

Department of English Studies, Sophia University

Thursday, 8th June 2023 (6pm - 7.15pm), 6-407

Colonialism and Conversion in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*



This presentation will consider the Virginia Company's propaganda campaign of 1609-10 in connection to William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (c. 1610), a play that brought an eclectic selection of colonial references and ideas to the London stage.

With the goal of elucidating Shakespeare's response to one of the most pressing ethical debates of his time, I argue that the specific target of the play's critique is, not necessarily the general concept of colonialism in and of itself, but the specious posturing that colonial rhetoric typically entailed in the early seventeenth century, especially political justifications based on the dubious prospect of state-sponsored conversion to Christianity.

Dr. Stephen Wittek is Assistant Professor of early modern drama at Carnegie Mellon University. He is the author of *Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of Conversion* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2023) and *The Media Players: Shakespeare, Middleton, Jonson, and the Idea of News* (Michigan University Press, 2015).

He is also co-editor of two recent collections of scholarly essays: *Performing Conversion: Cities, Theatre and Early Modern Transformations* (with José Jouve Martín, Edinburgh University Press, 2021) and *Shakespeare and Virtual Reality* (with David McInnis, Cambridge University Press, 2022). Since 2018, he has been the director of *Shakespeare-VR*, an educational project that enables students to explore Shakespeare's theater in virtual reality.

Talk is chaired by **Laurence Williams**
(Associate Professor, Department of English Studies)



Professor Stephen Wittek
(Carnegie Mellon University)



Yotsuya Campus, Building 6, Room 407

Open to all. Optional pre-registration and map here →

