

Welcome letter:

October 8, 2016

Dear Fellow Shakespeareans:

Welcome to the 2017 SAA Seminar, "New Approaches to *All's Well that Ends Well*." I am delighted to say that our seminar is fully subscribed, and I look forward to a spirited discussion of the many ways to interpret and understand one of Shakespeare's (dare I say) too frequently neglected plays.

As those of you who are regular SAA attendees know, the occasional seminar that is entitled simply with the name of a Shakespeare play or poem offers an opportunity for scholars working in the many and various corners of our profession to come together and focus their different lenses simultaneously. The program description of our seminar summarized some of the possible approaches; to remind you, it read:

"Recent debate about the authorship of *All's Well That Ends Well* has brought renewed attention to the complexities of the play, from its undated inception to its performance possibilities. The play's generic assignment, its attitude toward gender and sexuality, its theological orientation, its textual cruxes, its uncertain attribution, and its striking variations in popularity and performance are all ripe for reconsideration. This seminar invites new thoughts on the play from any perspective." I fully expect that your own "new thoughts" will extend the list.

Today's letter is intended to set the dates and assignments that will allow us to keep on track in preparing for the conference. I've put together the following schedule of deadlines, and although I'm not very technologically adept, I've also opened a shared Dropbox, entitled "SAA All's Well Seminar," as a convenient way for us to accumulate abstracts, bibliographies, and papers in one venue. I believe each of you should receive an invitation to that dropbox; please let me know if you do not. (If you do not have a Dropbox account, they are free and simple to open.) I will appreciate any further technical suggestions for enhancing our communal work; Dropbox is as far as I can take us.

Now, the schedule:

Upon receipt of this letter: please confirm that you have received this email, that you are still planning to attend the seminar, and that your contact information is accurate. I have posted the list of participants I received from the SAA in the shared Dropbox; please let me know if there are any inaccuracies, especially in your e-mail address.

By Monday December 7, 2016. Please send me, and post to the Dropbox, a working title and a short abstract of your proposed paper in Word format. Abstracts should be no longer than **200-300** words. It will be helpful to others if your abstract indicates something of your thesis and anticipated approach. In addition, please include

bibliographical information on two or three books or articles that you have found most stimulating in formulating your topic. We will all benefit collectively from pointers to key discussions, whether irreplaceable classic articles or newly published scholarship. I'll assemble these into a general bibliography and it, too, will be found on the Dropbox site.

By Wednesday, February 8, 2017. Please send your final essay, in Word format, to me and post it on the Dropbox site for all seminar participants. **Essays should not exceed 3000 words.** We are all busy people and we all will want to read your work carefully before the meeting. Therefore a tighter, short essay is far preferable. As a previous seminar leader cogently wrote, "A successful SAA seminar paper is likely to be neither lecture nor article nor ten random pages untimely ripped from a chapter. Instead, it's intended to be a small stage for a useful idea." Please also include an updated abstract, revised as necessary: these abstracts will be assembled for the seminar's auditors.

Important Note: The SAA mandates that I let the conference organizers know who has completed his or her paper no later than February 15; **if I have not received your paper by February 15, your name will not be in the program.**

March 8, 2017. Once I have received all of the papers, I will divide us into subgroups based as far as possible on commonalities of the essays, whether by topic or approach. Assuming that there are four groups of four, each of you will be responsible for writing *three* 250-500 word responses to the other members of your subgroup, ideally within two weeks of receipt of the other papers. These responses are the opportunity for specific suggestions, criticism, etc. They should be sent privately to the author of the other essay and to me, rather than to the entire membership of the seminar. In contrast, I will ask that each of you think of *two general* questions that arise from the papers in your subgroup and that will advance our communal discussion. These questions should be sent to me and posted on the Dropbox site.

April 5-8, 2015 SAA! We cannot know yet when our seminar will be scheduled, but that will become evident once the program is published. My goal for our two brief hours together is a well-balanced discussion of the issues and approaches we have found significant in our concentrated study of *All's Well that Ends Well*. The precise arrangements, including if possible drinks before or after the seminar, will be forthcoming in future emails. Meanwhile, welcome again, and please feel free to write to me at any time with questions or concerns.

Response letter:

Dear *All's Well That Ends Well* Seminar Participants:

I am happy to say that all of the papers are now in. Our numbers are reduced: we have 11 regular papers. Additionally, our two respondents are writing brief and intentionally provocative statements that will be distributed before the meeting and form the basis of some of our discussion.

It is now time for the writing of individual responses. Because we are fewer, I have divided us into four groups of either two or three. It is your job to read the other papers in your group now (of course you will read all the papers before the seminar meets) and write a 250-500 word response. I remind you that these responses are the opportunity for specific suggestions, criticism, etc. The responses should be sent privately to the author of the other essay and to me.

I also ask that you formulate two general questions that arise from the papers in your subgroup, questions that will advance our communal discussion. These questions should be sent to me and also posted on the Dropbox site in the folder entitled "General Seminar Questions."

Please try to prepare and send your responses, and post your general questions, in the next three weeks, that is, no later than March 17. That will give everyone time to prepare for a good discussion when the seminar meets.

Final letter:

Dear Seminar Members:

Thanks to all of you for your responses to each other and for your general questions. Your preliminary work will, I hope and believe, make for a thoroughly interesting and productive two hours in Atlanta.

To further help you prepare for the seminar, let me tell you that our discussion will fall into five parts, which I refer to briefly under the rubrics of character analysis; historical context; linguistic issues; early modern performance practices; and in conclusion, if we still have time, the eternal question, does it end well. Although you may immediately recognize that your paper addresses most closely one or other of these topics, discussion will be general. There will not be any paper-by-paper summaries, and everyone is encouraged to intervene on all topics.