



**Alumna
Subject
Graduated
Place of Work
Position**

Dr Farah Karim-Cooper
MA English, PhD English
1996, 2003
Shakespeare's Globe
Head of Courses and Research



Dr Farah Karim-Cooper is Head of Courses and Research at the Shakespeare's Globe. As well as providing the academic voice to the theatre Farah has published several books about Shakespeare's theatre, convenes an MA course in collaboration with King's College London and oversees a range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes with other universities.

Great minds *go on to* great places

Why did you choose to study at postgraduate level at Royal Holloway?

I did my undergraduate studies at California State University and I came over for my MA intending to spend a year in the UK. Then I took a year off and I started my PhD. I had fallen in love with the country and the literature and wanted to continue to study. I also met my husband at Royal Holloway, who was on the MBA program and at the end of my MA we got engaged.

What did you enjoy most about your PhD?

I enjoyed meeting other PhD students and working with Kiernan Ryan who was the Head of Department and my PhD supervisor at the time. Kiernan wouldn't just advise me about my thesis – he would talk to me about conferences and advise me about jobs. Kiernan was also instrumental in me being published. I also got my university teaching experience through the English Department during my PhD. After I completed my studies I stayed as a visiting lecturer for a couple of years and taught quite a few courses.

Have you kept in touch with any of your lecturers?

Christie Carson and I collaborated on a book together in 2008 and published Shakespeare's Globe: A Theatrical Experiment which has been very successful. Christie is coming to all of the

Globe to Globe performances and is writing a book about the Festival for Cambridge so I've helped her get access to certain areas. I've also worked with Eric Langley who is a new scholar in the Department.

What had been your career path since leaving Royal Holloway?

My PhD was on early modern cosmetics and aesthetics and I knew they were doing productions at the Globe that involved material practices from that period. So I contacted them and they brought me in as a consultant two years before I actually worked there. After that I taught at Royal Holloway as a Visiting Lecturer and I got quite a lot of experience teaching on the writing skills course and had a huge number of hours of teaching both undergraduates and postgraduates. I did that for two years then I had a baby. Then two of my friends from Royal Holloway sent me emails separately about this job at the Globe and that it would be good for me.

Why did you decide to join the Globe?

I was really inspired by the idea that there would be a place where Shakespeare's plays could be performed in their intended environment. I was impressed by Patrick Spottiswoode's work in Education and Andrew Gurr's work in Research and I thought it would be exciting to be a part of that.

What do you enjoy most about being Head of Courses and Research at the Globe?

I enjoy the contact with a wide range of people. I run an MA course and I have two PhD students through collaborations with a variety of universities. I have a full time academic job within the Globe but at the same time I get to work with actors and advise them about early modern staging techniques, costume, history, social contexts, and gender.

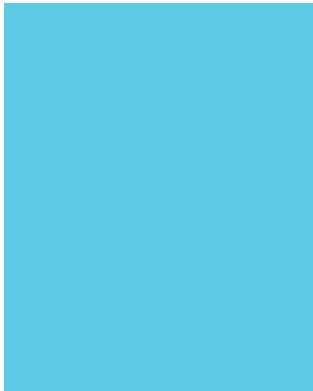
What is a typical day at the Globe like?

Every day is different. In the Autumn my MA students are here so I work with them in the mornings. Then I might have a management meeting to talk about logistics. I'm in the middle of project managing the build of an indoor Jacobean Theatre. As chair of the research committee I co-ordinate all the research projects that are associated with the build. I might have seminars in the afternoon and I also run 3 or 4 conferences a year. Yesterday I had a meeting with Top Trumps because they want to create a series of cards about Shakespeare's plays!

What work do you do with actors?

At the start of the season I give a company lecture to the actors about a wide range of things – maybe something the Director wants me to talk about or a topic that I think will open the play up for





people with passion

“I had fallen in love with the country and the literature and wanted to continue to study”



them. I run a team of researchers who will go away and dramaturg (Dramaturgy is the supportive network around the actors that provide background information around any given subject). This building imposes history on you the minute you walk into it. So a lot of Directors and Actors that come here want to know about the context and conditions which produced the playhouses. At the end of the season they come to us tell us what they have learnt and I add it to the oral history database on performance practice at the Globe.

What is the best performance you've seen at the Globe?

Titus Andronicus Directed by Lucy Bailey in 2006. I loved everything we did before that including the work that was done on original practices. But Lucy's Titus was thrilling and terrifying and very anti-Globe theatre space. The designer put a velarium roof over the Globe – so there was no ventilation, and they used incense and a type of dry ice within the Yard of the playhouse. It was brutal – we had 15 fainters a night. It was like nothing I had seen before or since.

What do you enjoy most about teaching?

Learning! When you are teaching postgraduates you have to be on top of your game because postgraduates are hungry; they are reading and researching and you don't want to be caught out.

I love it when I have students that are smarter than me – it forces me to get back into the texts and see what is new. The seminar sessions can be brilliant. We do really interesting seminars in the MA for the early modern playhouse practice module that I teach at the Globe. When the theatre season ends the Education Department gets the stage and we get to do whatever we want with it. It's an excellent teaching resource.

What do you enjoy about researching?

I feel a great passion about certain topics. I remember when I was writing my PhD I had just finished my chapter about John Webster and I couldn't stop thinking about him. It was exciting to think about his language and his imagery. The subject itself makes me passionate. I am writing a book about the hand and gesture – I find it fascinating how in the 16th century the hand meant so much more than it does today. It was a whole map of the self whereas today that's really limited to palm reading. So when Romeo and Juliet are standing palm to palm it is a very intimate and sexualised moment.

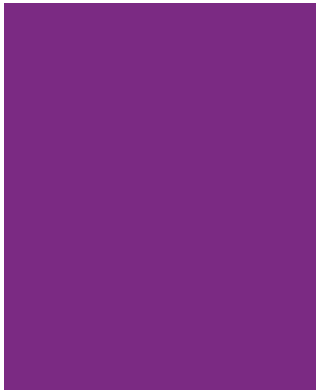
What exciting projects are you working on at the moment?

At the moment we are building an indoor Jacobean Theatre we are hoping to create a similar playhouse to that which Shakespeare worked in for

the latter part of his career. We are researching the aesthetics of Jacobean plays and how they work. It is launching in winter 2013 and will mean we have a summer and winter playhouse. The other big project is our research centre. We are inheriting about 350 16th and 17th century rare books from a collector in New York and we already have a fully staffed library and archive here that I run, which will move into the new building and we will also become a dedicated rare books library. We are going to need to fundraise for that and the project will take a few years.

What advice would you give to aspiring academics?

I would say that you don't have to limit yourself to the university corridor. At the moment there is more emphasis on research having an impact on the wider community rather than just a few academics and students. That results in a lot more collaboration between arts organisations and universities. For example, being curator of the British Museum is an academic job though perhaps not a typical academic job. I'd advise aspiring academics to think more broadly about what an academic career is.



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