

# In Good Faith: Dennis Britton's Research at the Folger

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Associate Professor of English Dennis Britton spent last year researching at the [Folger Shakespeare Library](#) in Washington, DC, thanks to a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The *Folger Magazine* featured Britton and his research in a recent edition of the publication.

Here's an excerpt from the story by Amy Arden:

“What role did the Reformation have in formation of racial identity?” asks Britton. “I see literature showing a way we have not thought about race and theology, and race and the Reformation. The Protestant questions about conversion and baptism show ideas about an unalterable racial difference, that Christians are fundamentally different from Jews, fundamentally different from Muslims, in a way that one cannot become the other. I see that idea being played with, even if Christian doctrine can't say that explicitly. But literature is trying to take that idea to its extreme.”

The result is a tragedy like *Othello*, whose original audiences may not have seen a man undone by lies and jealousy, but by his inherent destiny. Othello's failure is not that he falls for Iago's ruse, but that, by virtue of his birth, he is predestined to fail in his assimilation to Christian culture.

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