

## Abstracts and Bibliographies

Seminar: The World Must Be Peopled: Biopolitics and Early Modern Sexuality, Labor, and Race

1. Drew Daniel, Johns Hopkins University  
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“Simply the thing I am shall make me live”: Survival and Coercion in *All’s Well That Ends Well*

If biopolitics as a critical discourse has a dangerously overfamiliar mantra, it is surely Michel Foucault’s evocation of the passage from sovereignty to biopower taking place through a newly articulated capacity to “make live and let die.” But what concrete forms does such “making live” take, and what resources does early modern drama offer for thinking survival itself as a lived experience of involuntary coercion? I hope to find tentative answers to these questions in William Shakespeare’s quintessential problem play *All’s Well That Ends Well*. Arguably enacting Foucault’s theoretical framework in adjacent but distinct medical and political registers, AWTEW offers two characters at opposite ends of the spectrum between sovereignty and non-sovereignty experiencing their own survival as a kind of coercion: the ailing King of France, resigned to death but grudgingly consenting to treatment for his seemingly incurable fistula, and the miserably comedic Parolles, who seems to eerily prefigure biopower in his celebrated remark in the midst of torture that “simply the thing I am / Shall make me live” (4.3) What might these antithetical figures from early modern comedy teach us about our own comedies of survival at present?

William Shakespeare, *All’s Well That Ends Well* (1623).

Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France, 1975-1976*, Trans. Macey, Picador, 2003.

Francois Bonnet, *After Death*, Trans. Ireland, Urbanomic, 2020.

2. Kelly A. Duquette, Emory University  
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Disability Futures: Queer-Crip Veterans in *Henry V*

Building on Mitchell and Snyder’s theorization of “ablenationalism” in *The Biopolitics of Disability*, this essay considers the unique challenges that would likely follow Shakespearean veterans like Falstaff and *Henry V*’s Agincourt soldiers after a life of military action. I explore the historical context of an increasing homeless population to argue that England’s treatment of veterans, as evidenced in national legislation, offers insights into early modern understandings of gender, disability, and vagrancy. Often

unable to find paying work, maimed ex-servicemen were only able to claim disability benefits if they could prove disability to their local county governments by submitting access to their bodies via routine medical examination. In this context, disability takes on the narrow meaning of “disabled to work,” as A.L. Beier and Geoffrey Hudson have shown. In the martial rhetoric of Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, however, the promise of combat injury and the soldier’s willingness to accept what I term a “disability future,” ensures his present claims to martial masculinity on the battlefield. Paradoxically, however, in accepting this future, the disabled veteran becomes vulnerable to misogynistic characterizations of emasculation associated with vagrancy, a likely reality for an overwhelming number of injured servicemen returning home to England after war abroad.

Clark, Rachel Ellen. “Lame Doings: Amputation, Impotence, and Community in *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* and *A Larum for London*.” In *Amputation in Literature and Film: Artificial Limbs, Prosthetic Relations, and the Semiotics of “Loss,”* edited by Maren Scheurer and Erik Grayson, 21 – 41. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021.

Hudson, Geoffrey L. “Disabled Veterans and the State in Early Modern England.” In *Disabled Veterans in History*, edited by David A. Gerber, 117 – 144. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Press, 2012.

Mitchell, David T. and Sharon L. Snyder. *The Biopolitics of Disability: Neoliberalism, Ablenationalism, and Peripheral Embodiment*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015.

3. Joseph Gamble, University of Toledo  
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### Cassio’s Wife: Sexual Infrastructures and Queer Biopoliticians

In this paper, I turn to a line from *Othello* that has mystified editors for well over a century: Iago’s claim that Cassio is “a man almost damned in a fair wife” (1.1.20). Offering an account of this line that draws on the histories of Florentine sodomy by Michael Rocke and Helmut Puff, and particularly on Christopher Chitty’s recent claim that forms of financialization in early modern cities—crucial economic precursors to biopolitical governance—were marked by the flourishing of sodomitical sexualities, I argue that Iago imagines Cassio to be a sodomite, both because he is from Florence and because he thinks mathematically about the management of the lives of a distinct subpopulation (his soldiers). In short, Iago claims here that Cassio is a sort of queer biopolitician. *Othello* might help us see, then, that the skills and habits of mind necessary for standing-up and maintaining biopolitical forms of governance—numeracy, abstraction, bureaucratic “prattle”—might themselves be queer: non-normative, sexually suspect, non-reproductive.

Chitty, Christopher. *Sexual Hegemony: Statecraft, Sodomy, and Capital in the Rise of the World System*. Duke University Press, 2020.

Friedlander, Ari. *Rogue Sexuality in Early Modern English Literature: Desire, Status, Biopolitics*. Oxford University Press, 2022.

Urvashi Chakravarty, "Race, Natalty, and the Biopolitics of Early Modern Political Theology." *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, vol. 18, no. 2 (2018): 140-66.

4. David Glimp, University of Colorado  
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"Kissing the Lips of Unacquainted Change": Fiscal Policy and Security in *King John*

This paper examines how struggles over sovereign claims on subjects' wealth shape how *King John* broaches some of the basic tensions defining constitutional accounts of English governance. The depiction of King John's reign provides an occasion to understand some of the ways Shakespeare exploited for narrative purposes tensions between sovereign and biopolitical forms of power. Such tensions are especially evident in how the play stages antagonism surrounding how to define and implement security on a fraught geopolitical terrain.

5. Sawyer Kemp, Queens College, CUNY  
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Necropolitical Transactions and Transgender Militarism

This essay explores the interrelations of biopolitics and trans studies as methods for early modern literary and historical critique. In an effort to think transhistorically in ways that have payoff for trans people living, thinking, and working outside of the academy and outside of early modern studies, I am interested in taking contemporary trans issues as the focal point for early modern gender investigation. While biopolitics animates a number of issues in trans activism and scholarship, this essay explores the issue of transgender military service in the character of Othello from Shakespeare's tragedy, and the historical Spanish soldier Antonio de Erauso whose exploits animate the plot of the golden age comedy *The Lieutenant Nun*. By looking at the structures of societal constraint and exclusion, we can see more clearly a transaction promised and brokered to exchange imperial military action for access to state-sanctioned masculinity.

C. Riley Snorton & Jin Haritaworn, "Trans Necropolitics: A Transnational Reflection on Violence, Death, and the Trans of Color Afterlife"

Dean Spade, *Normal Life*

6. Ross Knecht, Emory University  
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Reproductive Labor in Erasmus's Dialogue "The Lying-In Woman"

This paper will consider "The Lying-In Woman," an Erasmian colloquy that inveighs against the use of wet-nurses, maintaining that nursing is the natural role of the mother and should not be left to a surrogate. This argument anticipates the widespread opposition to wet-nurses among Puritan preachers and moralists in the seventeenth century. Though it would not have material effect until later centuries, early modern opposition to wet nursing provided ideological support for the transition from "domestic industry," the medieval system in which almost all work was conducted or managed from the household, and "capitalist industry," in which waged labor took place in dedicated spaces like factories and offices and the activities of the household came to be seen as natural and private matters. Erasmus's dialogue is more complex and contradictory than later sermons on the subject, however, for even as it urges women to adhere to their "natural" maternal roles, it emphasizes the "artistry" of motherhood, which it compares to sculpture in its fashioning of the human form. My (provisional) argument is that this contradiction is attributable to Erasmus's own social and professional position. A bachelor, city-dweller, and independent scholar who refused positions in royal courts, Erasmus anticipated the kind of middle-class identity that would develop apart from the household in the modern era and hold an increasingly belittling view of "women's work." Yet as an educator and a humanist, he continued to maintain the importance of childhood socialization and the malleability of character in a manner that leads him, at times, to identify with his fictional lying-in woman.

Alice Clark, *The Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century*, New York: Routledge, 1991.

Valerie Fildes, *Wet Nursing: A History from Antiquity to the Present*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988.

7. Sarah Bich Le, Indiana University  
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*Blackness/Beauty: Performative Miscegenation, Racialization, and Discipline in the Jonsonian Masques*

In Ben Jonson's infamous work, *The Masque of Blackness*, the Daughters of Niger (the figurative embodiment of the African river) undergo a process of whitening to become

suitable mates for aristocratic white men. Performed in 1605 with the uses of black paint on white performers, the masque and its sequel, *The Masque of Beauty*, imagine blackness as a material reality capable of being worn and then discarded—both for the Daughters and the performers who play them. This paper examines miscegenation as a biopolitical mechanism in early modern drama through Ben Jonson’s two masque; I argue that through the process of self-discipline and the adaptation of a new racial knowledge system, the Daughters of Niger’s act of whitewashing both emphasize the power of white hegemony while also inadvertently reveals the tenacity of blackness. Their desire and performance of miscegenation uncover how the categories of race are made not simply in the realm of *polis*—in the political, economic, religious, and colonial activities of the age—but also through the domestic, sexual, and bodily, and that these two realms are necessarily intertwined. The practices of self-discipline through the management of one’s own temperate nature and humors emerge in these masques as a mode of racial and social mobility for nonwhite women in early modern narratives and performances.

8. Sarah-Gray Leslie, University of Chicago  
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“I am incorporate”: Racial Edibility and Legibility in *Titus Andronicus*

From mouthed-at arms to swallowing pits to formal banquets, *Titus Andronicus* (1596) is a play concerned with the dramatic and political weight of performing (in)digestibility. This essay argues that eating, swallowing, and mouthing are important mechanisms by which *Titus* racializes its characters. Scholarship has often focused on Tamora’s climactic end, in which she unwittingly eats a pie made of her sons’ body parts and is, postmortem, consumed herself; however, this paper will suggest that, by the fifth act, (in)digestibility has already been established as one of the main vectors by which characters’ bodies are rendered racially legible. As such, this essay brings the insights from Kyla Wazana Tompkins’s work—which considers the biopolitical importance of the edible and the orificial as racial signifiers in the 19th-century United States—to bear on the drama and politics of early modern England. How do the play’s concomitant anxieties around maternity, miscegenation, and sexuality become embedded within the racial signification of (in)edibility? How can “reading orificially” illuminate the final banquet scene as one that both fulfills the ends of the tragic genre and mirrors the emergent biopolitical demands for racial codification in early modern England?

William Shakespeare. *Titus Andronicus*. Edited by Jonathan Bate. London: Bloomsbury, 2018.

Kyla Wazana Tompkins. *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the 19th Century*. New York: New York University Press, 2012.

9. Carol Mejia LaPerle, Wright State University  
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### Othello's *Akrasia*: The Biopolitics of Racialized Ill-Will

Early modern discourses about volition were preoccupied with the surveillance and management of wills: whose is to be governed and who's to be followed, and to what purpose—ideological, institutional, compulsory— one's desires are made to submit. Embedded within these discourses is a fundamental, rather than circumstantial, disavowal of participation in the social contract. I theorize ill-will as a *category of exclusion*, a selectively essentialized exemption that does not require empirical evidence but is instead a pre-emptive anticipation of a problem. Ill-will marks a relational incompatibility, an abnormal volition, an always potential threat, attributed to racialized subjects. For this seminar, I examine an iteration of ill-will that departs from the connotations of enmity and hostility but rather expresses a category of exclusion rooted in what we might recognize as an affect attributed by bio-political power. Othello's *akrasia* (or weak will) marks an individual's incapacity in relation to the state, a form of unwell (incapacitated, compromised, weakened, or otherwise *ill*) will. This project argues that the moment of self-killing is an underexplored instance of Othello's racialized volition.

Daniel, Drew. 2022. *Joy of the Worm: Suicide and Pleasure in Early Modern English Literature*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Contextualizing the positive affects of a network of feelings attached to self-killing, such as amusement and joy, Daniel's unprecedented analysis explores what self-killing means beyond the pathology of individuated desolation. The work investigates self-killing as an index for understanding literary genre, social agency, racial construction, class differentiation, and death.

Duperron, Brenna and Elizabeth Edwards. 2021. "Thinking Indigeneity: A Challenge to Medieval Studies" *Exemplaria*, 33:1, pp. 94-107

With a rich, generative citation practice, Duperron and Edwards challenge premodern studies to re-center particular Indigenous and Critical Indigenous Studies methodological techniques and theories to promote five new approaches to the field: (1) to use non-European concepts and Indigenous epistemologies to re-understand premodern texts; (2) to recover "the Indigene," the invisibilized Native informant or Indigenous cultural practice, hidden in modern critical theory; (3) to investigate "proto-colonial concepts" germinating in premodern Anglo-European cultures; (4) to address how Medieval Studies supports and encourages current settler colonial processes, including settler "nativism;" and (5) to open new ways to think about the "medieval Indigene" as a discursive formation amidst Celtic, Basque, Welsh, Irish, etc. studies. **(This annotation is contributed by Lehua Yim).**

Grier, Miles Parks, Nicholas Jones, and Cassander L. Smith Eds. 2018. *Early Modern Black Diaspora Studies: A Critical Anthology*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

The interdisciplinary collection of essays seeks to center Black agency, rebellion, and creativity despite the history of enslavement and the trauma of the African diaspora in the early modern period. Focusing on a range of texts and contexts such as records of rebellions in the colonies, African influences on European art, and literary representations of Black resistance, it provides an alternate overview of historical artifacts that record oppression from the point of view of the abject while employing methodologies and analyses that decenter conventional, Eurocentric epistemologies.

Kafantaris, Mira 'Assaf, Sonja Drimmer, and Treva B. Lindsey, eds. 2022. *Race-ing Queens*. Special Issue of Barnard Center for Research on Women's *The Scholar and Feminist Online*.

Building on a long tradition of Black feminism, transnational and postcolonial studies, and Critical Indigenous epistemologies, the essays in this special issue examine racialized queens transhistorically and across geographies, through critique, analysis, and creative juxtaposition. Racialized queens, the editors argue in the introduction, "disturb a European teleology of history, dynastic descent, and knowledge production." It concludes with a call to further work on race and queenship through a global, abolitionist framework, as imagined in literature and history.

Harris, Jonathan Gil. 1998. *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic: Discourses of Social Pathology in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

In this study of the diseased body as a body politic metaphor, Harris explores foreignness as exogenous pathological infection. Drawing on the historical shift from galenic to particularized theory of disease, Harris theorizes the metaphor of the state-as-body, attacked through its apertures by pathogenic infection. The reconfigured diseased body, therefore, necessitates the policing of the boundaries of the commonwealth to fend off foreign invaders from without. Harris's examination dwells on the construction of those rendered outsiders in the early English imaginary, including Jewish people, Catholics, and other travelling communities. **(This annotation is contributed by Mira Assaf Kafantaris).**

Ndiaye, Noémie. 2022. *Scripts of Blackness: Early Modern Performance Culture and the Making of Race*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Grounding analysis of blackness in early modern performances of "cosmetic blackness," "acoustic blackness," and "kinetic blackness," the work demonstrates how racial categories in the English, French, and Spanish contexts were intricately imagined and regularly performed. The comparative study offers interventions in reading race and gender while collecting and investigating an underexplored archive of transnational performances.

10. Jennie Row, University of Minnesota

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Disabled Veterans and Sterile Women: Race and Reproducibility in France/Louisiana

How can we trace the early modern contours of ableism, and its resounding effects on racialized bodies, without necessarily performing a “Where’s Waldo” type of inventory of disabled bodies and minds. How can one account for the racialized impacts of ableism? How and why were a variety of embodiments and mental traits sifted into disposable and valuable existences?

The Hôtel Royal des Invalides (1676), initially built as a venerated residence for disabled veterans, today houses Napoleon’s tomb. But the original 17th century floor plans reveal another side of the story. Disabled veterans were taxonomized by their disabilities (organized into wards of the deaf or the mad) and were forced to labor, making shoes. Extensive disciplinary governance, deemed necessary because of the “unruliness” of the population, reinforces ableist beliefs that the disabled are a “problem” that must be corralled away from the public, to prevent mendicancy or disorder. The rhetoric of usefulness, uselessness and ideal masculinity is honed here. I pair this analysis with fragments of early letters from Louisiana governors who reject the influx of “useless” disabled veterans redeployed there, praise the skillfulness of enslaved Black men to be trained to be master craftsmen and disparage the “sterility” of the “already used-up” French women sent for sexual companionship and to populate the territory. Bodies are reduced to mere numbers (more laborers, more women) not only to specifically “make inhabitants” but also as a prophylactic– to prevent the ongoing practice of French settlers helping themselves to “sauvages” (Indigenous women) or indulging in the abomination of the “Italian vice.” Sexuality, disability, productivity, and reproduction play out in strangely racialized and entangled ways across these documents.

Letter, 12 may 1709, Gouverneur Périer, Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer

Vallette de Laudun, *Journal d'un voyage a la Louisiane, fait en 1720 / Par M\*\*\*, capitaine de vaisseau du roi.* (A La Haye & Paris: Chez Musier, fils & Fournier, 1768) (Huntington Library)

TA Lewis, “Ableism” [bit.ly/ableism2022](http://bit.ly/ableism2022)

LeJeune de Boullencourt, *Déscription Générale de l’Hôtel Royal des invalides.* Paris, 1683

11. Valerie Traub, University of Michigan

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Early Modern Biopolitics: Sexuality, Race, Population



Recent scholarship concerned with early modern sexuality and/or race has begun to consider the relevance of Michel Foucault's concept of biopolitical governance—the administration of “life”—to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (e.g., Glimp, LaFleur, Friedlander, LaFleur and Schuller). What does the concept of biopolitics—with its emphasis on techniques of classification, the analytic shift from the individual to the population, and the ultimate aim of “securitization”—add not only to our understanding of emerging forms of racism and the growth of colonialism, chattel slavery and empire, but the role of sexuality in fostering them? Does the analytic lens of biopolitics bring race and sexuality closer together or further apart? How, in particular, are the techniques of classification—which started to develop distinctive premodern forms with fifteenth-century herbals, sixteenth-century anatomical treatises, and seventeenth-century cartographic representations—related to biopolitics' intersection of disciplinary and administrative power?

Friedlander, Ari. (2022) *Rogue Sexuality in Early Modern English Literature: Desire, Status, Biopolitics* (Oxford U P).

LaFleur, Greta. (2018) *The Natural History of Sexuality in Early America* (Johns Hopkins U P).

LaFleur, Greta and Kyla Schuller. (2019) “Origins of Biopolitics in the Americas,” special issue of *American Quarterly* 71:3.