

Dr Erin Sullivan

Lecturer and Fellow

[Shakespeare Institute \(/schools/edacs/departments/shakespeare/index.aspx\)](https://schools/edacs/departments/shakespeare/index.aspx)

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About

I am a cultural historian and literary scholar interested in the relationship between identity, culture, and artistic expression. My primary focus is on Shakespeare and other Renaissance literature and the ways in which this writing engages with contemporary religious, scientific and philosophical ideas about what it means to be a living, feeling, and thinking human being. Increasingly I am also focusing on these issues in a modern context.

Qualifications

- PhD (UCL)
- PGCert in Academic Practice (Open University)
- MA (Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham)
- BA (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

Biography

I studied for a BA in English at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, after which I moved to England on a Fulbright postgraduate scholarship to study for a MA in Shakespeare Studies at the Shakespeare Institute. I completed my PhD at University College London, where I held the Roy Porter Memorial Studentship and was jointly affiliated with the English department and the Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine.

Teaching

Both my teaching and my research interests are broadly interdisciplinary, weaving together historical, cultural, and aesthetic concerns. I regularly convene modules on 'Shakespeare's Legacy' and 'Research Methods', and I also contribute to modules on 'Shakespeare's Craftsmanship', 'Shakespeare, the Playwright, and his Drama', and the undergraduate 'Shakespeare' course.

As Tutor for Distance Learning at the Shakespeare Institute I also help organise the [distance learning \(DL\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/edacs/departments/shakespeare/distancelarning/index.aspx) (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/edacs/departments/shakespeare/distancelarning/index.aspx>) options we offer through our [MA Shakespeare and Theatre](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/postgraduate/courses/taught/english/shakespeare-theatre.aspx) (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/postgraduate/courses/taught/english/shakespeare-theatre.aspx>) and [MA Shakespeare and Education](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/postgraduate/courses/taught/english/shakespeare-education.aspx) (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/postgraduate/courses/taught/english/shakespeare-education.aspx>) programmes. This work has led me to get involved in several elearning initiatives and funding bids - most recently the acquisition of in-house recording equipment for the Shakespeare Institute hall, which has allowed us to podcast many of our Thursday seminars for off-campus students - and I also write about pedagogical questions, elearning and otherwise.

Postgraduate supervision

I currently supervise students working on poisoning in Jacobean drama, dreams and genre in Shakespeare, Catholic theology and Renaissance literature, magic and natural philosophy in Shakespeare, and Korean adaptations of Shakespeare.

I would be interested in hearing from prospective research students working in any of the research areas outlined below.

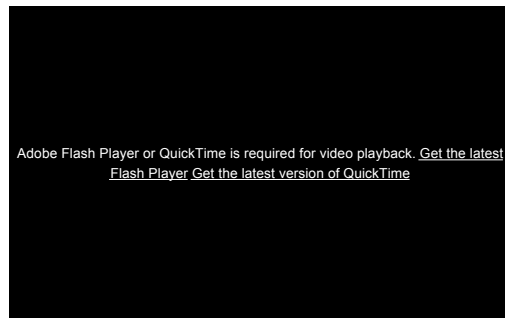
Research

I am interested in the intersection of culture, belief, and identity, chiefly in renaissance and early modern England, but also in other times and places. My research to date has dealt with this broad field of interest largely through the lens of the history of emotion and psychology.

I am currently completing a monograph called *Beyond Melancholy: Sadness and Selfhood in Renaissance England*, a project that has taken me deep into the history of medicine and religion in Shakespeare's time. I am especially interested in the ways in which medical and religious knowledge offered competing models for understanding the origins, meanings, and uses of sadness and the kinds of selfhood it produced, as well as the ways in which different kinds of literary writings (including plays, poetry, diaries, and other life writings) participate in this debate. My research on early modern emotions history has also led to several shorter publications, as well as an edited collection currently underway with Dr Richard Meek (Hull) entitled *The Renaissance of Emotion: Understanding Affect in Early Modern Literature and Culture*. In 2013 I held a six-week Universitas21 Fellowship at the University of Queensland's 'node' in the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the History of the Emotions, where I pursued research on both of these book projects, gave a [public lecture](http://www.historyofemotions.org.au/events/beyond-melancholy-sadness-and-selfhood-in-renaissance-england.aspx) (<http://www.historyofemotions.org.au/events/beyond-melancholy-sadness-and-selfhood-in-renaissance-england.aspx>) at the UQ Art Gallery, and talked about my work on [Australian national radio](http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/weekendarts/erin-sullivan/4663060) (<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/weekendarts/erin-sullivan/4663060>).

In addition to this primary research area I am also interested in the wider cultural use of Shakespeare in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, especially in relationship to cultural identity and community. In 2012 I led a highly collaborative project called 'A Year of Shakespeare' that investigated the presence of Shakespeare in the London Olympic Celebrations. Over 80 multilingual and intercultural productions and events involving Shakespeare were staged during this year - including the Globe to Globe Festival in London and the World Shakespeare Festival across the UK - and our project website www.yearofshakespeare.com (<http://www.yearofshakespeare.com>) documented the cultural conversation arising from each of these performances. This project has led to two edited collections for the Arden Shakespeare series: *A Year of Shakespeare: Re-living the World Shakespeare Festival* (2013) and the forthcoming *Shakespeare on the Global Stage: Performance and Festivity in the Olympic Year*. The project also formed the basis of a REF 2014 impact case study for my school.

Other research interests include the study of illness narratives (that is, how people write about their physical and mental suffering) and the history of 'human nature', especially as it is defined in relation to the animal world.



[video transcript \(/accessibility/transcripts/artsandlaw/shakespeare/sullivan-erin-research.aspx\)](https://schools/edacs/departments/shakespeare/sullivan-erin-research.aspx)

Other activities

Outreach and Public Engagement

I am very interested in encouraging greater public engagement with the work that goes on in academia. I am a trustee of the British Shakespeare Association, which seeks to establish connections across academia, the performing arts, and education, and I am involved in a variety of projects relating to public engagement with the history of medicine and medical humanities. To that end I have spoken at the Cheltenham Literary Festival on madness in literature, have been featured twice on Melvyn Bragg's 'In Our Time' talking about Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* and *The Tempest*, and have discussed humoral theory with Tony Robinson for his Channel 4 documentary about 'Superstitions' in history. My research on the 2012 World Shakespeare Festival was the subject of a REF 2014 Impact Case Study for the School of English, Drama, and American and Canadian Studies.

I also act as a historical advisor for Wellcome Trust-funded arts groups dealing with the medical culture of renaissance Europe and I have written several times for the medical journal *The Lancet*, contributing pieces on the history of madness, the mind, and literature's engagement with medicine. I am happy to hear from media organizations and arts groups interested in pursuing projects related to my research interests. Links to some of the events, projects, and publications I've worked on are listed below:

- [The Anatomy of Melancholy](http://www.stanscafe.co.uk/project-anatomy-of-melancholy.html) (<http://www.stanscafe.co.uk/project-anatomy-of-melancholy.html>), a Wellcome Trust-funded stage adaptation by Stan's Cafe (2013)
- [The Anatomy of Melancholy](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b010y30m) (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b010y30m>), In Our Time, Radio 4 (2011)
- [Baroque Box](http://www.elastictheatre.com), (<http://www.elastictheatre.com>) a Wellcome Trust-funded physical theatre piece exploring the mind-body relationship in seventeenth-century Europe, and [Julius](http://www.elastictheatre.com/new-julius/) (<http://www.elastictheatre.com/new-julius/>), a Wellcome Trust-funded video installation exploring intrusive thoughts and OCD today, Vocal Motions Elastic Theatre (2011)
- [The Stoned Ages](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_1DkW6zZQQI) (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_1DkW6zZQQI), History Channel documentary on the history of drug use and the drug trade, presented by *Breaking Bad*'s Dean Norris (2011)
- [The Glass Piano](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00s4rxr) (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00s4rxr>), a radio documentary for Radio 3's 'Between the Ears' series on music and female melancholy (2010)
- [Writing about Medicine](http://www.wellcomecollection.org/whats-on/events/writing-about-medicine.aspx) (<http://www.wellcomecollection.org/whats-on/events/writing-about-medicine.aspx>), panel discussion about medicine, literature, and the Wellcome Trust Book Prize, Wellcome Collection (2010)
- [Mind and Heart: Body and Soul](http://www.wellcomecollection.org/whats-on/events/mind-and-body-heart-and-soul.aspx) (<http://www.wellcomecollection.org/whats-on/events/mind-and-body-heart-and-soul.aspx>), public lecture on the history of the mind-body relationship, Wellcome Collection (2010); blogged about on the [Wellcome Collection blog](http://wellcomecollection.wordpress.com/2010/09/30/wellcome-library-insight-event-mind-and-body-heart-and-soul/) (<http://wellcomecollection.wordpress.com/2010/09/30/wellcome-library-insight-event-mind-and-body-heart-and-soul/>) (2010)
- [Brought to Life: Exploring the History of Medicine](http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/broughttolife/aboutus/meanstobowell.aspx) (<http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/broughttolife/aboutus/meanstobowell.aspx>), history of medicine resource for students and educators, Science Museum (2009)
- [Historical Keyword entries for 'Mind', 'Nostalgia', 'Insomnia'](http://www.thelancet.com/search/results?searchTerm=erin+sullivan&fieldName=Authors&journalFromWhichSearchStarted=lancet) (<http://www.thelancet.com/search/results?searchTerm=erin+sullivan&fieldName=Authors&journalFromWhichSearchStarted=lancet>), *The Lancet* (2008-)

Professional Service

I am co-editor for reviews for the journal *Cultural History*, and from 2010-2013 I was membership secretary for the British Shakespeare Association. At the Shakespeare Institute I am Tutor for Distance Learning, Website and Media Officer, Staff Library Representative, and Staff Liaison for the Student-Staff Consultative Committee.

I also act as a peer reviewer for several journals, publishing houses, and funding bodies, including *Shakespeare*, *Medical History*, Routledge, and the Wellcome Trust.

Books:

- (edited, with Richard Meek) *The Renaissance of Emotion: Understanding Affect in Early Modern Literature and Culture* (Manchester University Press, forthcoming 2014)
- (edited, with Paul Prescott) *Shakespeare on the Global Stage: Performance and Festivity in the Olympic Year* (Arden/Bloomsbury, forthcoming 2014)
- (edited, with Paul Edmondson and Paul Prescott) ***A Year of Shakespeare: Re-living the World Shakespeare Festival*** (http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=uchLQAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false) (Arden/Bloomsbury, 2013)

Journal articles and book chapters:

- 'Introduction: Re-reading the Early Modern Passions' (with Richard Meek) and 'The Passions of Thomas Wright', in *The Renaissance of Emotion* (forthcoming)
- 'Olympic Shakespeare and the Idea of Legacy', in *Shakespeare on the Global Stage* (forthcoming)
- 'Internal and External Shakespeare: Constructing the Twenty-first Century Classroom', in *Shakespeare and the Digital World*, ed. by Christie Carson and Peter Kirwan (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming)
- **'Doctrinal Doubleness and the Meaning of Despair in William Perkins's "Table" and Nathaniel Woodes's *The Conflict of Conscience*'** (http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/studies_in_philology/v110/110.3.sullivan.html), *Studies in Philology* 110:3 (2013)
- **'Olympic Performance in the Year of Shakespeare'** (<http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=uchLQAAQBAJ&pg=PA3&lpg=PA3&dq=A+Year+of+Shakespeare:+Re-living+the+World+Shakespeare+Festival+olympic+performance+in+the+year+of+shakespeare&source=bl&ots=FZS0iUkzF&sig=V8-o43RkpsMafMHvP0ttbEcI&hl=en&sa=X&ei=IRqUtaDInW0QXNxcC4Ag&ved=0CD0Q6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=A%20Year%20of%20Shakespeare%3A%20Re-living%20the%20World%20Shakespeare%20Festival%20olympic%20performance%20in%20the%20year%20of%20shakespeare&f=false>) and several production reviews in *A Year of Shakespeare* (Arden/Bloomsbury, 2013)
- **'The History of the Emotions: Past, Present, Future'** (http://www.academia.edu/3248598/The_History_of_the_Emotions_Past_Present_Future), *Cultural History* 2:1 (2013)
- **'"The Watchful Spirit": Religious Anxieties toward Sleep in the Notebooks of Nehemiah Wallington'** (http://www.academia.edu/2517823/The_Watchful_Spirit_Religious_Anxieties_towards_Sleep_in_the_Notebooks_of_Nehemiah_Wallington_1598-1658), *Cultural History* 1:1 (2012) - winner of the 2011 International Society for Cultural History Essay Prize
- **'A Disease unto Death: Sadness in the Time of Shakespeare'** (http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=MeQTAAAQBAJ&pg=PA159&lpg=PA159&dq=A+disease+unto+death+Emotions+and+Health.+1200-1700&source=bl&ots=I8pyc5G5ew&sig=roL.VaqQykt2_4ZIKHZEtAhhRz0&hl=en&sa=X&ei=IVFqUrOaM4Go0AWKqYGIDQ&ved=0CEqQ6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=A%20disease%20unto%20death%20Emotions%20and%20Health%2C%201200-1700&f=false), in *Emotions and Health 1200-1700*, ed. by Elena Carrera, Brill (Brill, 2013)
- **'Culture, Literature, and the History of Medicine: A Review Essay'** (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3198652/>), *Medical History* 55:4 (2011)
- **'Physical and Spiritual Illness: Narrative Appropriations of the Bills of Mortality'** (http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=Q9K9MHdH82AC&pg=PA76&lpg=PA76&dq=%E2%80%98Physical+and+Spiritual+Illness:+Narrative+Appropriations+of+the+Bills+of+Mortality%E2%80%99&source=bl&ots=VDnG4zP-Lv&sig=wy8irt_mfYyPnYe72d09xnpS4&hl=en&sa=X&ei=QIFqUvDOOYea1AXjqCwBQ&ved=0CDkQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=%E2%80%98Physical%20and%20Spiritual%20Illness%3A%20Narrative%20Appropriations%20of%20the%20Bills%20of%20Mortality%E2%80%99&f=false), in *Representing the Plague in Early Modern England*, ed. by Rebecca Totaro and Ernest B. Gilman (Routledge, 2010)
- **'Anti-Bardolatry through the Ages – or, why Voltaire, Tolstoy, Shaw and Wittgenstein Didn't Like Shakespeare'** (<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/opticon1826/archive/issue2/>), *Opticon* 1826, 2 (2007)

Shorter pieces:

- **'Shakespeare and the History of Heartbreak'** ([http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(13\)61923-6/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(13)61923-6/fulltext)), The Art of Medicine series, *The Lancet* 382 (2013)
- **'Melancholy, Medicine and the Arts'** ([http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(08\)61385-9/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(08)61385-9/fulltext)), The Art of Medicine series, *The Lancet* 372 (2008)

