

Craig Dionne, Professor of English Literature. Sabbatical Abroad June 2014- June 2015.

My wife was approached by her company to work on an international secondment in Tokyo, I applied for a year-long sabbatical in the hopes of taking the whole family to Japan for the year. I applied for and received a Visiting Researcher position (which comes with library privileges) at Keio University (Minato, Tokyo). My present research project --Posthuman *King Lear*: Reading Shakespeare in the Anthropocene--uses theories of ecology and cultural



historicism to interpret *King Lear* as a play about prodigality and social disintegration. Part of the project involves cross-cultural analysis, looking at Japan's use of tsunami stones as cautionary markers about disaster and comparing this to the Renaissance use of adages and proverbs to speak to future generations. Besides my research, my sabbatical experience will give me much to share with students: travels to shrines, castles, folk villages, studying the language, attending festivals and encountering Japanese customs. All of this will give me many things to draw on as a teacher. The English Reformation's impact on old English holiday customs has strong correlates in Japanese history, where an entire nation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Meiji period is, virtually overnight, swept into modernity and faced with the challenge of holding onto feudal traditions or

accommodating Western culture. It's been quite a year thus far: aside from reading and learning a whole new paradigm of philosophy and criticism, as family we have had many wonderful trips across the whole country, with plans before this coming June to see more of Asia and South Pacific. And we have also had the good fortune to make new friends from around the world. Many of my sons' teachers and tutors are people who simply said "yes" to life overseas (my youngest son's teacher is from exotic village of Plymouth, MI! But we have a circle of friends from around the world).

I would encourage students to embrace travel and work abroad as a way to reframe their life-long goals. There is a serendipity to travel that should be embraced. It seems to change us subtly, reorient our goals. On the surface, you resist because of all the uncertainty--being lost in train stations and public squares, and wrestling with a new language in unfamiliar places. But you learn to appreciate these challenges and you realize quickly that travel that gives us a confidence to take on more in life. I am happy to see many of the students I have had in my own study abroad courses in Europe and England return to world travel later in life. St Augustine's adage is appropriate: "The world is a book, and those who do not travel only read a page."

Craig Dionne teaches English Renaissance Literature, Literary and Cultural Theory. Research interests: Shakespeare through the ages, Global Shakespeare, Shakespeare in Popular Culture, theater in early modern urban culture, and history of the discipline.

