

Marianne Montgomery  
Gitanjali Shahani  
Shakespeare, Race, and Pedagogical Practice

The workshop format was a bit of an experiment for us. Basically, we ended up structuring it like a traditional seminar with non-traditional contributions. So everyone submitted something, but submissions ranged from reflective essays to syllabi to slides. Many people submitted multiple items. If I could change one thing, I'd require some sort of framing document explaining the submission. Some people wrote a framing letter or short essay, but some didn't, and it was hard sometimes to understand the context for the pedagogical materials submitted without a framing piece.

I've attached the initial letter we sent to participants. We followed the plan outlined in this letter very closely. In the workshop itself, we did not have structured response groups but instead grouped the discussion questions submitted by participants so that we could cover a range of topics.

Thanks for your work to make this SAA a success. We found the workshop very rewarding and were thrilled to have upwards of 35 auditors in attendance. I think this shows that there is an appetite at the SAA for sessions that take up urgent pedagogical questions and engage with present-day issues, including race.

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**SHAKESPEARE, RACE, & PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE  
SAA 2016**

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the “Shakespeare, Race, and Pedagogical Practice” workshop! We are pleased that you will be part of what we hope will be a stimulating, challenging, and inspiring conversation in New Orleans. Thanks also to Jonathan Burton, Kim F. Hall, Sujata Iyengar, and Virginia Mason Vaughan for accepting our invitations to participate in this session.

In addition to welcoming you to the workshop, this purpose of this email is to explain the workshop’s format, address logistics, and lay out our main deadlines in advance of the conference itself.

We first had the idea of putting together this workshop after attending the various panels on race in the early modern period at the 2013 Toronto SAA. It was clear from the discussion after these panels, both in the room and on social media backchannels, that there was much more to say. More recently, Kim Hall organized a seminar, “Early Modern Race/Ethnic/Diaspora Studies,” at the 2015 SAA. We hope this workshop can continue to build on the ongoing conversations about race coming out of these past meetings, but with a particular focus on our pedagogical practices. We have

included below the detailed proposal for this workshop, so you can see the kinds of questions and issues we hope to take up in our meeting. Also below is the full list of workshop participants.

A note on the workshop format: many of you have asked what makes a workshop different from a seminar. We proposed this session as a workshop in order to encourage submissions in forms beyond the traditional seminar essay of 10-12 pages. So everyone participating in this workshop (with the exception of our two respondents, Kim Hall and Ginger Vaughan, who will help to frame the conversation) will submit some materials to the group in advance of the conference itself (just like a seminar), but those materials may take various forms (unlike a seminar). These could include short essays, reflective pieces, lesson plans, digital modules, lecture outlines, sample assignments, archival resources, or other pedagogical materials. We encourage you to think broadly and creatively about what you want to share with the group and emphasize that posing questions or knotty problems is fine. None of us have all the answers on how to approach race in the early modern studies classroom, and the purpose of this workshop is to think through some issues together and share teaching strategies and approaches.

From our experiences in past SAA sessions, we have found that the best discussions happen when there is structured preparatory work in advance of the conference. Therefore, we are asking that you contribute not only your main materials, but also a secondary source bibliography item and a discussion question. We have created a Dropbox folder for sharing these various items, and we will shortly send each of you an invitation to join that folder, which will allow you to upload directly to it. (If you are not a Dropbox user, you can always email your contributions to us and we can upload them for you.) This is a private folder for our workshop. Only those with the link below can access the files in the folder, but you do not need a special login (just close any login prompts). Here is a link to view the items in the folder:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/l9n4php5k1rij7z/AAD7MTyAbYXJQ0jz589lmDjqa?dl=0>

## **SCHEDULE**

**At your earliest convenience:** Please confirm receipt of this email.

**December 15:** Please send a brief proposal detailing what you materials you plan to submit to the workshop. Please include also a brief annotated bibliography entry: one secondary source that you've found helpful for thinking about how you teach race and early modern studies. (Upload to Dropbox or email to Gitanjali and Marianne.)

**February 8:** Please send your final contribution for the workshop. (Upload to Dropbox or email to Gitanjali and Marianne.)

**March 11:** After reading all submissions, please send us a general discussion question for the workshop. (Upload to Dropbox or email to Gitanjali and Marianne.)

**March 23-26:** SAA meeting in New Orleans, LA. We'll focus our discussion on commonalities and divergences that emerged from our group's work. We'll plan to address each of the contributions and allow response time for all our participants. We also plan to get together socially before or after the workshop and hope you will join us!

Kim Hall has kindly shared her #shakerace hashtag with our workshop group, so we also encourage conversation on social media over the next few months.

If by some chance you are no longer able to remain in the workshop, please do let us know as soon as possible. We look forward to our shared work together and to seeing you all in New Orleans!

Best,

Gitanjali and Marianne

Gitanjali Shahani  
Associate Professor  
Department of English  
San Francisco State University  
[gshahani@sfsu.edu](mailto:gshahani@sfsu.edu)

Marianne Montgomery  
Associate Professor  
Department of English  
East Carolina University  
[montgomerym@ecu.edu](mailto:montgomerym@ecu.edu)

**Title:** Shakespeare, Race, and Pedagogical Practice

**Proposal:**

This pedagogically-oriented workshop builds on the three 2013 SAA panels on race in the early modern period. The questions generated by these panels (both during the sessions and on social media) seem especially relevant in the wake of last year's events in Ferguson, the #blacklivesmatter movements across the country, and religious and ethnic conflicts globally. Our workshop offers participants the opportunity to revisit these questions and conversations in order to provide new perspectives on issues related to teaching race and Shakespeare in the 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom.

Critical work in the past decade on global traffic, colonial encounters, geohumoralism, and intersecting categories of difference has deepened our understanding of the complexity of racialized discourses in the early modern period, but how can we best teach this complexity? How might we complicate students' responses to black lives in the Shakespearean text, whether Othello or Cleopatra or Morocco or the nameless Ethiopes in many a speech? What pedagogical strategies might we use to help students so that they can both understand the past more deeply and recognize privilege, injustice, inequality, and racism in the present? What is gained by historicizing race, and what historical contexts, archival materials, and critical readings are most useful in teaching? What presentist approaches might be helpful? How might Shakespeare speak to contemporary debates about racial violence, immigration, surveillance, and justice?

We invite participants to offer local and global perspectives from within and outside the U.S. Contributions might consider how the teaching of Shakespeare and race is inflected both regionally and nationally. For example, they may take up regional differences within the U.S. (urban/rural, North/South). They may examine Shakespeare in the context of histories of slavery, segregation, and colonialism in different historical and geographical contexts.

Participants will share short essays, lesson plans, digital modules, lecture outlines, assignments, or other pedagogical materials in advance of the workshop. Our objective will be to develop teaching strategies that help students become better readers of Shakespearean texts and the global political contexts in which they circulate.

## Workshop Participants

Jonathan Burton  
Whittier College  
jburton@whittier.edu

Brinda Charry  
Keene State College  
bcharry@keene.edu

Vanessa Corredera  
Andrews University  
correder@andrews.edu

Jason M. Demeter  
Marymount University  
jason.demeter@marymount.edu

Evelyn Gajowski  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
shakespe@unlv.nevada.edu

Douglas E. Green  
Augsburg College  
green@augsborg.edu

Kim Hall  
Barnard College  
khal@barnard.edu

Benjamin Hilb  
University of South Florida  
benjamin.hilb@gmail.com

Sujata Iyengar  
University of Georgia  
iyengar@uga.edu

Mira A. Kafantaris  
Ohio State University  
kafantaris.6@osu.edu

Nedda Mehdizadeh  
University of California, Los Angeles  
nmehdiz@ucla.edu

Sara Morrison  
William Jewell College  
morrison@william.jewell.edu

Jennifer Park  
UNC Chapel Hill  
jennifer.m.park@gmail.com

Virginia Mason Vaughan  
Clark University  
vvaughan@clarku.edu

Jessica Anne Walker  
Alabama A&M University  
jessawalk@gmail.com

Cordelia Zukerman  
University of Michigan  
czukerma@umich.edu