MAKING MUCH OF RACIAL MIXING: READING
SHAKESPEARE’S TITUS ANDRONICUS ALONGSIDE THE
AMERICAN MULTICULTURAL MOVEMENT

Kyle Grady, Ph.D. / Chapman University

Wednesday, March 6, 2019, 4pm. Galbraith Hall 254

This talk examines how popular approaches to racial mixing obscure quotidian histories. In contemporary America, the Multicultural Movement worked to bring mixedness back into the popular consciousness, but it also helped give rise to post-racial beliefs that racial mixing — particularly between black and white people — offered a salve for the intransigent racism of the past. Such a perspective hinges on the notion that mixedness is new, even while the work of iconic writers like Frederick Douglass reveal it to be a centuries-old reality of American demographics. In this talk, I argue that such misconceptions about racial mixing are not isolated to the American example. Early modern accounts of interracialism between English and African people often took a similar approach, linking racial mixing to drastic and impending cultural consequences. I read Shakespeare’s Titus Andronicus — a play that refers to racial mixing as an “experiment” — alongside the example of the Multicultural Movement to demonstrate how sensationalized accounts about racial mixing belie histories that are both mundane and problematic. In conjunction with exploring lesser-known early modern histories, this talk considers what it means to examine a historical period that held misconceptions similar to our own.