

The Renaissance Studies Program
“Truth, Falsehood, and Fraud in the Renaissance” Series
Presents the first lecture by

HOLLY DUGAN

*“A Rose by Any Other Name:”
Shakespeare and the Senses*



**4:00 p.m., Friday, January 31, 2014
Oak Room, Indiana Memorial Union**

Juliet’s famous musing on the arbitrariness of language in capturing the smell of a rose relies on a theory of olfaction that is at once transcultural and transhistorical. Though her point is ultimately about identity, it relies on an implicitly shared sense of the damask rose’s “sweet” scent. That it is still cited as a truism, despite scientific, historical, and literary arguments that argue against it, demonstrates how powerfully implicit our beliefs about olfaction are in constructing social meaning. In this paper, Professor Dugan begins with Juliet’s faith in the transcendent power of rose perfume to cut across social divides in order to posit more broadly the role of olfaction in constructing them. Focusing on various characters’ theories of sensation, particularly about the social meanings of olfaction, embedded in plays like *Romeo & Juliet*, *Henry V*, *Coriolanus*, *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice*, Professor Dugan isolates phenomenological paradoxes at work in Shakespeare’s plays between the imagined role of smell within them and its material presence in theatres. Connecting recent work on the history of the senses, affect, and space of the stage in early modern England, she argues that Shakespeare’s sensorium offers a unique opportunity to examine how embodied difference could be both socially constructed and experienced as visceral and true by its audiences.

Holly Dugan is Associate Professor of English
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