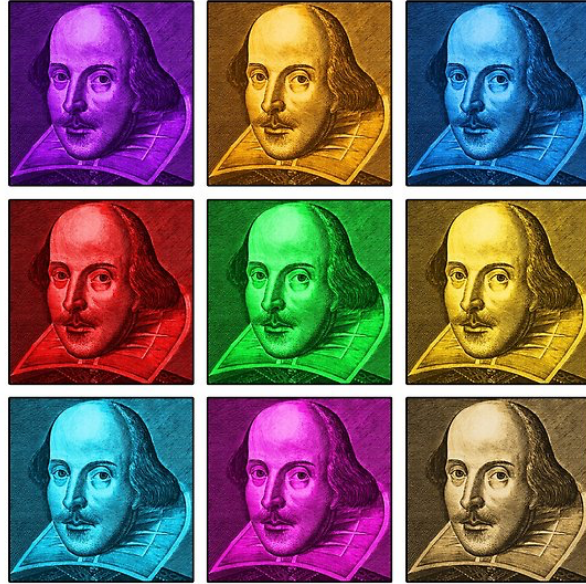


# Shakespeare and Identity

Professor Melissa E. Sanchez  
University of Pennsylvania



2-4 pm • March 3, April 7, May 5, June 2  
The Rosenbach Library of the Free Library of Philadelphia  
2008-2010 Delancey Place / Philadelphia, PA 19103

## Description

For centuries, Shakespeare was understood as a universal poet: his contemporary Ben Jonson declared that he was “not of an age but for all time!” and Samuel Johnson deemed Shakespeare’s characters the “genuine progeny of common humanity,” “not modified by the customs of particular places.” In the wake of feminist, queer, anti-racist, and anti-colonial history and theory, however, this view has been widely reassessed. Critics, teachers, actors, and directors have turned attention to Shakespeare’s copious representations not of universal sameness, but of the production and effects of gendered, sexual, racial, and national difference. Shakespeare’s plays were written in the decades when England’s domestic conflicts and international projects brought to the fore longstanding questions about the roles of men and women; acceptable forms of intimacy and expressions of sexual desire; the relation among race, religion, colonial expansion, and national belonging. Because they are deeply concerned with the instability of power, desire, and identity, these works continue to provide material for thought and discussion in the context of our own changing world.

This course will consider four plays that foreground issues of gender, sexuality, race, religion, and empire: *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Measure for Measure*, *Othello*, and *The Tempest*. We will discuss these plays in terms of their historical context, performance history, reception, popular adaptations, and continued resonances with debates about identity, difference, power, and intimacy. In addition, we will see the Lantern Theater Company’s production of *Measure for Measure* on April 14.

## Schedule

For each meeting, the assigned play is the only required reading. I have also suggested some optional critical readings that I recommend for anyone who wants more information as to the historical, critical, and theatrical contexts of the plays. These will be available as pdfs.

If you already own copies of the plays, you can use the editions you already have. If you need to purchase copies, I would recommend either the Oxford editions (if you just want good editions of the plays alone) or the Norton Critical editions (if you would like supplementary materials such as sources, historical documents, adaptations, and excerpts from critical responses).

### Sunday, March 3

#### **Primary Reading: *A Midsummer Night's Dream***

Supplementary Reading:

Montrose, Louis. "Shaping Fantasies': Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture." *Representations* 1 (1983): 61-94.

Loomba, Ania. "The Great Indian Vanishing Trick—Colonialism, Property, and the Family in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*." *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*. Edited by Dymphna Callaghan. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000. 163-87.

Rambuss, Richard. "Shakespeare's Ass Play." *Shakesqueer: A Queer Companion to the Complete Works of Shakespeare*. Edited by Madhavi Menon. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011. 234-244.

### Sunday, April 7

#### **Primary Reading: *Measure for Measure***

Supplementary Reading:

Dollimore, Jonathan. "Transgression and Surveillance in *Measure for Measure*." *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism*. Edited by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985. 72-87

DiGangi, Mario. "Pleasure and Danger: Measuring Female Sexuality in *Measure for Measure*." *ELH* 60:3 (1993): 589-609.

Aebischer, Pascale. "Silence, Rape and Politics in *Measure for Measure*: Close Readings in Theatre History." *Shakespeare Bulletin* 26 no. 4 (2008): 1-23.

### Sunday, April 14

***Measure for Measure* performance at the Lantern Theater Company (2pm)**

## Sunday, May 5

### Primary Reading: *Othello*

Supplementary Reading:

- Cavell, Stanley. "Epistemology and Tragedy: A Reading of *Othello*." *Daedalus* 108 (1979): 27-43.
- Matz, Robert. "Slander, Renaissance Discourses of Sodomy, and *Othello*." *ELH* 66 (1999): 261-276.
- Stockton, Will. "Chasing Chastity: The Case of Desdemona." *Rethinking Feminism: Gender, Race, and Sexuality in Early Modern Studies*. Edited by Ania Loomba and Melissa E. Sanchez. New York: Routledge, 2016. 195-211.

## Sunday, June 2

### Primary Reading: *The Tempest*

Supplementary Reading:

- Orgel, Stephen. "Shakespeare and the Cannibals." *Cannibals, Witches, and Divorce: Estranging the Renaissance*. Edited by Marjorie Garber. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987. 40-66.
- Singh, "Caliban versus Miranda: Race and Gender Conflicts in Postcolonial Rewritings of *The Tempest*." *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects*. Edited by Valerie Traub, M. Lindsay Kaplan, Dymphna Callaghan. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. 191-209.
- Jonathan Goldberg. "Discovering America." *Sodometries* [1992]. Fordham, 2010. 179-222

## Questions?

If you would like further information on the course content and readings, please contact:  
Melissa E. Sanchez, [sanchezm@english.upenn.edu](mailto:sanchezm@english.upenn.edu).

If you would like further information on registration, tuition, play tickets, or other administrative matters, please contact:

Edward G. Pettit, Sunstein Family Manager of Public Programs; [epettit@rosenbach.org](mailto:epettit@rosenbach.org) / (215) 732-1600, ext. 135

Emilie Parker, Hirsig Family Director of Education, Rosenbach; [eparker@rosenbach.org](mailto:eparker@rosenbach.org) / (215) 732-1600 ext. 120 **TEXTS**