

## Seminar presentation sheet

Academic year	2016/17
Seminar n°	3
Seminar title	<b>CRISES IN THE MERCHANT OF VENICE AND OTHELLO</b>
Teacher(s) (Name, SURNAME)	Nathalie VIENNE-GUERRIN / Lieke STELLING
University	Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3 / Utrecht University
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Teacher(s)' presentation	<p>Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin is Professor in Shakespeare studies at the université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3 (France). She specializes in Shakespeare's evil tongues, especially insults and also in Shakespeare on screen. She is the director of the Institute for Research on the Renaissance, the Neo-classical Age and the Enlightenment (IRCL, UMR5186 CNRS/Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3, <a href="http://www.ircl.cnrs.fr/">http://www.ircl.cnrs.fr/</a>). She is Co-editor-in-chief of the international journal <i>Cahiers Élisabéthains</i> (<a href="http://journals.sagepub.com/home/cae">http://journals.sagepub.com/home/cae</a>). See personal page: <a href="http://nvienneguerrin.jimdo.com/">http://nvienneguerrin.jimdo.com/</a></p> <p>Lieke Stelling teaches English Literature and Culture at Utrecht University. Her main research interests include Shakespeare, religious conversion, the English Reformation and humorous literature.</p>
Seminar presentation	<p>The seminar will focus on the way crisis is represented in <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> and <i>Othello</i>, with special reference to the issue of religious conversion and the verbal aspects of expressing crisis. We will discuss how religious conversion is explored in the plays in relation to the wider religious crises of Shakespeare's day, including the Protestant Reformation, the position of Jews in early modern Europe, and the renegade crisis, which involved European Christians converting to Islam in the Ottoman empire. The key question that will be addressed is how conversion can be seen as both a cause of and an answer to crisis. The seminar will explore the verbal forms of conflict that can arise from these crises. It will especially focus on the use of insult and slander in the two plays and on their destructive potential.</p>

Prerequisites to follow the seminar	Students participating in this seminar should have read the two plays by Shakespeare.
Seminar objectives /skills to be developed by the students	This seminar will extend and deepen the power of students' literary critical analysis through in-depth consideration of texts. Students will gain a broader understanding of the religious crises of the early modern period, especially in relation to the question of religious conversion. They will also explore the impact of verbal violence. Students will share analytical and critical views on the texts ascribed in class discussions and presentations, and will focus on research skills in the writing of a paper. Students will be invited to draw parallels between Shakespeare's world and our contemporary world.
Session 1 – Presentation / plan	General introduction: conversion and verbal abuse  <i>The Merchant of Venice:</i>  - Judaism and Christianity, Christianization of Jews - Jessica the renegade - Verbal abuse
Session 2 – Presentation / plan	<i>Othello:</i>  - Islamic-Christian conversion and the Ottoman empire - Othello as a convert? - Verbal abuse
Session 3 – Presentation / plan	The Moor, the Christian and the Jew: drawing parallels between Shakespeare's plays and current religious crises - short student presentations + discussions on this question.

## **Bibliography**

### ❖ Books:

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *Othello*. (We recommend that you use a good scholarly edition, i.e. The Norton Shakespeare, or the Arden, Oxford or Cambridge edition)

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *The Merchant of Venice*. (We recommend that you use a good scholarly edition, i.e. The Norton Shakespeare, or the Arden, Oxford or Cambridge edition)



❖ Articles

JANET ADELMAN, "Introduction," in *Blood Relations: Christian and Jew in The Merchant of Venice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008) 1-37.

PATRICK COLLINSON, "Introduction," in *The Reformation: A History* (New York: Random House, 2003) 1-14.

JAMES SHAPIRO, "The Hebrew Will Turn Christian," in his *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996) 131-165.

NATHALIE VIENNE-GUERRIN, *Shakespeare's Insults. A Pragmatic Dictionary* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

NATHALIE VIENNE-GUERRIN, "'You Have Rated Me': The Insults of *The Merchant of Venice*," *Litteraria Pragensia* 23.45 (2013) 82-97.

DANIEL VITKUS, "Turning Turk in *Othello*: The Conversion and Damnation of the Moor," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 48.2 (1997) 145-176.

**(Note: this list is preliminary and indicative of the seminar's major emphases; the seminar leaders may offer additional suggestions at a later stage)**