



Immersive Shakespearean Adaptations in New Media

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- USC undergraduate students will receive a \$1,500 stipend for course completion
- Non-credit course taught by a USC Mellon Digital Humanities Ph.D. Fellow
- Tutorials meet from 10-12pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays from May 28th–June 20th, 2019
- Enrollment is limited to 5 students. To apply, please send a CV/resume and letter expressing your interest in the course to hidw@dornsife.usc.edu by Friday, March 29, 2019

Course Description

Our techno-culture is obsessed with connection, authenticity and polysensorial experiences. From advertising buzzwords to innovative storytelling, the notion of being *immersed* carries high cultural currency in 2019. Immersion also promises to afford entirely new access to the past: you no longer need to read a play or attend a traditional performance in order to sponge up four centuries of the influence of Shakespeare's texts. Both 2Pac and the Ramones referenced *Macbeth*; an Apple commercial for the iPhone7 featured a scene from *Romeo and Juliet*; and *Game of Thrones* is cross-hatched with references to *Richard III*, *Henry V*, *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, and *Hamlet*. We are, quite literally, immersed in Shakespeare.

The genre of immersive theater is rejuvenating the way that audiences interact with 400-year-old Shakespearean texts, and this new mode of interaction is in turn breathing fresh air into how we understand classical narratives. The objects of study of this tutorial will be Shakespearean narratives that are immersive, whether experienced in-person or digitally. Through these narratives, we will also attempt to untangle contemporary culture's current obsession with the immersive experience. We will ask: What does *immersive* mean? What about *immersive media*? How is immersion informed and inspired by digital media? And why Shakespeare? During the course of the tutorial we will encounter multiple forms of Shakespearean adaptations and their impacts on contemporary storytelling such as Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More*, an immersive adaptation of *Macbeth*; Baz Luhrmann's beautiful built-world in *Romeo + Juliet*; and *Hamlet 360: Thy Father's Spirit*, a VR film adaptation that is now accessible on YouTube. We will also explore the rise of immersive experiences and why some of the most popular immersive experiences are Shakespearean adaptations.

Although Shakespearean tropes are central to the tutorial, the course does not assume prior knowledge of Shakespeare's texts. We will read selections from Shakespearean plays alongside some pertinent theory, and all texts will be made available to you in class or online. In order to reinforce and celebrate our study of immersive work, we will attend an immersive experience together as a class to practically apply our research. The central project in this class will be a co-authored Scalar book in which we can provide our own examples of and insights into these immersive and Shakespearean phenomena.