

The Center for the Study of Women & Society
and

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

PENELOPE GENG



“Accused/Accusing:
Rape, the Female
Appellor, and
Measure for Measure”

Recent headlines have highlighted the institutional barriers women face in trying to report rape. All too often, when a woman makes an accusation, her account is misheard or unheard by the very authorities who possess the power to prosecute. In some cases, in the midst of speaking, the female accuser becomes the accused as the same authorities begin to doubt her narrative or suspect her of false reporting. Aspects of this pattern of institutional suspicion can be traced to medieval and early modern English culture. Literary texts from *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* to *The Faerie Queene* traffic in the misogynistic fantasy of the false female accuser while legal texts (maxims, decisions, and commentaries) confirm that paranoia as a “fact” of law. Where does Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* sit in this particular cultural matrix? How does the play relate a crisis of law—the relationship between royal and communal justice, for example—to the issue of gender and power? To what extent does the play accord legal agency to Isabella, the play’s most visible female “appellor”?

PENELOPE GENG is an Assistant Professor of English at Macalester College. She teaches Shakespeare and early modern literature. Her research focuses on the intersection of literature, law, and religion. Currently, she is working on her first book *Communal Justice in Shakespeare's England*, an investigation of lay magistracy in early modern English literature.

Thursday, October 18th, 2018

6:00 - 7:30 p.m.

Room 9204

This event will be held at the Graduate Center, 365 Fifth Avenue (34th Street).

It is free and open to the public.

Co-sponsored with the CUNY Academy for Humanities and Sciences.

For more information see: <http://www.gc.cuny.edu/womencenter/>

