

Course Description: Because of the widespread dissemination and popularization of his works, William Shakespeare's complex and rich imagining of the lives of women in early modern England provides a powerful lens through which we can conduct an array of inquiries into the construction (early modern, modern, and post-modern) of the image and experience of "femaleness" in western culture. While the primary focus will be on female experience, we will also explore corollary constructions of masculinity, emphasizing ways in which these gendered and engendering aspects of social performance interact with and influence one another. Students in this course will read and reflect on a wide variety of cultural, historical, and literary texts (broadly defined) as a means of exploring rhetorical situations (past and present), conceptions of audience, and strategies of impact and influence (linguistic, rhetorical, visual, etc.) through which the cultural subject is formed.