

Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism:
Classroom Presentations

The basics: you'll be presenting a scholarly article that the rest of us aren't reading. It will either come from the "Recommended Reading" or from a collection of articles that I've been holding back, in reserve. I'll let you know your individual assignment.

Time: aim for around 30 minutes—no more than 40, please. (Marcos and Paul: your joint session should be more like 60-70 minutes.)

Somewhere early on, either right off the bat or after some other sort of brief introductory "hook" (a question, a short activity, a segment from a YouTube vid?), you'll need to give a *précis* of your article: tell us its topic, its thesis and major claims, its aims and motivations (what question it's trying to answer or what problem it's trying to resolve or deficiency it's trying to fill or misunderstanding it's trying to correct). Then walk us through an abbreviated version of its argument, simplifying, streamlining, highlighting, or even skipping where necessary, taking us down a sidetrack or two if they're interesting and not too distracting, but above all taking care to make the argument intelligible and manageable for an audience who is hearing it "cold" (and who won't be able to follow along in the text—unless, say, you project selected bits of it as a Prezi or a PowerPoint or a highlighted PDF). You're mostly narrating and describing here—conveying information—and so you'll be drawing upon your skills of summary and paraphrase. But you're also *teaching*, in a way, so pacing will be an important consideration (along with things like enunciation and intonation).

Somewhere along the line—you decide where (and it may be at more than one point), try to convey *your perspective* on this piece: let us know 1) what you find compelling/provocative/useful/revelatory about it, what it helps you do or see that other arguments don't, as well as 2) what, if anything, you find dopey/obscure/unconvincing/problematic about it. In other words: you'll want to convey the writer's argument accurately, but you don't have to be strictly neutral and objective; you can be critical, even show some emotion. (You could reveal your enthusiasms early—even *first*, as a kind of teaser—and save your reservations or critiques for at or near the end. Or you could do both along the way. Or...there's no strict formula here.) You may also want to indicate what areas of further research and analysis, what approaches or avenues of inquiry—about Shakespeare or the early modern period in general or some other topic—your article opens up (if any).

For much of your presentation, then, you may end up being a talking head. (This is a quasi-seminar, after all.) Feel free, however, to use the classroom computer to project text, graphics, media, etc. *BUT*: you should also think about how you could elicit our participation—with a moderated discussion, say, or a classroom activity of some kind. At a minimum, you should:

(over)

- Help us use your piece as a lens through which to “read” a particular speech or exchange or scene in the (screen)play that we’ve all read. Give us a passage from your text to chew over for a minute (the thesis, say, or some other key point), suggest a passage from the play to “apply” it to, and lead us in a discussion. (You’ll need to craft at least one or two good discussion questions.)

But you could also:

- Find a *performance* of the play (*Othello* and *Tempest*[s] only) and, with the aid of your article, help us “read” a representative scene that exemplifies the director’s treatment of some issue of race, empire, or colonialism (or his/her *failure* to do so).
- Suggest how your piece ties back to discussions we’ve had about similar issues in other works. (Provide specifics—or invite us to.)
- Help us put your text into conversation with one of the *required* secondary texts for the week: have us debate whether the main arguments (or even more isolated points) are at odds with each other or in substantial agreement with each other, and if so, how—or whether they simply present alternative but non-contradictory points of view. Does the one piece elaborate/elucidate/complement something said by the other? By contrast, does the first weaken/contradict/call into question the second (or vice versa)? Etc.
- Bring in some other historical or contemporary document that you’ve found on the web or in the world and explain how it sheds light on your piece (or vice versa).

Goes without saying that these are not the only options. If you can come up with something hipper or sexier to include as an element of your presentation—again, keeping in mind that this is a seminar, and you can be lively and compelling, even entertaining, without being hokey or contrived or condescending—then feel free. I’m always available for consultations.