In “Race and Gender in Contemporary Criticism: Problems in Shakespeare Studies,” we will examine current questions in early modern race studies, a category of criticism that began to flourish with the publication of Kim F. Hall’s 1995 *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England*. We will begin with Hall’s book wherein she employs black feminist literary criticism to reveal how tropes of lightness and darkness constructed racialized identity in the early modern period; she shows that these tropes continue to pervade contemporary concepts of race, gender, and beauty.

Among scholars of early modern and Shakespearean race studies, many acknowledge that their own identity becomes entangled with their academic work. Hall acknowledges that her “reading of dominant culture is fundamentally shaped by knowledge that is in fact taught in African-American communities about ‘white’ culture” (15). For this reason, we will interrogate how scholars’ identities effect their critical methodology, especially with respect to feminist interventions in Shakespeare studies. Texts under consideration may include: Ania Loomba’s *Shakespeare Race and Colonialism*, Dympna Callaghan’s *Shakespeare Without Women*, Ayanna Thompson’s *Passing Strange*, Joyce G. MacDonald’s *Women and Race in Early Modern Texts*, and Leah Marcus’s *How Shakespeare Became Colonial*. The majority of course readings will come from voices that are often marginalized in Shakespeare studies, and the academy at large: women, scholars of color, and especially scholars of color who are also women.

We will take a chronological historiographical approach in order to grapple with a variety of critical methodologies, as well as Shakespeare in historical and contemporary performance. Familiarity with Shakespeare is helpful but, by no means necessary.

**Graduate students from all disciplines are welcome, and encouraged to engage similar questions about representation, diversity, and major critical trends within their respective fields. Advanced undergraduates are welcome with instructor approval.**