

Humanities Seminars: Jane Austen, Novelist

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Thursdays, 9-12

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Jane Austen is one of the most popular and beloved novelists in the English language. A major architect of the English novel whose work helped invent, extend, and define the genre, Austen continues to beguile and challenge readers. For some, Austen is our beloved "Aunt Jane," who chats with us about tea parties, excursions in pony phaetons, and ill-advised epistolary relationships. For others, she is a subversive ironist whose piercing vision of human foibles offers us reflections relevant to our own lives and times. Sometimes compared favorably to Shakespeare, sometimes patronized as merely domestic, the simple fact remains that she is both beloved and studied; her novels continue to offer both entertainment and intellectual challenge.

How did this seventh child of a provincial clergyman, a single woman who lived an intensely domestic life, produce some of the greatest novels in the English language? What makes them great?

Austen's complete *oeuvre* will be examined and discussed in this class. Our examination will include historical, literary historical, and cultural contexts of Austen's work. We will closely consider the famous Austen writing style, covering plot, characterization, dialogue, rhetorical modes (with particular attention to irony), social commentary, the so-called "marriage plot" and Austen's deployment of it, among other characteristics of Austen's novels.

We will read all six of the finished novels, two unfinished novels, one unpublished novel; the rest of Austen's writing (letters, plays, poems, juvenilia, correspondence) will be referenced, where relevant, in lectures. The Oxford collection edited by R. W. Chapman is still the definitive version, but participants are encouraged to purchase any non-abridged, non-"modernized" editions of the novels (there are many inexpensive versions available in book stores and online).

Books for the class are on order at UA Bookstore for your convenience. You may use other editions as well.

1. Austen, Jane. *Juvenilia*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009. ISBN: 1443801666. \$11.99
2. *Pride and Prejudice*. Dover Thrift Editions, 1995. ISBN: 0486284735. \$2.32
3. *Mansfield Park*. Dover Thrift Editions, 2001. ISBN: 0486415856. \$3.60 onDover Thrift
4. *Northanger Abbey*. Dover Thrift Editions, 2000. ISBN: 0486414124. \$3.50
5. *Emma*. Dover Thrift Editions, 1998. ISBN: 0486406482. \$3.15
6. *Sense and Sensibility*. Dover Thrift Editions, 1995. ISBN: 0486290492. \$4.50
7. *Persuasion*. Dover Thrift Editions, 1997. ISBN: 0486295559. \$2.25
8. *Lady Susan, The Watsons, Sanditon*. Penguin Classics, 1975. ISBN: 0140431020. \$8.53

Reading Schedule

Oct. 2

Introduction

--Jane Austen's life, times, literary, and literary historical stature

16

Sense and Sensibility

23

Pride and Prejudice

30

Pride and Prejudice, cont'd

Nov. 6

Northanger Abbey

13

Mansfield Park

20

Emma

Dec. 4

Emma, cont'd

11

Persuasion

18

--*Lady Susan, The Watsons, Sanditon*
Conclusion