Forging Shakespeare

Emily Anderson
English
Dornsife College of Letters, Arts, & Sciences

This micro-seminar encourages students to think broadly about three humanistic issues: what constitutes “authenticity” in relation to an author’s work (Shakespeare’s in this case, but the conclusions can be broadened), how the relationship between an author and his text has been historically understood, and why, finally, Shakespeare seems to be such an active platform for thinking through these questions. Our first day’s lecture addresses these questions by getting students to think about “forging” Shakespeare in the sense of “making” Shakespeare: we discuss how the Shakespeare we know today is a product of many editorial and cultural collaborations. To this end, we examine textual variants of famous Shakespearean speeches, early biographical descriptions of Shakespeare’s life, and multiple artistic interpretations of how Shakespeare looked. The second class addresses issues of “forging” Shakespeare in the sense of “faking” Shakespeare: we discuss some of the famous Shakespeare forgery cases and do close readings of Shakespeare-imitations. No pre-circulated reading is required.