

Staging the Social in English Renaissance Drama

ENGL 5410 / Doty / Tuesdays, 2:00-4:50



From *The Witch of Edmonton*

The plays performed in the public theaters from 1585–1635 offer a glimpse of London’s changing social relations. The city was expanding at a rapid rate, hierarchies of class and signs of status were in flux, and new professions and social types were emerging. Emphasizing the “public” in public theater, this seminar considers how early modern drama facilitates, depicts, and invites audiences to practice for themselves some of the many social relations that were coming to define urban life. The course also pays due attention to the dramatic forms themselves – tragedy, city comedy, tragicomedy – and how they elicit responses in audiences that were riven by religious, class, and gender differences. Other readings include excerpts from classic texts of critical social theory – Max Weber, Norbert Elias, Erving Goffman, Pierre Bourdieu, Jürgen Habermas, Michel de Certeau, and Judith Butler – to ask what it means to be *social*, which is a question that drama is uniquely suited to answer. So, in addition to reading a set of brilliant plays that are often overshadowed by Shakespeare, students will also be introduced to some critical theory useful for any specialization.

Probable Reading List (will take requests, too):

Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*
Thomas Dekker, *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*
George Chapman, John Marston, and Ben Jonson, *Eastward Ho!*
Francis Beaumont, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*
Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, *The Changeling*
Thomas Middleton, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*
John Ford, Thomas Dekker, and William Rowley, *The Witch of Edmonton*

Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great, Part 1*
Christopher Marlowe, *Edward II* or *The Jew of Malta*
Ben Jonson, *Epicene*
Ben Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*
John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*
John Ford, *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore*