English 9127B: Performance Conditions in Shakespeare’s Time
Wednesdays 12:30-3:30
Weldon Library 257

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Description: This course focuses on the creation and staging of professional theatre in the age of Shakespeare. Students will study architectural evidence of performance spaces and consider how these spaces might have been put to use in practice, they will be introduced to practical theatrical concerns such as company organisation, payments for scripts, theatrical collaboration, rehearsal, and censorship, and they will examine and discuss surviving textual evidence of the revision and transmission of dramatic manuscripts through to performance.

6 January  Introduction to the course
   Plus seminar assignments.

13 January  Early modern stages
   Dramatists and actors had a shared understanding of the theatres in which their plays would be performed, and the opportunities these spaces provided. This week we’ll explore the stage space of the outdoor amphitheatres in terms of live performance.

20 January  Thomas Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*

Heywood was a contemporary of Shakespeare, and one of the most prolific playwrights of the age – he claimed to have a “hand or main finger” in 220 plays. This week we study the play for which he is today most famous. Please use my draft edition of *Woman Killed* (intro, text, and commentary). I’m finalizing this material for publication, and would welcome your comments.

27 January  Early modern stage conventions

Dramatists and actors (and their audiences) made sense of live performance according to established conventions, and some of these conventions can be recovered from close study of the drama. We’ll turn again to *Woman Killed*, but this time with an eye to those moments in the text that might be revealing of the mechanics of large-company performance in the open-air amphitheatres. We’ll study such aspects of early modern performance as “passing over” the stage; “as from” directions; the law of re-entry (and its occasional transgression – see Sc. 13); cue lines to get actors offstage; cue lines for exit after improvised dialogue and/or dancing; how to get corpses offstage; one actor as group “leader” (Jenkin).


3 February  Plots, Parts, and Promptbooks

Understanding how theatrical companies prepared for performance asks us to interpret the textual traces that survive from the period. This week will introduce you to plots, parts, and promptbooks, and we will begin to consider how they might have guided performance.
10 February: Rehearsal

Technology shapes perceptions of character. One will understand character and dramatic pace differently if one accesses a play in part(s), or as a single entity. This class will explore the implications of plays in parts. Please read the chapters below. You will also be asked to prepare a “part” from *Woman Killed*. During class time, we’ll try performing a scene or two from the play using only these parts.


17 February: READING WEEK

24 February: Thomas Heywood, *The Captives*

This play only survives in manuscript, and there has been immense debate about whether or not this manuscript was used as a promptbook. We’ll use this first week on the play to talk about themes and staging issues. Please use Paul Merchant, ed., *The Captives*, in *Thomas Heywood: Three Marriage Plays* (Manchester, 1996) – the edition is out of print, but a copy of it is available in Leanne’s office.

2 March: Thomas Heywood, *The Captives*

This second week on the play will be turned over to close discussion of the manuscript and its potential markings for performance. Please reread the play, using the Malone Society edition (available in Leanne’s office), and look specifically at, and for, evidence of playhouse use.
9 March The “foul papers” and “fair copy” debate
Interpretation of how texts were prepared and reproduced for use in early modern theatres has bedevilled our understanding of surviving documents, the cultures of professionalism that gave rise to them, and their modern editorial reproduction. W.W. Greg drew a distinction between foul papers and fair copy that enabled textual scholars and editors of the twentieth century to discern the manuscript copy behind printed texts. More recent scholars have challenged this methodology and its assumptions as unfounded. We’ll engage in class with Paul Werstine’s monumental re-examination of Greg, and also consider Stanley Wells’s analysis and categorization of quarto and Folio Much Ado about Nothing. Read any modern print edition of Much Ado (multiple editions are available at Weldon).


16 March Much Ado about Nothing: Quarto and Folio
This class will provide opportunity to apply last week’s discussion to a close analysis of Much Ado as a two-text play. We’ll look at variants between quarto and folio Much Ado, and discuss what we can say about their provenance. We’ll also talk about why this debate matters in terms of the modern editorial reproduction of early modern drama. Facsimiles of Q and F Much Ado are available on, and can be downloaded from, EEBO; you can also get print facsimiles of these texts from Weldon or me.

23 March Woman Killed with Kindness: Q1607 and Q1617
Woman Killed is another play that survives in variant versions, and the nature of the differences between these texts has led textual scholars to assume this is another instance of “foul papers” and “fair copy”. Students will be asked to collate scenes from this play, and consider editorial procedure on the basis of that evidence. Facsimiles of Q and F Much Ado are available on, and can be downloaded from, EEBO.

30 March Authors and the Dispersal of Authority
Over the course of this term, we’ve been implicitly decentring the place of the author, examining how actors, scribes, and bookkeepers help to shape both text and performance event. This week we’ll turn to think about these plays in their printed form as potentially directed at a readership, rather than a theatrical audience. Lukas Erne makes the case for Shakespeare as literary author, while Sonia Massai argues that agents in the printinghouse “edited” plays for print publication.


6 April Essay Preparation
Students will give a 10-minute mini-presentation in this final class, outlining the argument they will pursue in their final paper. Your presentation should include discussion of primary materials, relevant secondary reading, and methodology.

ASSIGNMENTS

- *Presentation* (50 minutes) 20%
- *Response to presentation* (10 minutes) 15%
- 3 x 500-word response paper 15%
- *Participation* (including part preparation, scene collation and analysis, final-class presentation) 10%
- *Essay* (4,000 words) 40%

Statement on Academic Offences
Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following URL:
http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf