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Signature Shakespeare Program Expanded



Dean's Scholars in Shakespeare pose in the courtyard of the reconstructed Shakespeare's Globe Theater in South Bank, London.

More courses, scholarships and events on tap for the Dean's Scholars in Shakespeare program.

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One of Columbian College's signature programs has an expanded scope this academic year.

Dean's Scholars in Shakespeare—previously a one-year program—has now grown to a two-year program offering a select group of students a unique opportunity to explore the works of William Shakespeare in a global and multimedia context.

The new program now includes more scholarships, lecture series, cultural events on and off campus and a "living and learning" cohort in Cole Hall on the Mount Vernon Campus. The itinerary for the program's subsidized faculty-led study-abroad trip to London and Stratford-upon-Avon has also been enhanced, with more activities in Shakespeare's hometown.

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"Shakespeare is one of the most popular subjects among students," said Alexander Huang, program director and associate professor of English. "With a strong group of award-winning faculty and the Medieval and Early Modern Studies Institute, GW is the ideal home for the only honors 'living and learning' program focusing on Shakespeare in the nation."

New courses this year include a university writing class on "Adapting Shakespeare" with Adjunct Professor of Writing Joseph Fruscione, in which students examine various approaches to adapting Shakespeare to other mediums, and a Dean's Seminar on "Urban Shakespeare," taught by Associate Professor of English Holly Dugan, in which students explore how Shakespeare drew inspiration from London as well as students' own relationships to performances in Washington, D.C. Dean's Scholars will also have exclusive access to Folger Shakespeare Library as part of a special agreement between the library and George Washington.

"With this program, students can take advantage of GW's connections with leading D.C. institutions, including the Shakespeare Theatre Company, Folger Theatre and the Folger Shakespeare Library," said Dr. Huang. "The Folger Theatre has earned a reputation for producing innovative interpretations of works by Shakespeare and his contemporaries, and the Shakespeare Theatre Company is a major international player in the presentation and preservation of classic theater."

Students will supplement their research with "cutting-edge digital research tools," said Dr. Huang, including the free, open-access video and performance archive [Global Shakespeares](#), which he co-founded and co-directs, and the iPad "[Tempest](#)" app, an interactive textbook designed for social reading, authoring and sharing of the play.

Input from a new interdisciplinary steering committee of GW faculty, administrators and local scholars will help "strengthen GW's connections to local institutions" through the program, said Dr. Huang. Committee members include Associate Dean for Graduate Studies Tara Wallace; Professor of English Jeffrey Cohen, director of GW Institute for Medieval and Early Modern Studies; Associate Professor of English Patrick Cook, who will be teaching a Dean's Seminar on "Hamlet" in spring 2013; Professor of English Jonathan Gil Harris; Columbian Professor of History Linda Levy Peck; Professor of Theatre Alan Wade; and David Schalkwyk, director of research of the Folger Shakespeare Library and editor of "Shakespeare Quarterly."

Along with scholarly opportunities, the program also provides students with a unique social experience. The new living and learning cohort for Dean's Scholars in Cole Hall gives freshmen the chance to engage more with other students in the program. There are a total of 60 Dean's Scholars this academic year, 15 of them freshmen.

"Our Dean's Scholars are a group of dedicated students from a wide array of majors, including pre-med, law and engineering," said Dr. Huang. "This cohort is a great experience for new freshmen to interact with their fellow classmates, whom they will be taking classes with for the next two years."

The program will also provide students with faculty support in applying for either the Luther Rice Undergraduate Research Fellowship or the George Gamow Undergraduate Research Fellowship, and Dr. Huang said he hopes to eventually offer scholarships toward air travel for the program's 10-day trip to England that students experience during their sophomore year.

The next trip for the new class of Dean's Scholars will feature more time in Stratford-upon-Avon and receive more subsidy from the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences, said Dr. Huang, including a visit to the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, the world's leading charity for promoting Shakespeare featuring archives, events and five houses previously owned or related to Shakespeare.

Not all Dean's Scholars in Shakespeare events are just for students. A new Dean's Lecture in Shakespeare series, launched this fall, will feature Shakespeare scholars from around the world and is free and open to the public. More than 120 people attended the series' inaugural lecture by Director Emerita of the Folger Shakespeare Library Gail Kern Paster on Sept. 7. Dr. Paster spoke about representations of Shylock and Othello throughout the century, using images from the Folger Shakespeare Library Archives.

Dr. Huang said the series has broad appeal because it relates Shakespeare's work with larger themes about art, life and politics.

"The series is an opportunity for everyone at GW to explore what it means to engage with important ideas and artistic expression and the role of these ideas in our lives," he said.

Future speakers include Dennis Kennedy, former Samuel Beckett Chair of Drama at Trinity College Dublin, who will lecture on the culture of the Shakespeare spectator; and Erika Lin, assistant professor of English at George Mason University, who will speak about her new book "Shakespeare and the Materiality of Performance."

The program will also host a symposium in January on digital humanities, in collaboration with the Medieval and Early Modern Studies Institute, the Department of English, the University Writing Program and the Office of the Provost.

The university's location and the connections of its faculty provide Dean's Scholars in Shakespeare with scholarly and cultural opportunities unavailable at any other institution, said Dr. Huang.

"The rich resources of GW and Washington, D.C., provide a unique home for the Dean's Scholars in Shakespeare," he said.

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