

English 221-01: Novel of Manners

CRN 29238

Professor J. Brady
Palmer 306 (office)

Spring, 2009
MWF 9:00-9:50 in Palmer
205

843-3906 (office phone)

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:

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 novel of manners over a century -- from 1813 to 1913 -- in the fiction of Jane Austen, Henry James, and Edith Wharton. We move from the heroine-centered courtship plots of Austen’s fiction, set in Regency England, through Wharton and James’s adaptations of the genre 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 the lens through which we will interpret Wharton’s novels, many of them set in America’s Gilded Age, the era of conspicuous consumption. 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. This course has these principal goals: to introduce students to the conventions of the genre; 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 consider the evolution of the novel of manners over time and across national boundaries. This is a course, then, in authorial self-revision, in literary influence, and in the study of an important novelistic genre.

This course carries both F2 (Writing Intensive) and F4 (Literary Texts) credit.

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. 14	Introductory remarks
Jan. 16, 21, 23, 26, 28	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i> (1813)
Jan. 30, Feb. 2, 4, 6	<i>Northanger Abbey</i> (1816)
Monday, February 9	First essay due, 4 pages
Feb. 11, 13, 16, 18	<i>Washington Square</i> (1880)
February 20, 23	Workshops of first essays
Feb. 25, 27, March 2, 4	<i>The Aspern Papers</i> (1888; 1905-07)
Friday, March 6	Second essay due, 4 pages
March 9, 11, 13	“The Private Life” (1891); “The Middle Years”(1893/1909); workshops of second essays
Spring Break	
March 23, 25, 27	<i>Theory of the Leisure Class</i> (1899)

Monday, March 30	Short essay on Veblen due, 3 pages
April 1, 3, 6, 13, 15, 17	<i>The House of Mirth</i> (1905)
April 8	Workshop of Veblen essays
April 20, 22, 24, 27, 29	<i>The Custom of the Country</i> (1913)
Friday, May 1	Final essay due, 6 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 (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.