

SEX AND BOOKS IN SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND

GNDR_ST 361 & ENGLISH 338

SPRING
2023



Books and sex go hand in hand. We use books and other writing technologies to express desire, enjoy our sexuality, and explore and define our gender identities. Likewise, cultural anxieties about sex and gender often center on books, as recent calls to ban texts with queer themes from schools and libraries around the U.S. demonstrate. To make sense of the fascinating, often fraught relationship between sex, gender, and written media, this course focuses on a key period in Anglophone literary and sexual history: the so-called Renaissance, when book production exploded thanks to the printing press and England was rocked by rapid cultural, racial, and religious upheaval. Examining representations of sex and gender in books, manuscripts, maps, printed images, and other textual media from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, we will ask: how did different communities share ideas about sex? What could be published in print and what had to stay private? What texts survive today, and why? What distinguishes art from obscenity? In the process of exploring these questions, students will have the opportunity to work hands-on with premodern books.

Becky Fall

MW 9:30-10:50am
Kresge Hall 2-339