

**Shakespeare's Women**  
**Humanities Seminars Program**  
Dr. Meg Lota Brown

Wednesdays 2:00-4:00  
September 21- October 19  
UA Poetry Center

Many of Shakespeare's most powerful, intelligent, and subversive characters are female. How were such vividly complex roles constructed in a culture that legally defined women as property, on the grounds of their intellectual and moral inferiority? Given the early modern imperatives of feminine silence, chastity, and obedience, how is it that women impel Shakespeare's plots, orchestrate conflicts, and—in many instances—impose “resolutions”?

This five-week course considers representations of women in three of Shakespeare's comedies and two of his tragedies. We will address the social and historical contexts of women's roles and how the playwright both generates and subverts his culture's assumptions about gender.

While examining the extraordinary vitality of Shakespeare's female characters, we will ask: what is their relation to the state, the family, the church, political economy, and desire? In short, what is their relation to order and disorder?

**Reading Schedule**

**September 21:** Introduction to Shakespeare and Women; discussion of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

**September 28:** Discussion of *Romeo and Juliet*

**October 5:** Discussion of *As You Like It*

**October 12:** Discussion of *The Merchant of Venice*

**October 19:** Discussion of *Othello*

Students are welcome to read any unabridged edition of the drama. Please bring the assigned work to each class meeting, including the first day.