

Ari Friedlander  
Sexuality from Below

Dear Participants,

I am very happy to welcome you to next spring's SAA seminar 40, "Sexuality from Below." With a fully subscribed roster of 16 participants, I look forward to a lively conversation in New Orleans. In this letter, I will discuss the seminar's aims, structure, and schedule, but before doing so, I am excited to announce that Patricia Fumerton (English, UC-Santa Barbara), author of *Unsettled: The Culture of Mobility and the Working Poor in Early Modern England* (Chicago, 2006) and director of the [English Broadside Ballad Archive](#), has agreed to act as a respondent for our seminar. I am grateful that Professor Fumerton will lend her expertise on the "low culture" of early modern England to our examination of sexuality from below.

### Aims

Social status has been central to many influential studies of sexuality in Shakespearean England. By examining the erotics of class difference, scholars have demonstrated the various ways in which socio-economic and political factors help produce early modern sexual dynamics between masters and servants, widows and suitors, teachers and students, and monarchs and courtiers. But in situating servants, or more rarely, the settled poor at the bottom of the social hierarchy, they often leave a range of figures out of the socio-sexual system, including vagrants, gypsies, disabled persons, prostitutes, criminals and the unemployed. This seminar asks: how might studying sexualized representations of social outcasts change our understanding of the relationship between sexuality and class? What effect does thinking about sexuality through figures "outside" the social system have on the binaries we commonly use to structure historicist work, such as order/disorder, social/sexual, and licit/illicit?

### Structure

In order to facilitate discussion and to ensure that everyone receives varied responses to their work, I plan to assign each of you to a smaller group of three or four people, based on the contents of the papers. I will ask each participant to write targeted responses to two other members of their group, and then to work as a group to devise some discussion questions, which I will circulate prior to our meeting.

**Please note that SAA guidelines prohibit listing in the program names of those who have not completed their seminar's written work by February 12<sup>th</sup>.** However, I am very keen that our pre-conference conversations occur as close as possible to the conference, so that they are fresh in our minds when we convene. I am therefore going to ask only for your seminar papers before that deadline. Your obligation, then, for your responses and discussion questions is moral rather than institutional. Please be considerate of your colleagues, and write thorough, thoughtful, and, above all, timely responses and questions.

## Schedule of Written Work

**November 1, or ASAP:** Please confirm that you have received this letter, that you are still intending to participate in the seminar, and that your contact information is correct. I am attaching here the current list of participants, and once I hear from all of you, I will circulate an updated list if necessary.

**Friday, December 18:** Please send me the following:

1. An abstract (200 words max).
2. A brief bibliography of 1-2 works.

I will subsequently send out a pdf with collected abstracts and bibliography to the group.

**Friday, February 12:** Please send me a 10-12 page seminar paper (3000 words max). I will subsequently send out a pdf with all of the papers to the group.

**Friday, February 19:** I will send you groupings and response paper assignments.

**Friday, March 4:** Please send the two 750-word response papers to me and to the authors of the original papers.

**Friday, March 18:** Each group will send me two discussion questions:

1. A discussion question based on the shared interest(s) of your response group, as they've emerged in drafting your response papers.
2. A discussion question for the whole seminar, based on your reading of the collected papers of the entire seminar.

**March 23-26:** SAA 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting held in New Orleans, Louisiana.

## Other Important Dates:

**January 1:** Conference Registration Opens, Final Schedule of events announced in SAA's January Bulletin.

**March 1:** Deadline for SAA conference registration.

Thank you all for your interest in this topic, and for being willing to share with me, and with each other, your valuable time and your considerable talents. I am honored, humbled, but most of all delighted to be joining you all in this intellectual endeavor!

I very much look forward to working with you.

All best,  
Ari Friedlander

P.S. Please don't forget to email me a quick note as soon as you can confirming your participation and contact details. Thanks again!