

Feedback – Shakespeare Association of America Annual Meeting 2016

‘Early Modern Sensory Interactions’ Seminar

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New Orleans was our first experience leading a seminar for SAA, and we found it to be an extremely positive and fruitful experience. Our correspondence followed the models provided, so are probably not of further use as exemplars, but we did find that certain decisions contributed positively to a positive seminar environment in which participants all felt able to contribute and were able to move beyond individual papers to wider points of discussion.

We circulated two pieces of critical-theoretical reading at the beginning of the process, which seemed to provide particular points of continuity and indeed facilitated discussion in the seminar. We also spent significant time grouping the abstracts in sets of three, asking each three to comment on one another’s work. We began the discussion in New Orleans by asking each triplet to speak about one another’s work and the points of connection, which was particularly helpful in moving discussion away from summarising individuals’ work towards collective discussion and engaging with the work of others. The use of Dropbox to share all work beforehand was a simple and effective way of encouraging participants to begin reading and thinking about one another’s work beforehand, which may also have facilitated more sustained and fruitful discussion in the seminar.

We also spent time (in a New Orleans cafe) thinking hard about discussion topics and key issues that cut across multiple papers, beginning the seminar by introducing these. We received a lot of positive feedback from participants and auditors to the effect that these topics facilitated productive discussion.