

ENGLISH 184T: JANE AUSTEN (Independent Study)

CRN #94844

Fall 2008

Dr. Patricia Juliana Smith

Individually Negotiated Honors Option for Dana Schmidt

OVERVIEW:

This course is an Independent Study with an Individually Negotiated Honors Option designed for Dana Schmidt. The purpose of this Independent Study is to facilitate Ms. Schmidt in her quest to gain knowledge about the life and works of Jane Austen, with particular focus on how these works are related to British literary history and culture in the late 18th and early 19th centuries and also the crucial role Austen has played in shaping the tradition of women's literature as well as that of the novel of manners.

In order to accomplish the course objectives, the Independent Study (and INHO) will require a close reading of the assigned works, accompanied by a study of various critical writings on these works.

HONORS OPTION OBJECTIVES:

The Individually-Negotiated Honors Option for Ms. Schmidt will have the following goals:

1. To undertake a textual and historical study of Jane Austen's works from within the context of what literary scholars deem the "long 18th century" (i.e., from the Restoration to the beginning of the Victorian period).
2. To apply feminist theory as it applies to issues of gender and sexuality within Austen's works. Of primary importance in this regard is Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, which many feminist critics now regard as a significant influence on Austen and her fictions.
3. To understand the significance of the novel of manners in English literary history and Austen's influence on subsequent authors in the genre, such as E. M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, Evelyn Waugh, and Elizabeth Bowen.
4. To comprehend Austen's use of irony as a subversive rhetoric.
5. To further develop Ms. Schmidt's critical facilities through close reading and the writing of critical essays.



6. To further development Ms. Schmidt's research skills through the reading of critical essays as secondary sources.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Readings:

- a. All of Austen's novels (*Northanger Abbey*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion*) as well as one work from her juvenilia (e.g., *Love and Freindship [sic]*, *Lady Susan*, *The Watsons*) as primary texts.

- b. The following early feminist works in order to place Austen within the tradition of women's literature:

Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*
Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

- c. An analytical reading of the following texts for historical and cultural background:

Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*.

E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*.

Claudia L. Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s: Wollstonecraft, Radcliffe, Burney, Austen*.

Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen*.

Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen*.

- d. The following critical studies:

Edward Copeland and Juliet McMaster, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*.

D. W. Harding, *Regulated Hatred and Other Essays on Jane Austen*.

Jill Heydt-Stevenson, *Austen's Unbecoming Conjunctions: Subversive Laughter, Embodied History*.

Claudia L. Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel*.

Daryll Jones, *Jane Austen: Critical Issues*.

Clara Tuite, *Romantic Austen: Sexual Politics and the Literary Canon*.

• Tony Tanner, *Jane Austen*.

Mary Waldron, *Jane Austen and the Fiction of Her Time*.

2. Papers:

- a. Two five-page papers due at sixth week and tenth week of term. One paper will address issues of gender and sexuality in Austen's works; the other will examine an issue of the student's choice.
- b. One fifteen-page research paper due at the end of the term. This longer paper will involve more than one text and explore a larger theme than the shorter papers.

For both papers, the student will work closely with the professor in formulating a topic and in researching the project.

3. Oral exams at midterm and the end of term.
4. Office meetings every two weeks to discuss critical readings and other assignments.

EDUCATIONALLY ENRICHING ACTIVITIES:

One shortcoming of an independent study is the lack of group interaction and feedback from multiple perspectives in the classroom. Accordingly, the student should have the opportunity to discuss the texts with a larger group of informed individuals. To this end, the following activities are proposed:

- a. Attending an academic conference at which paper(s) or lecture(s) on Austen and her works are presented. (Many conferences and special events are held in the greater New York area at such venues as CUNY Graduate Center, NYU, Columbia, Stony Brook, and Fordham).
- b. Attending an academic event or a performance involving social history and culture that would relate to issues raised in Austen's works.

Additionally, Ms. Schmidt may instead choose to view several recent film adaptations of Austen's novels.

SYLLABUS:

English 184J exists only as an Independent Study for students seeking to enhance their reading and knowledge of Austen's works. As it is not connected to a regularly scheduled class, it has no regular syllabus, save for the individually designed course of study determined between the professor and the student for the Independent Study. Accordingly, no traditional syllabus is attached, and the INHO, in and of itself, functions in lieu of a syllabus.

