

## Abstracts for Seminar 31 (SAA 2025)

*Value and Values: Shakespeare in a Business Context*  
Melissa Geil

The integration of humanities, particularly Shakespeare, into business education presents both challenges and opportunities for transformative pedagogy. This brief essay examines the role of Shakespeare in undergraduate business education and explores strategies for meaningful curriculum integration to enhance students' critical thinking and ethical reasoning capabilities, while acknowledging the inherent risks of oversimplifying or decontextualizing complex literary works for business purposes. Through analysis of existing programs and pedagogical approaches, I identify successful models of Shakespeare integration in business education, including Harvard Business School's "The Moral Leader" class and various executive leadership programs utilizing Shakespearean frameworks for teaching management principles. Shakespearean works can serve as effective case studies for teaching crucial business concepts such as leadership, change management, ethical decision-making, and strategic communication. However, this utilitarian approach runs the risk of reducing Shakespeare's complex narratives to simplified business lessons. When done well, however, thoughtful integration of humanities-based thinking regarding virtue, ethics, and critical analysis can produce more well-rounded business professionals capable of addressing complex global challenges.

•

*Transforming Shakespeare's Life and Times into The Early Modern England Encyclopedia (EMEE)*  
Kate McPherson

This project discusses the ways that Shakespeare's Life and Times (created in 1995 as a CD-ROM and 1999 as a website) is being reconceptualized and redeveloped into The Early Modern England Encyclopedia (EMEE) by Dr. Kate McPherson and Dr. Kathryn M. Moncrief. Informed by expertise in literature and theater of the English early modern period, EMEE will move information from humanities disciplines like literature, theater studies, history, cultural studies, women and gender studies, philosophy, and religion into a free, public, peer-reviewed digital space. Once launched in late 2025 as a resource for high school and university students, EMEE will provide reliable, open access, contextual information on the literature, history, and culture of England from c.1500-1700. Each of the more than 500 planned EMEE articles is 500-1200 words long and includes at least one high-quality, public domain image, as well as a list of vetted Key Print Sources published in 2000 or later, as well as a list of carefully chosen, reliable Key Online

Sources. EMEE will be hosted and maintained as part of a large digital consortium, Linked Early Modern Drama Online (**LEMDO**).

•

*This Earth, This Realm, This Texas: Shakespeare and the Public Humanities*  
Kristen Polster

This essay examines a sampling of the numerous Shakespeare-related public humanities projects in the state of Texas. The examination includes the Odessa College campus, with its replica of The Globe and Anne Hathaway's cottage on the West Texas prairie, the Texas Shakespeare Festival housed at Kilgore College in rural East Texas, Shakespeare at Winedale in the Hill Country, and a few programs in the Dallas area. All of these promote (currently and historically) Shakespeare plays as an avenue to cultural growth in their areas of the state, using the plays to build community and appreciation for fine arts. All have likewise evolved to embrace the multiplicity of communities they serve. The goal of this examination is to research the motivations of these programs as part of a future book on the life of Marjorie Morris, The Globe's founder, and as the foundation for a cooperative course between the SMU English Department and Shakespeare Dallas.

•

*Hull House: A Historical Case Study in Public Shakespeare*  
Elizabeth Rivlin

This paper offers Hull House, the Chicago settlement founded in 1889 by Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr, as a historical case study that provides useful context and possible takeaways for today's public Shakespeare projects. Shakespeare played an important role in Hull House's mission to, in the words of Addams's biographer Louise Knight, "repair the damage done to egalitarian social relations by massive industrialization and . . . massive immigration." I trace Hull House's uses of Shakespeare back to Addams' and Starr's educational and cultural development, as each in the years before founding Hull House made the transition from engaging with Shakespeare as a bounded literate activity sanctioned for young women to a strengthening conviction that literature and art, including Shakespeare, needed to be brought into a sphere of meaningful, direct social action. I then illustrate several of the ways that Shakespeare featured at Hull House, including a long-running Shakespeare class and club, Addams' polemical speeches and writings, and the dramatic readings and performances that arguably proved the mode in which Hull House gained the most traction with the publics it tried to serve. Hull House's Shakespearean projects, like Hull House itself, had the aim of patriating and acculturating new Americans, raising questions about where the line is between paternalist condescension or colonialist indoctrination

and public access and empowerment. At the same time, both Addams and Starr showed a capacity for self-reflection and self-criticism that pushed them both to recognize themselves as beneficiaries of their work and to see the people who came to Hull House as co-contributors to, rather than simply beneficiaries of, that work. Perhaps, then, there are both cautions and inspiration to be taken from the example of Hull House.

•

*Public Shakespeare and Water Justice*

*Adrianna M. Santos*

The Borderlands Shakespeare Colectiva (BSC) is engaging in a cross-campus, collaborative pedagogical initiative at Texas A&M University-San Antonio and Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas in which we introduce students to theater and public performance while fostering critical thinking about water rights. Climate disaster in Texas, particularly in places prone to hurricanes like Houston and Port Aransas, shows how rising temperatures caused by anthropogenic interventions are implicated in global warming, often leading to disastrous outcomes for poor and underprivileged neighborhoods. For example, in San Antonio, the histories of redlining and uneven development of urban areas have led to both deadly flooding and community uprisings for justice (Miller 2021). Our courses, Decolonial Shakespeares, Intro to Drama, and Intersectional Shakespeare, will explore water rights, social justice, historical/modern accessibility to public water sources, and their connection to borderlands spaces, which see the contamination of water, the commercialization and privatization of rivers, creeks, and lakes, and environmental racism that disproportionately affects communities of color. We hope to directly influence young people to be involved in, and excited about, public humanities in performance along the San Antonio River. In this paper, I will describe the project and ponder: What does it mean for first-generation, Latinx students to appropriate Shakespeare and to perform these appropriations in San Antonio, specifically, alongside a public water system that has shaped the sociopolitical, historical, residential, economic, linguistic, and cultural nature of the city itself.

•

*Shakespeare and Prison: Time out of Joint and the Pursuit of Social Justice*

*Amy Smith*

Defining the goals of the public humanities, like defining those of any social movement, is not an easy task, but it is one in which we, as Shakespeare scholars, can participate. We are one of many constituencies involved in this endeavor and, rather than accepting others' construction of the work to be done or the reasons behind such work, we could and should be an active voice for social

justice. Susan Smulyan, a historian and former director of The John Nicholas Brown Center for Public Humanities and Cultural Heritage, suggests that “no matter how you map the public humanities, discussions of collaboration and social justice need to be at the center” and cites racial justice as central to these endeavors. And it seems that no matter how you map Shakespeare-centered public humanities, you will find prisons. Since the 1990’s there has been a proliferation of Shakespeare in prison programs, yet almost all of these programs focus on individual rehabilitation rather than societal issues. One exception is Time out of Joint, “a BIPOC led educational project that provides exciting workshops led by educated former prisoners and artist activists aided by PhD scholars.” The program seeks to “address racism and inequity through dialogue, listening and critical thinking” (www.TOOJ.org). If we’re willing to move away from seeing Shakespeare’s works only as a blueprint for individual rehabilitation and instead seeing his works as a way to make inroads toward social justice, we can join the wider community in its resistance to carceral and racist institutions.

•

*‘Shakespeare’s plays as Shakespeare wrote them:’ Chautauqua and the Origins of Public Shakespeare*

*Jillian M. Snyder*

Why is William Shakespeare so bound up in the history of turn-of-the-century American Protestantism? And how does this unlikely role speak to his continued predominance in—and our own relationship to—the public humanities? This essay explores the origins of public Shakespeare in America through the Chautauqua movement, an adult education program started by the Methodist bishop John Heyl Vincent at the turn of the twentieth century. Vincent’s program touted Shakespeare’s plays as models of human flourishing in a fallen world. But while Chautauqua’s attendees welcomed Shakespearean lectures and monologues, they fastidiously avoided theatrical performance, believing it to be laden with sin. The essay thus turns to examine how touring companies like those of Ben Greet overcame this antitheatrical prejudice. As a Christian Socialist, Greet appealed to the Progressive Protestant values of Chautauqua’s audiences; moreover, he marketed his stagings as true to Shakespeare’s original vision. Through stagings like Greet’s, mass numbers of Americans encountered theatrical performance for the first time, which laid the groundwork for public Shakespeare that extends to the present day. Situating Shakespeare’s reception in this religious landscape not only illustrates the unique—and occasionally unsettling—intersections between faith and culture in 19th-century America, but also offers a framework for how practitioners of public Shakespeare might approach this work today.

•

*Compulsory Shakespeare / Optional Art*

*Will Tosh*

This paper puts Shakespeare's Globe's flagship performance project designed for young people, *Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank*, in conversation with the prevailing approach to high school English literature instruction in England. It argues for the critical place of this and other endeavours in the UK's educational and cultural landscape, as a remedial intervention to undo some of the damage wrought upon students' understanding of Shakespeare by an excessive focus on technical, exam-focused learning.

•

*Whose Audience?: Toward a Methodology of Listening*  
*Jayme Yeo*

This essay investigates a tension in public scholarship between *speaking*, understood as communicating scholarly ideas to a non-scholarly audience, and *listening*, understood as community-engaged research that begins with the intention of better understanding community partners. I trace this tension through two projects I recently concluded—a grant-funded investigation of the history of Shakespeare in Nashville and a pair of scholarly articles I wrote with an incarcerated student—as a way of asking questions about what it means to engage the public in meaning-making, both about Shakespeare and about university education. The essay ends by sketching a more robust methodology of listening for Public Shakespeare as a field.