

## English 221-01: Novel of Manners

**CRN 20593**

Professor J. Brady  
Palmer 306 (office)  
843-3906 (office phone)

Spring, 2010  
TR 8:00-9:15 in Palmer 207

### **Reading List:**

Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Penguin)  
Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (Penguin)  
Henry James, *Washington Square* (Penguin)  
Henry James, *The Aspern Papers and Other Stories* (Oxford)  
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:**

Tuesday, Thursday: 9:30-10:30, or by appointment through the week

### **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 several writers closely identified with the genre: Jane Austen, Henry James, and Edith Wharton. We will move from the heroine-centered courtship plots of Austen's fiction, set in Regency England, through Edith Wharton, and Henry James's American adaptations in the late nineteenth century and the opening decades of the twentieth century. We will read Veblen's classic economic study of the leisure class as a principal lens through which we will interpret the novels of Edith Wharton, often set in America's Gilded Age, the era of conspicuous consumption. The novels in this course, largely traditional in structure, and spanning comedy, melodrama, tragedy, and satire focus on the implications of the chauvinist assumption Lawrence Selden makes in *The House of Mirth*: that marriage is the heroine's vocation. This course has these principal goals: to introduce students to the conventions of the novel of manners; to consider the ways in which novelists revise their own work over their careers and respond in

complex ways to the influence exerted on them by their precursors and contemporaries; to study important and influential works by three major novelists, one English, two American.

This course carries both F2 (Writing Intensive) and F4 (Literary Texts) credit. The class will workshop samples of the first two essays, focusing on issues of revision, on improving clarity of argument, and on uses of textual evidence in formal essay writing, in addition to more technical aspects, including punctuation and grammar.

### **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 20% of the grade reflecting class participation and attendance and may be asked to withdraw from the course.

### **Schedule:**

Jan. 14	Introductory remarks
Jan. 19, 21, 26, 28	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i> (1813)
Feb. 2, 4	<i>Northanger Abbey</i> (1816)
<b>Monday, February 8</b>	<b>First essay due, 5 pages</b>
Feb. 9, 11, 16	<i>Washington Square</i> (1880)
February 18, 23, 25	Workshops of first essays
March 2, 4, 9	<i>The Aspern Papers</i> (1888; 1905-07)
March 11	“The Private Life” (1891); “The Middle Years” (1893/1909)
<b>Friday, March 12</b>	<b>Second essay due, 5 pages</b>
March 15-19	Spring Break
March 23, 25	Workshops of second essays
March 30, April 6	<i>Theory of the Leisure Class</i> (1899)

April 1	Easter Recess
April 8, 13, 15	<i>The House of Mirth</i> (1905)
April 20, 22, 27, 29	<i>The Custom of the Country</i> (1913)
April 30	Awards Convocation
<b>Saturday, May 1</b>	<b>Final essay due, 6 pages</b>

**Method of Evaluation:**

Austen essay (5 pages)	20%
James essay (5 pages)	20%
In-class question*	10%
In-class grade	20%
Wharton/Veblen essay (6 pages)	30%

\* 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 re-written.