



DIFFERENCES THAT MATTER *on the Early-Modern Stage*



Jeffrey R. Wilson
(Graduate Syllabus)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

“You are never, ever only you”: the thesis of identity politics, which may turn out to be the definitive issue of the twenty-first century. This statement comes not from a theorist of identity, but in a riff on Renaissance drama and its legacy, Keith Hamilton Cobb’s *American Moor*, speaking back to Shakespeare’s *Othello*. Questions of identity—*What defines us? How does our individuality relate to the histories and cultures we carry? Why are physical and cultural differences such persistent venues for hostility between people?*—are all over pre-modern literature, even if the language to discuss them has only recently emerged. Nowhere is this more evident than in early-modern drama, partly because drama is the form of literature that makes the most of the visual, partly because early-modern drama was obsessed with social conflict.

This course explores questions of race, gender, class, religion, ability, age, sexual orientation, and intersectionality as they arise on the early-modern English stage. We will see how identities formed along these lines are represented in plays by Caryl Chesson, Dekker, Heywood, Jonson, Kyd, Lyly, Marlowe, Middleton, Peele, Sidney, Shakespeare, and Webster. Looking back through the lens of modern civil rights movements, we will ask how discrimination worked in the early modern age. What were its effects on individuals? How is it addressed—resisted, reinscribed—in modern scholarship? How can modern history and theory help us understand these distant texts and traditions? How can these conceptually rich plays help us understand the modern identity politics that are their legacies?

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HOW THE COURSE WORKS

The schedule below lists the readings assigned for each day. It also lists scholarship on the texts and traditions we'll talk about, and some theory on the issues under consideration. You don't need to read all the scholarship and theory, but they will come up in class, and you may want to check them out yourself.

Each session will begin with some informal chatting about the reading: did you like it? favorite characters? any parts you struggled with? what questions should we try to answer? Then I'll kick things off with some historical context for our readings. Starting in Week 3, we'll turn the class over to one of the seminar participants for a 15-minute presentation delivering an argument to launch our discussion of the day's readings. Those discussions will be the centerpieces of our meetings, our opportunities to analyze, question, debate the meanings of our texts. After a short break, we'll take about 30 minutes to workshop and perform a key scene from the week's readings (starting in Week 3, a student will be assigned to be our director each week, selecting our scene and bringing a vision to our performance). Having worked closely with the text, we'll have some time for open discussion, where you can test out ideas for papers, and think about the implications of our discussions for our understanding of identity today. In each session, some time will be reserved for instruction on research and writing strategies, with an eye toward your final paper. And in the final segment of each session, I'll provide some modern theoretical ideas and questions to frame the next week's readings.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Norms, Normal, Normalcy

Readings

Licensing Order (May 16, 1559)

Philip Stubbes, *The Anatomy of Abuses* (1583): Excerpts

Scholarship

Davis, Lennard J. "Constructing Normalcy." *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body*. Verso, 1995, pp. 1-21.

Traub, Valerie. "The Nature of Norms in Early Modern England: Anatomy, Cartography, *King Lear*." *South Central Review*, vol. 26, no. 1/2 (2009), pp. 42-81.

Bearden, Elizabeth B. "Before Normal, There Was Natural: John Bulwer, Disability, and Natural Signing in Early Modern England and Beyond." *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. 132, no. 1, Jan. 2017, p. 33.

Theory

Goffman, Erving. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Simon & Schuster, 1963.

Fiedler, Leslie. *Tyranny of the Normal: Essays on Bioethics, Theology & Myth*. David R. Godine, 1996.

Gay, Roxane. *Bad Feminist*. Harper Perennial, 2017.

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *The Lies That Bind: Rethinking Identity*. Norton, 2018.

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Weeks 2-3: Ethnicity and Race

Readings

Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy* (1582-92)
Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine* (1587)
George Peele, *The Battell of Alcazar* (1594)

Scholarship

- Race in Early Modern England: A Documentary Companion*, edited by Jonathan Burton and Ania Loomba. Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Hall, Kim. *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England*. Ithaca, 1995.
- Smith, Cassander L., Nicholas R. Jones, Miles P. Grier. "Introduction: The Contours of a Field." *Early Modern Black Diaspora Studies: A Critical Anthology*, edited by Smith, Jones, and Grier.
- Erickson, Peter, and Kim F. Hall. "'A New Scholarly Song': Rereading Early Modern Race." *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 67, no. 1, Aug. 2016, pp. 1–13.
- Hendricks, Margo, "Race: A Renaissance Category?" *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, Ed. Michael Hattaway. Oxford, England: Blackwell, 2003. 690-698.
- Singh, Jyotsna G. "Introduction: The Global Renaissance." *A Companion to the Global Renaissance: English Literature and Culture in the Era of Expansion*, edited by Singh. Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, pp. 1-27.
- Griffin, Eric. "Nationalism, the Black Legend, and the Revised *Spanish Tragedy*." *English Literary Renaissance*, vol. 39, no. 2, 2009, pp. 336–370.
- Slotkin, Joel Elliot. "'Seeke out Another Godhead': Religious Epistemology and Representations of Islam in *Tamburlaine*." *Modern Philology*, vol. 111, no. 3, Feb. 2014, pp. 408–436.
- Bartels, Emily. "Enter Barbary: *The Battle of Alcazar* and 'the World'." *Speaking of the Moor: From Alcazar to Othello*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008, pp. 21.

Theory

- Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*. Edited by Kimberlé Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, Kendall Thomas. The New Press, 1995.
- Delgado, Richard, and Jean Stefancic. *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*. Second edition. New York University Press, 2012.

Weeks 4-5: Gender

Readings

John Lyly, *Galathea* (1588)
Mary Sidney, *The Tragedy of Antonie* (1595)
Middleton and Dekker, *The Roaring Girl* (1611)
John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612-13)
Robert White, *Cupid's Banishment* (1617)

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Scholarship

- Renaissance Woman: A Sourcebook: Constructions of Femininity in England*. Edited by Kate Aughterson. Routledge, 1995.
- Kelly, Joan. "Did Women Have a Renaissance?" *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, edited by Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz. Houghton Mifflin, 1977, pp. 139-164.
- Howard, Jean E. "Crossdressing, the Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England." *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 39, no. 4, 1988, pp. 418-440.
- Van Elk, Martine. "'Before she ends up in a brothel': Public Femininity and the First Actresses in England and the Low Countries." *Early Modern Low Countries*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2017; pp. 30-50
- Chess, Simone. "Or whatever you be: Crossdressing, Sex, and Gender Labor in John Lyly's *Gallathea*," *Renaissance and Reformation*. Vol 38, No 4 (2015), pp.145-166.
- Krontiris, Tina. "Mary Herbert: Englishing a Purified Cleopatra." *Readings in Renaissance Women's Drama: Criticism, History, and Performance 1594-1998*, edited by S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies. Routledge, 1998, pp. 129-41.
- Bromley, James M. "'Quilted with Mighty Words to Lean Purpose': Clothing and Queer Style in *The Roaring Girl*." *Renaissance Drama*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2015, pp. 143-172.
- LaPerle, Carol Mejia. "Gendering Pathos on the Early Modern Stage: Persuasion and Passion in John Webster's *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi*." *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2015, pp. 19-38.
- Lamb, Edel. "'Shall We Playe the Good Girles': Playing Girls, Performing Girlhood on Early Modern Stages." *Renaissance Drama*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2016, pp. 73-100.

Theory

- De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. 1949. Translated by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier. Random House, 2009.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 1990.

Weeks 6-7: Class

Readings

- Arden of Feversham (1592)***
Thomas Dekker, *The Shoemaker's Holiday (1600)*

Scholarship

- Stone, Lawrence. *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641*. Clarendon Press, 1965.
- Howard, Jean. "Renaissance Theater and the Representation of Theatrical Practice: A Brief for Political Criticism." *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England*. Routledge, 1993, pp. 1-21.
- O'Brien, Emily. "*The Tragedy of Master Arden of Feversham*, True Crime, and the Literary Marketplace of the 1580s." *Shakespeare Studies*, vol. 45, 2017, pp. 113-120.

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Bartolovich, Crystal. "Mythos of Labor: *The Shoemaker's Holiday* and the Origin of Citizen History." Working Subjects in Early Modern English Drama, edited by Michelle M Dowd and Natasha Korda. Ashgate, 2011, pp. 17-36.

Theory

Marx, Karl, and Frederick Engels. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. 1848. Translated by Samuel Moore.
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf>.

Week 8: Sexuality

Readings

Christopher Marlowe, *Edward II* (1594)

Scholarship

Same-Sex Desire in the English Renaissance: A Sourcebook of Texts, 1470-1650, edited by Kenneth Borris. Routledge, 2004.

Bray, Alan. *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*. Gay Men's Press, 1982.

Smith, Bruce R. "Sexuality and the Play of Imagination." *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England: A Cultural Poetics*. University of Chicago Press, 1991

Traub, Valerie. "The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2001, pp. 245-63.

Lillo, Matthew D. "Rereading Transvestism and Desire in Christopher Marlowe's *Edward the Second*." *SEL Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 58, no. 2, 2018, pp. 285-305.

Theory

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*. Translated by Robert Hurley. Pantheon Books, 1978.

Weeks 9-10: Religion

Readings

Christopher Marlowe, *The Jew of Malta* (1589-90)

Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus* (1592)

Robert Daborne, *A Christian Tuned Turk* (1612)

Scholarship

Religion and Society in Early Modern England: A Sourcebook, edited by David Cressy and Lori Anne Ferrell. Routledge, 2007.

Thomas, Keith. *Religion and the Decline of Magic*. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971.

Jackson, Ken, and Arthur F. Marotti. "The Turn to Religion in Early Modern English Studies." *Criticism*, vol. 46, no. 1, pp. 167-90.

Reinhard Lupton, Julia. "The Religious Turn (to Theory) in Shakespeare Studies." *English Language Notes*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2006, pp. 145-149.

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- Preedy, Chloe. "Bringing the House Down: Religion and the Household in Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*." *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 26, no. 2, Apr. 2012, pp. 163–179.
- Degenhardt, Jane Hwang. "The Reformation, Inter-Imperial World History, and Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*." *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. 130, no. 2, Mar. 2015, pp. 402–411.
- Macdonald, James Ross. "Calvinist Theology and 'Country Divinity' in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*." *Studies in Philology*, vol. 111, no. 4, 2014, pp. 821–844.
- Britton, Dennis. "Reproducing Christians: Salvation, Race, and Gender on the Early Modern Stage." *Becoming Christian: Race, Reformation, and Early Modern English Romance*. Fordham University Press, 2014, pp. 142-72.

Theory

- Auerbach, Erich. "Figura." 1938. Translated by Ralph Manheim. *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*. Meridian, 1959): 1-78.

Weeks 11-12: Ability

Readings

- William Shakespeare, *Richard III* (1592)**
Thomas Heywood, *The Fayre Maid of the Exchange* (1607)

Scholarship

- Hobgood, Allison P., and David Houston Wood. "Ethical Staring: Disabling the English Renaissance." *Recovering Disability in Early Modern England*, edited by Hobgood and Wood. The Ohio State University Press, 2013, pp. 1-22.
- A Cultural History of Disability in the Renaissance*, edited by Susan Anderson and Liam D. Haydon. Bloomsbury, 2019.
- Johns, Geoffrey A. "A 'Grievous Burthern': Richard III and the Legacy of Monstrous Birth." *Disability, Health, and Happiness in the Shakespearean Body*, ed. Sujata Iyengar. Routledge, 2015, pp. 41-57.
- Williams, Katherine Schaap. "'More Legs than Nature Gave Thee': Performing the Cripple in *The Fair Maid of the Exchange*." *ELH: English Literary History*, vol. 82, no. 2, 2015, pp. 491–519.

Theory

- Stiker, Henri-Jacques. *A History of Disability*. Translated by William Sayers. University of Michigan Press, 1999.
- Siebers, Tobin, *Disability Theory*. University of Michigan Press, 2008.

Week 13: Age

Readings

- William Shakespeare, *King Lear* (1605-06)**

Scholarship

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- Martin, Christopher. *Constituting Old Age in Early Modern Literature from Queen Elizabeth to King Lear*. University of Massachusetts Press, 2012.
- Harkins, Matthew. "The Politics of Old Age in Shakespeare's *King Lear*." *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2018, pp. 1–28.

Theory

- Butler, Robert N. "Age-ism: Another Form of Bigotry." *The Gerontologist*, vol. 9, no. 4, Winter 1969, pp. 243–246.
- Nelson, Todd D. "The Age of Ageism." *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 72, no. 1, 2016, pp. 191–98.

Weeks 14-15: Intersectionalities

Readings

- Ben Jonson, *The Masque of Blacknesse* (1605)**
William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (1611)
Elizabeth Cary, *The Tragedy of Mariam* (1613)

Scholarship

- Hendricks, Margo, and Patricia Parker. Introduction to *Women, 'Race' and Writing in the Early Modern Period*, edited by Hendricks and Parker. Routledge, 1994, pp. 1–16.
- Chakravarty, Urvashi. "Race, Natalty, and the Biopolitics of Early Modern Political Theology." *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, vol. 18, no. 2, Spring 2018, pp. 140–66.
- Thiel, Sara B. T. "Performing Blackface Pregnancy at the Stuart Court: *The Masque of Blackness* and *Love's Mistress, or the Queen's Masque*." *Renaissance Drama*, vol. 45, no. 2, 2017, pp. 211–236.
- Warner, Marina. "The Foul Witch" and Her "Freckled Whelp": Circean Mutations in the New World." *The Tempest and Its Travels*, edited by Peter Hulme. Reaktion, 2000, pp. 97–113.
- Gajowski, Evelyn. "Intersecting Discourses of Race and Gender in Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam*." *Early Modern Literary Studies*, vol. 27, 2017.

Theory

- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review*, vol. 43, no. 6, 1991, pp. 1241–1299.
[Crenshaw, Kimberlé. *On Intersectionality: Essential Writings*. New Press, 2020.]

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

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| 10% | 7-page single-source paper due the day of your class presentation. |
| 10% | 15-minute presentation and discussion moderation. |
| 10% | Director for a scene performance. |
| 70% | 25-page research paper. |