***Gender, Power, and Politics on the Early Modern (and Modern) Stage***

Professor Marion Wells

ENAM/GSFS 419

T/TH 11-12:15

Sunderland 202

Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 1-2:30 PM

In this class we will explore the representation of gendered embodiment on the early modern stage, considering as we do so how theatrical embodiment intersects with other treatments of the body in early modern culture. We will read both early modern and contemporary theoretical accounts of gender as performance, investigating among other issues the use of boy actors, the representation of specifically “female” disorders (e.g., “suffocation” or hysteria), the performance of maternity, and the treatment of same-sex eroticism. Of particular importance will be the representation of the articulate or angry woman as the “shrew” or “scold,” and we will begin the class with an investigation of so-called “shrew-taming” narratives. Primary readings will include: Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Winter’s Tale*, Webster’s *Duchess of Malfi*, and Cavendish’s *Convent of Pleasure*. We will end the semester by examining the complex nexus of gender, race, and power in contemporary political and popular culture, focusing in particular on the representation of Hillary Clinton, Anita Hill, Michelle Obama, and Christine Blasey Ford, with commentary by Rebecca Traister, Brittney Cooper, and Lindy West.

Editions of all these plays are available through the online college bookstore. In general, I’m not concerned about which particular edition you use, as long as it is complete and unabridged. You may also photocopy plays from other editions if you prefer. An asterisk\* indicates that the reading will be posted to our class webpage, which you can access through sites.middlebury.com. **Where possible, I strongly encourage you to use hard copy versions of these texts that you can bring to class, annotate, etc.**

***Course Requirements***

**Papers**. You will write one long paper for this class (around 12-15 pages). This paper may be *either* a comparative research paper focusing on two or three of the plays we have read; *or* an analysis that brings one or two plays into substantial conversation with the contemporary material we will study at the end of the class; *or* a hybrid paper that includes personal narrative/non-fiction in relation to discussion of one or more of the plays. Each version of the final paper should include some secondary research, including theoretical and critical treatment of our central themes as well as articles focused on the plays. A shorter critical paper (6-8 pages) will be due mid-way through the semester.

**Presentations**. Presentations (15 minutes) will usually occur in groups of 2 or 3, mostly in the last 2 weeks of class. Choose a topic that fits with the day’s reading (e.g., “Hating Hillary”), and relate it creatively to the themes and readings we have done in the class. Your presentations should include:

\*Detailed discussion of a particular passage from the reading/video segment.

\*Bring this back to a particular theme or idea we discussed in relation to the plays. Reference to a particular passage/play is helpful.

\*Which critical/theoretical reading helps with analysis of your material?

\*optional: Bring in something your group found in the news or on a digital platform that you thought engaged usefully with your topic.

\*Questions for the class.

**Blog Posts**. For one class *every other* week I would like you to choose ONE passage from the assigned play that seems especially striking, central, strange, illustrative of major themes, etc., and write a brief informal post about it. You can choose to start counting on week 1 or week 2, but you should have a total of 6 posts by the end of the semester. The post is equivalent to a short online response paper—we can all benefit from observations that come up in these before class, and also use them during class discussion. It is also my hope that you will develop a portfolio of blog responses that may come in useful for your papers. The post must be submitted by 10 PM on the evening before *either* the Tuesday or Thursday class. Please note it is NOT possible to submit late blog posts, because the point really is to do them before class discussion, not afterwards. Blogs that fulfill the requirement and are submitted on time will automatically get full credit.

**Class Participation**. Class participation covers a number of important areas:

1. Arriving on time to class, with the appropriate text or texts.
2. Reading the assigned material carefully, as demonstrated by your contributions to class
3. Contributing thoughtfully to class conversation (at a minimum once per class, but also not dominating the conversation). Be prepared for me to call on you to bring you into the conversation.
4. Attending respectfully to others during class discussion. This means absolutely NO non-class use of digital devices. Stay alert and focused while others are speaking.
5. Pick a passage from the reading for each day that we could use to spark conversation at the beginning of class. This is a low maintenance exercise, but important!

**Beyond the Page.** This innovative group of professional actors who have been working in classrooms at Bread Loaf School of English is piloting work on the main campus this Fall. We will work with them to embody pieces of text—both dramatic and theoretical—in at least three of our meetings. We will also look at film clips from productions for these plays from time to time.

Students who have Letters of Accommodation in this class are encouraged to contact me as early in the semester as possible to ensure that these accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. For those without Letters of Accommodation, assistance is available to eligible students through Student Accessibility Services. Please contact Jodi Litchfield or Courtney Cioffredi, the ADA Coordinators, for more information: Courtney Cioffredi can be reached at [ccioffredi@middlebury.edu](mailto:ccioffredi@middlebury.edu) or 802-443-2169 and Jodi Litchfield can be reached at [litchfie@middlebury.edu](mailto:litchfie@middlebury.edu) or 802-443-5936. All discussions will remain confidential.

**Grade breakdown**:

First paper: 20 %

Class participation: 20%

Final Paper: 30%

Final Presentation: 15%

Blog: 15%

Sept 10: Introduction

***Angry Women: Bridling and Taming the Shrew***

Sept 12: Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*

From Mary Beard, *Women and Power*: “The Public Voice of Women”

Sept 17: Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*

Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution”\*

Carson, “The Gender of Sound”\*

Sept 19: Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*

Joannes Bramis*, “A Merry jest of a shrewde and curste wife, lapped in morrelles skin”* \*

Boose, “Bridling Scolds” \*

Sept 24: Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*

Finish up

***Anxious Masculinity: Then and Now***

Sept 26: Fletcher, *Tamer Tamed*

Robert Cleaver, extracts from *Godly Form of Household Government*\*

Thomas Laqueur, from “Making Sex”\*

Oct 1: Fletcher, *Tamer Tamed*

Excerpt from Mark Breitenberg, “Anxious Masculinity”\*

Excerpt from podcast, *This American Life*, Episode 46, Act 2, “Instructions for Sissies”

<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/10/male-trump-voters-masculinity/503741/>

Oct 3: Fletcher, Tamer Tamed

Stallybrass, “Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed”\*

***The Maternal/Witchy Body: Patriarchal Territories Enclosed***

Oct 8: Shakespeare, The Winter’s Tale

Schalkwyk, “A Lady’s ‘Verily’ is as Potent as a Lord’s”

Oct 10: Shakespeare, *The Winter’s Tale*

From Sedgwick, *Between Men\**

Oct 15: Shakespeare, *The Winter’s Tale*

From Paster, *The Body Embarrassed*, “Complying with the Dug”

Oct 17 Shakespeare, *The Winter’s Tale*

From Sady Doyle, *Dead Blondes and Bad Mothers*

*Oct 18 PAPER ONE DUE*

Oct 22 FALL BREAK

Oct 24 Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*

An Homily of the State of Matrimony\*

*The infortunate mariage of a Gentleman, called Antonio Bologna wyth the Duchesse of Malfi, and the pitifull death of them both*, from Painter, *The Second Tome of the Palace of Pleasure\**

Oct 29: Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*

Jankowksi, “Defining/Confining the Duchess”\*

Oct 31 Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*

Nov 5: Dekker, et al., *The Witch of Edmonton*

Deborah Willis, from *Malevolent Nurture* \*

Nov 7: Dekker, et al, *The Witch of Edmonton*

*\**from King James I, *Demonology, In Form of a Dialogue*

\**An Act against Conjuration, Witchcraft, and Dealing with Evil and Wicked Spirits*

Nov 12: Dekker, et al, *The Witch of Edmonton*

From Paster, *The Body Embarrassed\**

***Challenging the White Masculine Stage: “Eloquent Rage” Then and Now***

Nov 14: Cavendish, *The Convent of Pleasure*

Nov 19: Cavendish, *Convent of Pleasure*

Katherine Kellett, “Performance, Performativity, and Identity in Margaret Cavendish’s Convent of Pleasure”\*

**Arrange meetings with me to discuss paper topics for final paper**

Nov 21:Rebecca Traister, from *Good and Mad*, “Hold Your Temper/Hold Your Tongue”;

From Mary Beard, *Women and Power*: “Women in Power”

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, “Medusa”

Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, “The Discursive Performance of Femininity: Hating Hillary”

Nov 26: Traister, “The Circle of Entrapment”; “Minority Rules”

From Anita Hill, *Speaking Truth to Power*

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/17/t-magazine/michelle-obama-chimamanda-ngozi-adichie-gloria-steinem-letter.html>

Brittney Cooper, from *Eloquent Rage*: “Strong Female Leads”

“The Political Power of Women’s Anger”: Brittney Cooper and Rebecca Traister in conversation, video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XTP_zT9YQX8>

Nov 28: **Thanksgiving Break**

Dec 3: Traister, “Getting Away with It: Harvey”

Traister, “Sympathy for the Devils”

Lindy West, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/17/opinion/columnists/weinstein-harassment-witchunt.html>

Lindy West, “Brave Enough to be Angry”

Dec 5: Brittney Cooper on Kavanagh Hearings, from “Now this Election” (video link)

NYT (text and video): “Brett Kavanagh and Christine Blasey Ford Duel with Tears and Fury”

Time Magazine: “Myth of Nice Girls and Tough Guys” (video and text)

NPR short podcast: “Harnessing the Power of ‘The Angry Black Woman’”

FINAL PAPER DUE

**Selection of Relevant Texts on EEBO:**

Robert Cleaver: *A Godly Form of Household Government* (1603)

Helkiah Crooke: *Mikrokosmographia: A Description of the Body of Man* (1615)

William Gouge: *Of Domestical Duties: Eight Treatises* (1622)

James Guillemeau: *Childbirth, Or the Happy Deliverie of Women* (1635)

Edward Jorden: *A Brief Discourse of the Disease called the Suffocation of the Mother* (1603)

William Perkins: *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (1631)

Reginald Scot: *The Discovery of Witchcraft* (1584)

Jane Sharp: *The Midwives Book* (1671)

Philip Stubbes: *Anatomy of Abuses* (1583)

Henry Swinburne, *Treatise of Spousals* (1591)

Juan Vives, *The Education of a Christian Woman* (1523)

William Whately: A Bride-Bush, or A Wedding Sermon (1617)