

The Society for the Study of Women in the Renaissance
presents:

Alicia Andrzejewski

**“Ophelia’s Rue: Shakespeare in Post-Roe
America”**

What can Shakespeare's plays tell us about abortion and bodily autonomy in a post-Roe America? In this talk, Andrzejewski attends to how characters like Ophelia “bring down flowers” in Shakespeare’s plays to remind us that people have sought early and late term abortions across time, and that this search is represented in the most canonical of authors, of texts. She puts Shakespeare’s plays in conversation with early modern medical texts and receipt books, interviews with herbalists and abortion doulas, and her personal experience with herbal abortifacients to think through Ophelia’s “rue”—her isolation, her sadness, her only hope to end an unplanned pregnancy. Andrzejewski argues that the desperate, panicked search for information, the dark vials containing the promise of a different life, and the communities that harbored and disseminated this knowledge transcend time— and that these “historical touches across time,” to use Carolyn Dinshaw’s phrase, are particularly important in a post Roe v. Wade world, when pregnant people will be forced to turn to the kinds of remedies available before the medicalization of abortion.



Alicia Andrzejewski is an Assistant Professor in William & Mary’s English department, a scholar of early modern literature and culture; queer, feminist, and critical race theory; and the medical humanities. Her work has appeared in Shakespeare Studies, Shakespeare Bulletin, The Tennessee Williams Annual Review, The Chronicle, Literary Hub, American Theater, The Boston Globe, Catapult, Outside Magazine, Electric Literature, The Huffington Post, LA Review of Books, and other publications. Her current book project, *Queer Pregnancy in Shakespeare’s Plays*, argues for the transgressive force of pregnancy in his oeuvre and the expansive ways in which early modern people thought about the pregnant body.

THURSDAY, SEPTMEBER 21, 2023

6:00-7:30 PM EST

For more information and to RSVP for Zoom details:

<https://bit.ly/SSWRALicia>



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