

SAA 2026 / Denver, Colorado / April 1 – 5

Seminar: Faculty/Student Collaboration in the Undergraduate Shakespeare Classroom

Presenter: Amanda Di Ponio, Huron Underground Dramatic Society (HUDS) + English 2400E Collaboration: Theatre Practice in the Liberal Arts Classroom

#### Abstract

In 2023, as a recent hire (Assistant Professor, Drama and Performance, Theory and Practice) in the English and Cultural Studies (ECS) department at Huron University College in London, Ontario, Canada, I proposed and then piloted a collaborative course with our decades old, on-campus drama club, the Huron Underground Dramatic Society (HUDS). This paper considers the evolution of that collaboration from my first year working with the group—club to classroom—from 2022 to the present. For the 2025-26 academic year, and with the assistance of two undergraduate research assistants (URAs), I reworked an existing ECS course, English 2400E: Dramatic Forms and Genres, piloted for the first time in 2023-24 as practice-based experiential learning, in order to promote making within the classroom—through writing, performing, or both—the theory informing the dramatic forms and genres studied. Some students who signed up for this year’s ECS elective course confirmed that they did so because they wanted to explore the relationship between drama and performance, theory and practice; others because they were already doing so much work with the HUDS club that earning a credit was naturally appealing; and others still simply expressed art appreciation and wanted to take part. In both iterations of the class, students not only pushed themselves far beyond what they thought they were capable of but recognized that understanding performance, and performance-making, is vital to their skills development. This paper is an investigation into the value of practice-based faculty-student collaborations, of evaluating and experimenting with potentially effective methods and strategies for engaging undergraduate students in the study of drama. This year’s robust participation in both club and classroom will demonstrate that such collaborations are not only valued but should be encouraged at liberal arts colleges.

## **Applied Adaptation: Creative Collaboration in Shakespeare Courses**

Emily Schoenbeck, Augustana University

Creative, Critical, Collaborative—fan adaptations of Shakespeare are demonstrations of how amateurs can engage with literature in ways that are relevant and inventive, and these works by amateur fans can be a source of inspiration for a different kind of amateur: students. Fan adaptation practices require students to tangibly implement their close readings of the texts, as well as demonstrating to students a real role young adult Shakespeare readers can play in the Shakespeare canon. In my own most recent Introduction to Shakespeare course, I implemented a four-week long final project that required students to create a full web-based adaptation of *Much Ado About Nothing*. For the project, called U of Much Ado, each student had to submit three online components that could be hosted on a website—news article, video blog, podcast episode, etc.—and work with all of their classmates' components to tell an adapted version of the story as a class. Integrating long-form digital fan practices into classroom spaces allows instructors to center the collaborative nature of amateur knowledge in a twenty-first century environment. Fan practices in classroom spaces encourage critical close reading and use Shakespeare as a tool for building collaborative communities.