Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century

At the start of the English Restoration, Shakespeare's dramatic output was widely considered as on a part with that of Johnson and Beaumont and Fletcher. But by the end of the eighteenth century, his reputation had risen far above those of his peers, approaching the lofty heights he inhabits today. How did this transformation happen? This class studies how Shakespeare became the Bard, a process that took place in the long eighteenth century (1660-1800). Acknowledging that many of the changes Restoration and eighteenth-century adapters made to Shakespeare appear risible to us—like adding a third death to the ending of *Romeo and Juliet*, or giving Caliban a sister—we will seek to understand such decisions in the context of new aesthetic practices and cultural values. We will study various Shakespearean performances, from plays like *King Lear* that tested genre boundaries, to stagings of *Hamlet* interspersed with comic entr'actes, to David Garrick's “Shakespeare Jubilee”, a 1769 festival that neglected to feature any Shakespeare plays. We'll also consider cultural practices that centered around the playwright, such as the Shakespeare Ladies' Club. This class will also examine the six eighteenth-century anthologies of Shakespeare published by the Tonson printing house in order to understand how the evolution of editorial practice shaped Shakespeare's reputation. Students will read a variety of dramatic, theoretical, and critical sources in order to understand the growth of Bardolotry in the eighteenth century.

**REQUIRED TEXT:**

Readings to include texts by Doody, Hutcheon, Johnson, Murphy, Rosenthal, Rowe, Rumbold, and others.

**RECOMMENDED TEXT:**

*The Norton Shakespeare.* ISBN 9780393934991. (You are welcome instead to use the Shakespeare texts you already own, as long as they are critical editions.)

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

10% attendance and participation  
15% seminar presentation  
5% presentation of final paper  
20% annotated bibliography  
50% final paper (14-16 pages)