

English 221-01: Novel of Manners

CRN 28381 and 28382

Professor J. Brady
Palmer 306 (office)

Spring, 2008
MWF 9:00-9:50 and
11:00-11:50 in Clough
417

843-3906 (office phone)

Reading List:

Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Penguin)
Jane Austen, *Emma* (Penguin)
Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (Penguin)
Henry James, *Washington Square* (Penguin)
Henry James, *The Bostonians* (Penguin)
Henry Adams, *Democracy: An American Novel* (New American Library)
Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (Penguin)
Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth* (Penguin)
Edith Wharton, *The Custom of the Country* (Penguin)

Office Hours:

Monday, Wednesday: 1:00-2:00
Tuesday, Thursday: 11:00-12:00

Course Description:

‘Isn’t marriage your vocation? Isn’t it all what you’re brought up for?’

-- Lawrence Selden to Lily Bart, in *The House of Mirth*

This course is a study of the development of the novel of manners over a century, as reflected in the work of those writers most identified with the genre: Jane Austen, Henry James, and Edith Wharton. We move from the heroine-centered courtship plots of Austen’s fiction, set in Regency England, through Edith Wharton, Henry Adams and Henry James’s adaptations of the genre in the late nineteenth century and the opening decades of the twentieth century. We will pair two political ‘novels of reconciliation’ set in the post-civil war Reconstruction era written by Adams and James. We will also read Veblen’s classic economic study of the leisure class as the lens through which we will interpret the novels of Edith Wharton, set in America’s Gilded Age,

the era of conspicuous consumption. The course treats four major writers, one English and three Americans and considers the strong influence English novels of the nineteenth century had on these cosmopolitan writers. The novels in this course, largely traditional in structure, and spanning comedy, melodrama, tragedy, and satire focus on the implications of the assumption Lawrence Selden makes in *The House of Mirth*: that marriage is the heroine's vocation.

This course may be taken for credit toward a minor in women's studies or as part of a minor or major in English. It counts as an F4 in terms of foundation credits.

Attendance Policy:

Late arrivals to class will be counted as an absence and any student who misses or comes late to class more than **four** times in the semester will receive a zero in the 10% of the grade reflecting class participation and attendance and may be asked to withdraw from the course.

Schedule:

Jan. 9	Introductory remarks
Jan. 11, 14, 16, 18	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i> (1813)
Jan. 21	Martin Luther King Day
Jan. 23, 25, 28, 30, Feb. 1	<i>Emma</i> (1816)
Monday, February 4	First essay due, 5 pages
Feb. 6, 8, 11, 13	<i>Northanger Abbey</i> (1818)
Feb. 15, 18, 20, 22	<i>Washington Square</i> (1880)
Feb. 25, 27, 29	<i>Democracy</i> (1880)
Friday, February 29	Second essay due, 5 pages
March 3, 5, 7	Spring Break
March 10, 12, 14, 17	<i>The Bostonians</i> (1886)
Wednesday, March 19	In-class essay on Adams/James

Friday, March 21	Easter Recess
March 24, 26, 28	<i>The Theory of the Leisure Class</i> (1899)
Monday, March 31	Short essay on Veblen due, 3 pages
April 2, 4, 7, 9, 11	<i>The House of Mirth</i> (1905)
April 14, 16, 18, 21, 23	<i>The Custom of the Country</i> (1913)
April 25	Awards Convocation
Monday, April 28	Final essay due, 5 pages

Method of Evaluation:

Austen essay (5 pages)	20%
James essay (5 pages)	20%
In-class question*	10%
Adams/James in-class essay	10%
Veblen essay (3 pages)	10%
In-class grade	10%
Wharton essay (5 pages)	20%

* Each student will pose one formal question to the class during the semester, speaking from notes only. Your question should be focused, given a context, and its potential significance made clear to your classmates. The question should explore a fresh aspect of the text that you think important to our understanding of the work. Having posed your question, you will then guide class discussion.

** All late essays will be penalized by at least a letter grade, and may not be rewritten.