

English 190-02: Novel of Manners

CRN 19481

Professor J. Brady
Palmer 306 (office)
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Fall, 2008
10:00-10:50 a.m. MWF in
Palmer Hall 208

Reading List:

Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* (Penguin)
Jane Austen, *Persuasion* (Penguin)
Henry James, *Washington Square* (Penguin)
William Wyler, *The Heiress* (film)
Henry James, *The Aspern Papers* (Penguin)
Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (Penguin)
Edith Wharton, *The Custom of the Country* (Penguin)
Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence* (Penguin)

Office Hours:

Monday through Friday: 11:00-12:00, or by appointment

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 and Henry James's adaptations of the genre in the late nineteenth century and the opening decades of the twentieth century. 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 three major novelists, one English and two American, and considers the strong influence English novels of the nineteenth century had on the cosmopolitan American writers who spent most of their careers writing their fiction in Europe. The novels in this course, largely traditional in structure,

focus on the implications of the assumption Lawrence Selden makes in *The House of Mirth*: that marriage is the heroine's vocation.

English 190-02 is limited to first-year students and sophomores only. It carries F4 – Literary Texts credit and is also a Women's Studies elective. English 190-02 counts towards an English major.

We will workshop one of your essays during the course.

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:

August 27	Introductory remarks
Aug. 29, Sept. 3, 5, 8, 10	<i>Mansfield Park</i> (1814)
September 12, 15, 17, 19	<i>Persuasion</i> (1818)
Monday, September 22	Austen essay due, 4 pages
September 24, 26, 29, Oct. 1	<i>Washington Square</i> (1880)
October 3, 6	Workshops of first essay
October 8, 10, 13, 15, 17	<i>The Aspern Papers</i> (1888)
Fall Recess	
October 22, 24	<i>The Heiress</i> (Wyler film)
Monday, October 27	James essay due, 4 pages
October 29, 31, November 3	<i>The Theory of the Leisure Class</i> (1899)
November 5, 7	Workshops of second essay
Monday, November 10	Veblen essay due, 3 pages

November 12, 14, 17, 19, 21 *The Custom of the Country* (1913)

November 24 *The Age of Innocence* (1921)

Thanksgiving Recess

December 1, 3, 5, 8 *The Age of Innocence* (1921)

Wednesday, December 10 Wharton essay due, 4 pages

Method of Evaluation:

Austen essay (4 pages) 20%

James essay (4 pages) 20%

In-class question* 10%

Veblen essay (3 pages) 10%

In-class grade 20%

Wharton essay (4 pages) 20%

* You 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.