a variety of texts and films, including *Othello* and Laura Blumenfeld's nonfiction *Revenge: A Story of Hope*, in which she spent a year living in Jerusalem with the aim of finding the man who had shot her father. The final assignment for this course was a reflection essay. One student, an International Relations major, wrote, with reference to Blumenfeld's text, *Othello*, *American Moor*, and *The Hate U Give*, that his most significant discovery was the symbiotic relation of the personal and the political. He reflected on the ways in which political policy and international strategy and tactics can be depersonalizing, discovering that literature could bring into focus the individuals who are affected by political action, whether global or local. In this case, this student discovered a connection between the humanities and his interest in studying and pursuing a career in international relations. This may not be the principal aim of a course like Shakespeare and Film, but it could be a productive outcome for students in a general education course who may never encounter Shakespeare otherwise.

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Kim Reigle

SAA Workshop Proposal—Shakespeare in the General Education Classroom

Performance Pedagogy to Bridge a Five Hundred Year Cultural Divide:  
Teaching *Othello* in the General Education Classroom

In my Flip Grid introduction, I used an image of the Stratford Festival’s thrust stage to represent my artifact. I chose this image because it represents one of the ways I like to teach Shakespeare—through performance. The methodology was introduced to me by a dear grad school friend, who was trained in the Folger Method (she later ended up working at the Folger for a time). Although I didn’t implement all the of techniques she shared with me, those I did choose to implement were, and still are, some of the most effective ways that I have found to teach Shakespeare. When students ask, “Can we do this again tomorrow?” you know that it was a good lesson. However, I cannot say that I have been able to cohesively teach an entire play using this method, in part because the general education course I teach is a literature survey, and I feel pushed for time.

Prior to 2020, I structured the survey course chronologically. There was a short unit on sonnets that led into our study of *Twelfth Night*. When we got to Shakespeare, after studying Wyatt and Surrey, I assigned sonnets that focus on love, choosing sonnets from both the young man and dark lady sonnets. We then discussed that not all Shakespeare’s sonnets were written to a lady, as a way to help students understand that Shakespeare is complex and still relevant. We would then move to *Twelfth Night* with a focus on gender and poetics, putting a scene or two on its feet in the process. In the wake of the summer of 2020, I decided to completely overhaul that course, in an attempt to demonstrate to students that early English lit texts are not as removed from students as they might think and to diversify, as much as I could, my early Brit Lit survey. As part of that course revision, I moved away from chronology and created thematic clusters—Belief and Religion, Race, Gender, and Social Status. In that transition, I traded out *Twelfth Night* for *Othello*. Originally, I planned to use the film *O* as part of my teaching strategy, but decided against that given some of the language in the film. As part of the revision of this course, I would like to make performance the central aspect of my pedagogical approach to teaching *Othello*. The goal in doing this is to not only help students connect with *Othello* as a play, but to also connect to the themes within the text, which are still relevant today.

To that end, while using a handful of performance pedagogy techniques here and there has been successful, the artifact I propose for this workshop is a unit plan built around performance using *Othello*, targeted to the general education classroom specifically. The students who take the course I am creating this unit for vary in terms of preparation and interest. Our general education courses do not have any pre-requisites, which means that students sometimes take my course before they have even completed their composition sequence. On occasion, students sign up for the course because of the time slot rather than the content., so interest in the subject of the course cannot be assumed. Moreover, many of our

students are first generation. On the other end of the spectrum, the course, as a Brit Lit survey, is required for our English majors, some of whom will not elect to take our upper level Shakespeare course. Thankfully, most English majors do take Shakespeare at the upper level, but it is not required. This means that for some of our English majors, my 200 level survey will be their only exposure to Shakespeare. Thus, it is vitally important to me that students understand and, hopefully, enjoy their experience with Shakespeare in this general education course.

### Bibliography

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University of Alabama  
M. Tyler Sasser

### Artifact Group Notes Assignment on *Othello*

**Directions:** Complete the two following sections. Email a Google Doc link to me with your class number, section number, and “Group Notes” in the subject line. In the body of the email, include everyone’s name, the Google Doc link, and two Zoom screen shots with times separated by at least 45 minutes, indicating the time you spent discussing the material.

#### Part 1: Annotations

As a group, annotate three of the following quotations using the comment features in Google Docs (click Insert, Comment, *etc.*). As modeled in class, I want to see highlighting, underlining, different text colors, marginal comments, *etc.*) Be sure to (re)watch the videos on how to study/annotate a text. Really analyze these lines. Make sure your name or initial is in the comments or that I know who is working under what color. In other words, you need to make sure I know who wrote what.

*As an example, I often ask students to address Othello’s final speech in 5.2.350. I generally give five quotations and ask for them to select three. I often allow them to pick to their own quotation to analyze as well.*

## Part 2: Short Answers

After completing your annotations, answer the following questions for *one* of the quotations your group annotated.

- 1) Watch the three videos of professional actors performing your quotation. How do the three versions reflect different understandings of the text? How do the three versions compare to your own notes as individuals and a group?
- 2) Contextualize your quotation within two or three of the short 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century readings located in Blackboard. In other words, what connections can you draw between those readings and your quotation? How do they further advance your understanding of the text?

*Here I use the sort of short excerpts one would find in texts such as The Bedford Othello: Texts and Contexts or a Norton Critical Edition.*

- 3) Contextualize your quotations within two or three contemporary readings or videos located in Blackboard. In other words, what connections can you draw between those readings or videos and your quotation? How do they further advance your understanding of the text?

*Here I include reviews of contemporary performances, interviews with actors and/or directors, short podcasts, etc. I also aim to begin including readings from Greenblatt's Tyrant, Shapiro's Shakespeare in a Divided America, or Smith's This is Shakespeare.*

## Reflective Essay

An assignment with which I have experimented in recent semesters is this Group Notes assignment. I include it in a general education survey course where the vast majority of the 35 students in the class are not majoring in English. I typically spend four or five 75-minute classes on one play.

Students in small groups (4-5 students) complete this assignment outside of class. I hope it accomplishes the following: 1) Students in peer groups discuss Shakespeare without a professor and outside of class, ideally associating Shakespeare with something other than a classroom; 2) They practice close reading; 3) They contextualize the text within issues of its time as well as our time.

For example, with Othello's speech in 5.2, I ask students to read more about Blackness, Moors, the Ottoman Empire, the White Devil, or cultural attitudes about Venice in the early 1600s. Then, I ask students to consider if the play and/or playwright is/are racist by watching the RSC-sponsored debate on YouTube where actors, directors, and academics discuss such questions. Or, I have students to contextualize the lines within the history of blackface minstrelsy in America, particularly its popularity in our own South. Of course, there are numerous contexts with which students can study the play, and this assignment offers the opportunity to make connections to whatever themes or ideas routinely surface in one's survey course. Ultimately, I want students independent of me and the classroom to discuss a passage by itself, in an original context, and in a contemporary context.

The assignment has undergone many forms. It began as extra credit, and I only asked students to annotate 3-4 quotations. With the addition of the short answers, it needed to be a

larger assignment. It could be expanded further to include some sort of presentation, whereby the groups share their experiences with the entire class. Or, students might perform the lines themselves and then explain to the class their interpretative decision(s). In the directions above, I ask students to provide screen shot from their Zoom meeting. Before COVID, I asked students to take a photograph or *selfie* of the group working on the assignment in a public space, and I provided further extra credit if they posted the photo on social media. I think in gen. ed. classes, it is important to take any opportunity to disassociate Shakespeare from homework, even if it is ultimately a homework assignment. I'm trying to cultivate a communal Shakespeare experience outside of the classroom.

Connecting the text to the contemporary is deeply important to me. When I teach *Beowulf* in the same course, I include these readings in our discussion (all of which are easily found on the Internet): "Misnaming the Medieval: Rejecting 'Anglo-Saxon' Studies"; "The Real History of Anglo-Saxons Undermines Racists' Theories"; "McCarthy Issues Apparent Rebuke of GOP Caucus Platform Promoting 'Anglo Saxon Political Traditions.'" Likewise, when I conclude a unit on *Othello*, students read the following: "Ira Aldridg"; "How the History of Blackface is Rooted in Racism" (BB); "Why You Can't Wear Blackface . . . Even for Halloween"; "NPR: Actor Andre Holland Explores: 'Where I Fit, How I Fit, If I Fit'"; "Female Friendship in *Othello*"; "All-Female *Othello*." A vital part of my teaching Shakespeare to non-majors is the understanding that most of my students are receiving their gen. ed. credit in the humanities in my class. I remind myself that teaching Shakespeare to English majors is a different rhetorical situation than using Shakespeare to teach a humanities credit.

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SAA 2022: Shakespeare in the General Education Classroom Workshop

#### **A Case Study in Shakespeare**

Gregory M. Schnitzspahn, Fisher College

At my small, urban institution, I frequently work with students who take my 100-level "Introduction to Shakespeare" course to fulfill the Humanities or English requirement for one of the college's more popular majors, such as Business Management. This proposal will discuss my workshop artifact, a constantly developing Shakespeare "case study" assignment that is specifically geared toward Management majors (though it

surely remains accessible to students working in other fields).

To begin, I must confess that my inspiration for this assignment and its approach comes from “The Moral Leader,” a course that has been offered to MBA candidates at Harvard Business School for decades. This course, now largely taught by Joseph Badaracco and Sandra Sucher, applies HBS’s case study method to the complicated, often conflicted, characters and situations that appear in well-regarded works of literature. In a standard MBA case study at HBS, students analyze a business problem and recommend a specific course of action; when students meet in the classroom, their instructors do not intervene with a correct or best response to the problem, but rather facilitate debate on a multitude of equally valid recommendations. For students enrolled in “The Moral Leader,” however, literary works such as *The Death of a Salesman* or “The Secret Sharer” provide the material and nuances of a complicated case focused on “leadership” or “character.”

For Management majors in my “Introduction to Shakespeare” class, something like the case studies from “The Moral Leader” can help develop not only their understanding and appreciation of Shakespeare, but also the critical thinking and argumentative skills that they will use throughout their careers. In its simplest form, a version of this assignment shows up as one among many prompts for a final paper, asking students to analyze, say, the merits and shortcomings of Richard’s and Bolingbroke’s leadership styles in *Richard II*. But more adventurous students can opt to write a full case study that concludes with a specific recommendation chosen from among several alternatives. What course of action, students might ask, should Bolingbroke pursue upon capturing Bushy and Green, including their execution?

Case study papers can take many different forms at many different institutions, and students can use any of them for this assignment, but what all of these formats have in common is that they identify a problem, consider *multiple* valid solutions, evaluate the benefits and shortcomings of these alternatives, and then recommend a specific course of action. In some ways, this should sound similar to the “thesis-driven” or “five-paragraph” essay that many of us already teach, but whereas expository writing students might find encouragement to “be decisive” and argue vehemently for their thesis . . . the case study format remains more open to possibility, concluding with a reasoned “recommendation” rather than a final, definitive statement.

And this is also why the method works so well with Shakespeare, and in particular, why it resonates with the endless opportunities for interpretation in his work. Indeed, I often stress to my gen-ed students that Shakespeare is “obsessed with ambiguity,” be it in language, in character, in situation. Readers of Shakespeare, that is, face as many valid interpretive decisions as business leaders face when considering their alternatives, and directors or performers must, like managers of other organizations, settle on only *one* plan of action. But this assignment does not only allow students to practice a method that might seem more relevant to their fields of study and future careers, it also encourages them to view what they find in Shakespeare’s plays and poetry as something more like “data” that absolutely requires human interpretation (and maybe a little appreciation for negative capability). Considering the looming threat of physical and non-physical automation to those of us trying to make a living in the world, this perspective helps some otherwise disinterested students

find value in studying Shakespeare. And more importantly, it helps them see an even greater value in themselves, and all of humanity.

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(Sorry, I couldn't pick just one from among these three!)

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SAA workshop “Shakespeare in the General Education Classroom”  
Laura B. Turchi – Initial Abstract

My artifact for the “Shakespeare in the General Education Classroom” workshop is a successful proposal made to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for *RaceB4Race: Sustaining, Building, Innovating*. The document represents more than four months of extensive and significant revisions via discussions with program officer(s). Although I am not named in the proposal, I contributed to the thinking behind the first two academically focused activities described, and I am now the Clinical Professor named in the text, supposed to make this work happen (as part of a great team). I am sharing the proposal document as a whole, but I am focusing on the activities that are my responsibility. These are (in part):

1. “To develop, pilot, and disseminate a useful range of higher education curriculum and pedagogy appropriate to faculty at different stages of their careers.”

And

2. [to invite] “Postdoctoral fellows, predoctoral fellows, and undergraduates to create Gen Z-targeted peer-to-peer, social media content that reveals and explores premodern globalism and the earliest constructions of racial formations.”

This proposal is relevant to the “Shakespeare in the General Education Classroom” workshop because such courses are among the higher education classrooms the RB4R Mellon project plans to influence. We believe premodern critical race studies should inform students’ experiences of Shakespeare plays. We plan to make that happen through both traditional and innovative content availability and delivery in higher education.

My goal in examining, reflecting on, and sharing this artifact with this SAA workshop is to first re-visit the assumptions about what higher education curriculum needs from premodern critical race scholarship. Then I want to think carefully about how those assumptions are useful as we begin our work. To me, this is a “so what” question: if Mellon’s funding says we are correct in our claims about what needs to be changed/transformed in higher education, how should those claims guide what we (must) (want to) do?

I am hoping that my reflective writing about this proposal will also enable me to better articulate some theories of curriculum-driven change. What difference can curriculum, even engagingly packaged and skillfully mediated, make? Separately, with the Shakespeare Center of Los Angeles, I am working with the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) and their “Learning for Justice” standards for K-12 education (I will add these to SAA workshop google file). In their theory of change, the SPLC breaks up social justice education, separating out curriculum and instruction from culture and climate (and from family and community engagement). As both the Mellon RB4R project and the Shakespeare and Social Justice initiative claim curriculum can lead to transformative change, I want to carefully consider social and cultural dimensions of teaching and learning.

As the Mellon project is in its early stages, in my reflective essay I plan to write about two dimensions of curriculum intentions in the proposal, specifically:

1. Characterizations of higher education courses and faculty as instructors – and how these should inform our curriculum design (the “containers” and “storylines” into which we plan to shape and present premodern critical race scholarship).

2. Characterizations of Gen-Z (undergraduates) and their preferences for learning – and how these might be accounted for as we plan for “horizontal” information-sharing and influence via social media platforms.

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### **“Diversity, Enrollment, and Engagement” by Tim Turner**

The set of artifacts I propose to discuss for the workshop include the syllabus and accompanying flier for a course I have previously taught on “Early Shakespeare.” My paper will explore the advantages of building syllabi around diverse themes to attract enrollment by demonstrating that the study of Shakespeare today is animated by research topics and questions of contemporary relevance to modern students without “dumbing things down” too much. In my teaching, this has meant incorporating and advertising a special focus on Shakespeare and Popular Culture; Shakespeare, Sexuality, and Gender; and Shakespeare and Race. In addition to the intrinsic interest and importance of these topics, conversations with student advisors on my campus indicated that students perceive Shakespeare to be a “boring,” “outdated” subject of study [though we needed no ghost come from the grave to tell us so] and that, at the same time, students are eager to enroll in courses that explicitly address diverse themes and topics. I redesigned this Shakespeare course to demonstrate that 1) some of the most interesting work in Shakespeare studies today addresses these ideas and that 2) student interest and engagement in Shakespeare can be sustained and even elevated when they feel a connection to the themes and topics explored and discussed in the class. In addition to securing enrollment in the course, this approach also generated a lively set of discussions among students and an enthusiastic response to the design and execution of the course itself.

### **Bibliography**

*Here are some \*very\* introductory essays I assigned to broach these subjects in the class:*

Harris, Jonathan Gil. “Shakespeare and Race.” In *The New Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*. Margareta De Grazia and Stanley Wells, eds. Cambridge UP, 2011, pp. 201- 216.

Prescott, Paul. “Shakespeare and Popular Culture.” In *The New Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*. Margareta De Grazia and Stanley Wells, eds. Cambridge UP, 2011, pp. 269- 284.

Orgel, Stephen. “Shakespeare, Sexuality, and Gender.” In *The New Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*. Margareta De Grazia and Stanley Wells, eds. Cambridge UP, 2011, pp. 217- 232.

*I have also found the following resources to be indispensable on Shakespeare and race:*

Hall, Kim F., et al. "Early Modern Race/Ethnic/Indigenous Studies: A (Crowdsourced) Annotated Bibliography."  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AaMp1a18y715FklUq1x5scqBHYS9QpzMzgYU\\_ZyFow/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AaMp1a18y715FklUq1x5scqBHYS9QpzMzgYU_ZyFow/edit). Accessed 1/12/2022.

Williams, Brandy C. "On Building a #ShakeRace 'Canon.'"  
<https://www.brandycwilliams.com/blog/on-building-a-shakerace-canon>.  
Accessed 1/12/2022.

"Speaking the speech: cultivating a space somewhere between literature and performance for the students in the general education classroom"

Greg Watkins – Lecturer, Stanford University; Co-Creator of myshakespeare.com

Artifact:

The artifact I'd like to use is the Act 1, scene 7 page from the myShakespeare.com edition of *Macbeth*

Here's a direct link to that page: <https://myshakespeare.com/macbeth/act-1-scene-7>

Please note that some of the interactive features can only be used if you create an account. Accounts are fully free, but there's also a lot to see on this page without having to create an account.

Reflection:

The myShakespeare website provides digital editions of six Shakespeare plays. They are full text editions that incorporate a number of interactive elements, including audio playback, some performance videos, interline gloss, 'plain English' translation, and some 'study' elements, like annotations, highlighting, and quiz features.

As a co-creator of the site, I've had to think a lot about how best to reach students – how best to invite them into the world of a particular play without creating the kind of substitutes and short-cuts that can have the effect of enabling them to *avoid* the world of the play in some large measure.

When working on the production of video content for *Macbeth*, I came across Giles Block's *Speaking the Speech*. I was trying to give myself a quick education on directing Shakespearean actors (about which I knew little!), but what I found in his chapter on *Macbeth* was a way of thinking about what's happening in Shakespeare performance that would become some foundational principles for website design.

As you'll see on the website, 'video performance' is typically a direct-to-camera address of a relatively short piece of a scene. What I found in the Block's chapter on *Macbeth* was encouraging me to slow performance way down – make it more 'thoughtful,' and as if speaking to the viewer.

Along the way, it has become my conviction that this kind of 'slowing down' provides a new kind of approachability for students of Shakespeare in a general education class.

Somewhere between having only the words on the page, on the one hand, and attending a fully staged performance of the play, on the other hand, there's some space for students to meet these characters in their animated thoughtfulness, as people speaking a special kind of speech, and that their way of speaking rewards students for the time they invest in coming to understand it.

Bibliography:

Block, Giles. *Speaking the Speech: An Actor's Guide to Shakespeare*. Nick Hern Books Limited, 2013

Specifically, the "Macbeth's scene 7 soliloquy" subsection of Chapter 15 "*Macbeth: Deepening and Reviewing Our Work*"

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Deborah Uman, Weber State University

Proposal, Shakespeare in the General Education Classroom

### Shakespeare in the hands of the restless poor

My title for this reflection is an homage to Earl Shorris' influential 1997 essay, published in *Harpers Magazine*, "On the Uses of a Liberal Education: As a Weapon in the Hands of the Restless Poor." I first happened upon the article because the magazine was lying around in my mother's house and its core argument—that an education in the humanities, particularly in the western classics, such as Plato, Socrates and Shakespeare, are powerful tools for those who have been marginalized and underserved to become active citizens, politicized to change a system that keeps people poor and complacent—has remained with me for over 20 years. Shorris bases this essay on his experience creating and teaching the Clemente Course in the Humanities, which continues to operate under the aegis of Bard College. While living in Rochester, I spent several years trying to create a Clemente Course. I wrote grants, found community partners and interested faculty. I ran a fairly unsuccessful pilot at a housing complex for families in economic crisis and was on the verge of offering a second pilot in conjunction with an educational non-profit when COVID hit. Both pilots included a Shakespeare play (*The Tempest* and *Othello*, respectively). Then I moved to Utah and to Weber State, delighted that they ran a version of the Clemente Course called Venture only to learn that it was shut down. As dean, I am in a position to find the resources to revive our Venture course and am currently in the midst of those efforts, with the cautious hope of having Venture (and a companion version for high school students) ready to go in the Fall of 2022.

When I first read the instructions for this reflection, I thought the artifact was something we would analyze rather than construct, so I spent a little time pursuing a cluster of materials, including: websites for the Clemente Course in the Humanities and the Venture Course; a book published about the Venture program, *Hope, Heart, and the Humanities: How a Free College Course is Changing Lives*; student testimonials; and sample Clemente syllabi. A cursory look at such materials suggested that "Shakespeare," while it was very much part of Shorris' initial curriculum is, at most, briefly mentioned as a kind of synecdoche for the humanities in promotional materials. Some syllabi include a work or a section of a Shakespeare play and others do not.

For my own artifact, I will likely work on two: promotional material for our revived materials and a new course proposal for an Introduction to Humanities general education course that will provide a shell for a portion of the Venture Course curriculum. Before I put these together, I will analyze the material listed above for the messages they offer about the potential value of the humanities for groups of people who have been historically and systematically marginalized and to consider where Shakespeare might belong both as a marketing tool and as a subject for instruction.

Bibliography:

Earl Shorris, "On the Uses of a Liberal Education: As Weapon in the Hands of the Restless Poor," *Harpers Magazine* 295.17 (September, 1997):50-59.