# Education Research Proposal

## Abstract

This research project will study the different ways in which Shakespeare is appropriated by popular American television and how these uses of Shakespeare reflect that medium’s utilization of generic tropes and intersexuality. The project will also study the use of Shakespeare in popular culture. With the introduction of new technologies and the Internet, television is now in a massive transition period allowing for richer television programming. This project will look at how representations of Shakespeare reflect this immediacy, and how it enhances the television programs. It will also demonstrate the tension between highbrow niche Shakespeare, and lowbrow common Shakespeare. Television is a powerful medium, and seeing how Shakespeare is used in it is an important aspect of Shakespeare and popular culture that has largely been marginalized in academia.

## Review of Literature

In his “Shakespeare after Shakespeare: An Encyclopedia of the Bard in Mass Media and Popular Culture”, Richard Burt discusses the lack of scholarship in television Shakespeare. Burt and Greenhalgh, in their respective introductions to the US Television and UK Television sections of Shakespeare after Shakespeare, begin to open up this area of scholarship, and I wish to continue on with their trend. Other important studies include: Bulman and Coursen’s “Shakespeare on Television: An Anthology of Essays and Reviews”, published in 1988, and tending to center on the BBC Shakespeare adaptations and other televised plays; “Watching Shakespeare on Television” by H.R. Coursen, published in 1993, focused more on watching recorded performances of plays on television via tapes rather than broadcasted shows; “Shakespeare on Screen: Television Shakespeare: Essays in honour (sic) of Michele Willems”, published in 2008, focused more on adaptations of the plays rather than television shows that include allusions to the plays or Shakespeare himself; and various articles on individual televised plays and their focus. Although these books and essays will help my research, there is a significant lack of scholarship of the use of Shakespeare allusion and appropriation on television.

## Outline

My chapter breakdown would begin with an introduction to television studies and what makes it a unique and different medium, including the changes in broadcast and technologies, to contextualize the argument and continue into a breakdown by television genres. I would discuss the appropriation of Shakespeare in shows like The Simpsons and South Park that are thought to be lowbrow but include a lot of niche, highbrow humor, and how the use of Shakespeare complements what these shows are doing. Then, I would examine the use of Shakespeare on adult dramas, such as the popular crime dramas Bones and CSI: Miami, as well as the use of Shakespeare in sitcoms, and how the appropriations differ based upon genres. I also want to explore if Shakespeare is ever used in reality television or soap operas in order to see if he is used to provide prestige to the genres of television that are thought of as inferior. Lastly, I would discuss how the digital and changing medium of television could affect and change the way in which we study Shakespeare, as well as the way in which Shakespeare is appropriated, thus showing the future potential for Shakespeare in television.