

Sequence of assignments for ENG101: Shakespeare in Carceral Institutions (and touching on ENG103)

We will take as a given that education has value and Shakespeare also has value. The question that we are asking is not about value, it is about Shakespeare's work: why Shakespeare's plays? Why the particular plays that most seem to be taught or performed?

We will not be looking at the plays themselves; we are looking at choice and reception and reflecting on that.

ENG103 will be looking at the documentation of education and the arts in prisons in media. This is more amorphous right now, but their first assignment will contribute to the work of the ENG101: they'll make a list of documentaries about Shakespeare in carceral institutions, where they're available, and make an annotated bibliography of reviews/ think pieces on the docs.

This will facilitate Essay #1 for ENG101, which will ask students to critically review a documentary and the existing responses to it. (ENG103 will do a series of small research projects that may augment the work of students in ENG101, but I'll say more about that at another time.)

After we have looked at the documentaries and the phenomenon, we will look at some specific examples of Shakespeare performance produced within carceral institutions and at Shakespeare study done in a range of institutions. This will lead to a speculative argumentative essay answering the question of Why Shakespeare?

The final essay for the class will be a larger, more formal research essay wherein students will argue, using a range of sources, for a specific resource and its funding to be available in a specific carceral site. (This will not necessarily be Shakespeare-oriented.)