

W. Moffat
Spring 2001
EC 310; x 1499
Hours: M 2-4
 W 3-5
 Th 9-10
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EC 301
1 MF; 2W

English 399: Jane Austen in Her Time

Required Texts:

Jane Austen: Emma (Norton Critical Edition)
Mansfield Park (Norton)
Persuasion (Norton)
Pride and Prejudice (Norton)
Northanger Abbey (Penguin)
Sense and Sensibility (Penguin)

Park Honan, Jane Austen: A Life (Random House)
Dierdre Le Fay, ed. Jane Austen's Letters (Oxford)
Claire Tomalin, Jane Austen: Her Life

Suggested:

Edward Copeland, ed. Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen (Cambridge UP)
J. David Grey, ed. The Jane Austen Companion (Macmillan)
Mary Poovey, The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer (Chicago UP)
Emma Thompson, Sense and Sensibility Screenplay
Lawrence Stone, Family Sex and Marriage in England (Harper and Row)

Course objectives:

This course is both practical and theoretical. First, we will read all six of Austen's major novels, biographical material, surviving letters, and selected social history with an aim towards understanding the social conditions described by the novels. The course is designed to be a workshop in educating ourselves, as best we can from the vantage point of more than two hundred years' distance, on what we need to know to "read" Jane Austen's time. Wherever possible we will demonstrate our understanding in practical ways, teaching each other what we have learned about eighteenth-century life.

Second, we will explore the relation between literature and society by asking questions about the methodological assumptions of a social and historical approach. How are the novels themselves (their author, their audience, their publication, their reception, their forms) shaped by cultural conditions? What questions does an historical approach leave unresolved or unasked? Is it possible to have anachronistic assumptions about an 19th-century novel? How does learning about another time and culture inform our own values?

Jan 23 (W) Introduction and Syllabus Review

25 The History of England [URL-- <http://courseinfo.dickinson.edu/courses/engl399A-sp01/>]

29 Le Fay, ed. Letters, 1-21

Constructing Jane Austen

31 Honan chs. 1-3; Tomalin, chs. 1-6

Feb. 2 Issues in Austen Biography; bring a paragraph analyzing 1. The relation between Tomlin and Honan's approaches **OR** 2. Problems in Austen Biography as revealed by your reading

5 Group # 1: Practical Presentation; Jan Fergus "The professional woman writer" in Cambridge Companion 12-32

7 Duckworth "Jane Austen and the Construction of the Progressive Author" College English 53:1, 77-90; E.D. Hirsch "Objective Interpretation" in Validity in Interpretation (Yale UP, 1967); Bender "In the Public Domain" TLS Aug 10-12, 1990, 54.

9 Williams, Culture and Society (selection, URL)

Early Work

12 Group #2: Practical Presentation; Love and Freindship

14 Love and Freindship

16 Northanger Abbey

19 Group #3: Practical Presentation; selections from Altick, English Common Reader [URL]

21 Northanger Abbey

23 Northanger Abbey

Work and World

26 Group #4: Practical Presentation; Stone, 149-424; Gillis, selections; Stone, selections

28 Sense and Sensibility

Mar. 2 Sense and Sensibility

5 Sense and Sensibility

7 Mansfield Park

9 Mansfield Park; **short paper due in class**

12 Group #5: Practical Presentation; discussion of film: Mansfield Park

14 Mansfield Park

16 Jane Austen and the Real World

Spring Break

26 **Annotated Bibliography and Paper Prospectus Due in class**

28 Pride and Prejudice

30 Pride and Prejudice

Apr. 2 Group #6: Practical Presentation; research conferences

4 Pride and Prejudice

6 Scouting Reports on Social History; finish Tomalin by this point

9 Group #7: Practical Presentation; research conferences

11 Scouting reports on Social History; finish Honan by this point

13 Persuasion

16 Group #8: Practical Presentation; research conferences
18 Persuasion
20 Persuasion

21 Special Field trip to Winterthur Museum, DE.

3 Scouting Reports on Social History
25 Emma
27 Emma

30 Moffat article; Rosmarin article [URL]
May 2 Emma
4 Evaluations

Research paper due Monday May 14, 12 noon, in my office

Course requirements:

Letter writing: Each student will be expected to write and mail a letter to a correspondent of choice. No e-mail. Students must submit a weekly accounting that the assignment is complete, but the letters may remain private.

Practical presentation: Small groups of students will present a practical presentation of some aspect of 18th-century domestic life in a 15-minute class presentation; times will be staggered across the term. Emphasis should be on clarity and imagination in these presentations. I urge you to meet with me as you plan your presentation. Groups must supply documentary, textual and visual materials, to be linked to the URL, no later than one class day after their presentation.

Two papers: The first, a 4-6 page paper showing how a passage from an Austen novel is illuminated by contextual research [most likely this will be Northanger Abbey, Sense & Sensibility or Mansfield Park, unless you read ahead, with my consultation]. This paper may take the approach of a reading, or some problems and questions. I expect a substantial bibliography for this paper--either using primary materials, or discussing cultural and historical literary scholarship.

The final project will be a research paper of 15-20 pages. Students will devise their own topics. Papers will explore the contextual and intertextual questions raised by the course as a whole; a 1-2 page prospectus and annotated bibliography is required. Each student must schedule a half-hour conference with me between April 2 and April 16. I encourage students to come speak with me during office hours regarding the strategy and method of their research and writing in all of their assignments.

The course as a whole is designed to encourage and reward substantial, independent, self-motivated research into social and cultural history. While we will meet three times a week, it has the spirit of a seminar, which requires that you discipline yourself to read beyond class assignments in an ongoing, sustained, and disciplined manner.

You may not pass the course if you do not complete all written and oral work. Grades will be cumulative, based on the following proportions:

Presentation (group grade) 20%
Short paper 20%
Prospectus, annotated bibliography (ungraded)
Research paper 60%

URL and Reserve Holdings:

I encourage students to participate in the class URL, and post materials which may be of value to the whole class. Our library liaison, Kirk Moll, can assist you in attaching the materials to our Blackboard site.

Since we are an 18th century college, there are significant holdings in special collections and storage which may be useful. The following topics may be interesting for classroom presentations: gardens, textiles, food, furniture, leisure (games, music, reading), dancing, the country house, inheritance and property law, transportation and mapmaking, religion, the army, the navy, education and the universities, portraiture, newspapers (we have a complete run of the Times from 1788-), medicine, personal grooming. These categories may help to demystify British domestic life in the 18th century, and place Austen in a social context.

We have several versions of film adaptations of Austen's work on reserve for the course. Please note that the central texts for your papers are to be the novels themselves; and take care when viewing adaptations that you consider them in the context of Williams' theoretical position.

There is a short list of items on reserve in the Waidner-Spahr A/V room. I have tried not to inundate, and to leave open your own avenues of research; you KNOW if you would be happy to talk about Austen criticism and good social history at any time.