**English 723 (41090): “Reading Jane Austen”**

Talia Schaffer Mon 4:30-6:20, KP 708

Office: KP 614 Office hours: Mon 2:30-3:30

and by appointment

Phone:(718) 997-4675

E-mail: talia.schaffer@qc.cuny.edu

In "Reading Jane Austen," we will go in depth into the work of one of the formative novelists of the British literary tradition. We’ll read *Northanger Abbey, Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice, Emma, Mansfield Park, Persuasion,* as well as some of her juvenilia and the unfinished last work “Sanditon.” But we will also be looking at historical information about dramatic changes in ideas of marriage and family during Austen’s time, changes to which her novels respond (and which they, in turn, helped perpetuate). Our class will also explore the history of Austen criticism, asking why it so often, in Eve Sedgwick’s words, imagines Austen as “a girl being taught a lesson.” We will look at how critics have dealt with sexuality, war, slavery, economic change, class mobility, and gender roles in Austen’s fiction, so the class will also function as a kind of introduction to changes in critical and theoretical work over the past century. We will also look at film adaptations of Austen novels and read criticism helping us explore what aspects of Austen’s texts get altered, emphasized, or excluded in contemporary American popular culture, and why. Presentation, research paper, and blog.

Required books:

Austen, Jane. *Emma.* 1816. Oxford World’s Classics

978-0199535521

Austen, Jane. *Mansfield Park.* 1816. Oxford World’s Classics.

978-0199535538

Austen, Jane. *Northanger Abbey, Lady Susan, The Watsons, Sanditon.* Oxford World’s Classics.

  978-0199535545

Austen, Jane. *Persuasion.* 1818. Oxford World’s Classics.

 978-0199535552

Austen, Jane, *Pride and Prejudice.* 1813. Oxford World’s Classics.

978-0199535569

Austen, Jane. *Sense and Sensibility.* 1811. Oxford World’s Classics.

978-0199535576

\*Anything with an asterisk is a reading posted on Blackboard

Course Schedule

Sept 8 introduction and handouts:

juvenilia, Janeites, Vickery

Sept 15 *Northanger Abbey*

\*Johnson

Sept 22 *Sense and Sensibility,* first half

\*Sedgwick

Sept 29 *Sense and Sensibility* to end

excerpts from Ang Lee film

\* Gay

Oct 6 Library session

Oct 13 NO CLASS: COLUMBUS DAY

Oct 20 *Pride and Prejudice*

\*Armstrong, Ch 1 36-58; Ch 2 59-88

Oct 27 *Mansfield Park*, first half

\*Cleere

Nov 3 *Mansfield Park* to end

excerpts from Patricia Rozema film

\*Troost/Greenfield

Nov 10 *Emma,* first half

\*Tanner

**first short paper due**

Nov 17 *Emma* to end

excerpts from “Clueless”

\*Looser

Nov 24 *Persuasion*

\*Wiltshire

Nov 26-30 NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING BREAK

Dec 1 \*“Sanditon”

\*Miller, Ch 3

Dec 8 work on final paper

Dec 15 final discussion

**final paper due**

Learning goals:

In this course students should

1. Learn about Austen’s work in historical and theoretical contexts

2. Become comfortable analyzing popular culture

3. Locate and critically engage with relevant research

Requirements and grading:

One presentation (about 20 min.) 30%

Two long papers (about 10 pp.each) 25% each

Effort grade 20%

Presentation:

Each week one of you will post a presentation on the blog.

In the presentation, you should analyze the critical article or theoretical reading for that day. *Do not summarize it.* Instead, briefly explain what the critic is arguing, isolate areas where you think the critic is wrong (or especially insightful), and suggest alternative ways of explicating the text. You must find one thing you admire about the article before you launch into your devastating critique.

It should be the equivalent of about 5 pages (if you put it into a Word document). Post it the day that the class meets.

Essays:

I am trying a new technique in this class. You will do two 10-page papers, although they may be cumulative (ie, you can do them as Part I and Part II of the same larger paper). Each paper needs at least 3 sources, with at least one article found by using the MLA Index. Other sources may include articles from other databases I have approved, like JSTOR or Project Muse, or academic books. Websites may be used *only if* they are approved academic sites.

For Essay 1, you will have the library session to help you. For Essay 2, I have set aside one class day to help – we will workshop and conference our drafts.

Blogging:

I’ve set up a blog on Blackboard. Please post at least 10 comments over the course of the semester (no more than 2 per week though; you can’t do all 10 on one day!).

We meet on Mondays and that is the day that the presenter will be posting the presentation. You may post responses after class, any time that week, up to the following Monday, at which point a new blog post will be opened for a new presentation.