

## **Two Modern Classics: *Madame Bovary* (1856) and *The Portrait of a Lady* (1880)**

Professor Emeritus Peter E. Medine

*Madame Bovary* and *The Portrait of a Lady* invite discussion and comparison. Each centers on a remarkable heroine who dares to seek independence even at the risk of violating social norms. The plots conform to the pattern of the standard education novel. But both heroines fall short of the “education” and triumph usually achieved in such novels. Emma Bovary dies at the conclusion. Isabel Archer may end up alive and with her hard-won wisdom and moral sense intact, but she ultimately returns to an impossible marriage which makes for the novel’s famously indeterminate conclusion. By probing into the novels’ similarities and differences, we can deepen our understanding of the books’ significance as modern classics and gain a renewed sense of their power to intrigue and move us today as much as they did readers in the nineteenth century.

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### **COURSE SCHEDULE**

Fall 2022

#### **Syllabus**

Wednesdays from 1 PM - 3 PM on November 2, 9, 16, 30, and December 7, 2022

Format: Hybrid (Students may select to attend on campus or online at registration.)

#### **TEXTS:**

Gustave Flaubert. *Madame Bovary*. Ed. Margaret Cohen, Norton Critical Edition, 2nd ed. (W. W. Norton & Company, 2004); [ISBN 0-393-97917-2 (Pbk.)].

Henry James. *The Portrait of a Lady*. Ed. Phillip Horne, Penguin Classics, (Penguin Random House, 2011);[ISBN 978-0-141-44126-9 (Pbk)].

These are the editions of the novels I shall use, and I encourage all seminar members to have them. They are reliably edited from a textual point of view and contain helpful ancillary material. Most important, having them at hand will enable seminar members to locate passages I shall refer to by page number in class; having a different edition will make locating those passages difficult and following the discussion nearly impossible.

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The editions are readily available on Amazon, E-bay, and other such on-line venues. You may also try googling the publisher's series directly, namely "Norton Critical Editions" and "Penguin Classics." Email me if you encounter any difficulties in securing the texts. For what it's worth, I have found that nearly always a used copy is perfectly good.

### **CLASS PROCEDURE:**

Seminar members should plan to read the assigned selections of the text in advance of class discussion. The discussion will be based on the assumption that everyone is familiar with the contents and has the texts at hand during class.

Depending on one's prior familiarity with the novels, the reading assignments should require two to three hours a week.

### **CALENDAR:**

November 2: Introduction: review of Chronology and some reflections the novel as a Literary Form.  
Discussion of *Madame Bovary*, pp. 5 - 101.

November 9: *Madame Bovary*, pp. 102 - 275.

November 16: *The Portrait of a Lady*, pp. 3 - 195.

November 30: *The Portrait of a Lady*, pp. 196 - 421.

December 7: *The Portrait of a Lady*, pp. 422 - 623.

