English 485-01: Henry James and Edith Wharton

In this course we will focus exclusively on the works of Henry James and Edith Wharton. Through intensive study of their novels and short stories, we will consider questions of sexuality, gender, ethnicity, nationality, aesthetics, and economics. We will also situate the fiction historically, not only by learning about the authors’ lives, but more importantly, by considering the texts as cultural artifacts of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth and by thinking of them as exemplars of various literary genres and modes such as realism, naturalism, satire and novels of manners. Finally, we will also consider questions of literary influence and intertextuality, given the close personal and professional relationship between the two authors.

This course is the capstone experience of the English major, and its primary goal is to guide you towards finding your own voice as a literary critic by helping you hone your skills of independent research, synthesis and interpretation. To this end, the course begins with a series of common readings, gradually moving towards independent research, reading, and writing. By the end, you will have produced a 20-25 page essay of original scholarship, and you will be required to present your work formally to your peers during the last weeks of the semester.

**Required Texts**


Several articles, essays and short stories will be assigned throughout the semester and will be considered required reading. These texts will be available in our public folder.

**Recommended Texts**


**Assignments**

You will write two 5-7 page papers, one on a James text and one on a Wharton text. The culminating research paper will be 20-25 pages. We will discuss further parameters for this paper in class. As part of the final research project, you will also write a 2-3 page formal proposal, produce an annotated bibliography, and give two presentations – one on your preliminary analysis/research and one on your final essay. You will also be required to submit your first five pages to peer review. We will discuss the particulars of these assignments in class. Grades for all of the above will be weighted as follows:
Short Essay #1 15%
Short Essay #2 15%
Seminar Essay 50%
Proposal 5%
Annotated Bibliography 5%
Presentations 10%

Assignment Submission Policy

Essays are due on the day and time specified in the syllabus. I expect hard copies, unless you are submitting a late paper over the weekend. You will lose 2/3 of a letter grade per day (including weekends) whenever an assignment is late. (For example, if the essay receives an A- but is one day late, the final grade is a B, and so on.) After an essay is a week late, you will receive an “F” on the assignment. If you fail to turn in any of the major assignments, you will fail the course. Presentations are mandatory and cannot be made up. Please clear your calendar now of any conflicts on presentation days.

Also, please note that essays must be typed, double-spaced with an inch margin, stapled, and adhere to MLA standards in both layout and documentation. See me if you have questions about MLA or need further information.

Attendance Policy

Because this is a senior seminar, you are expected to perform like graduating majors and be serious about your work. I will have little patience, therefore, with lax attendance or inattention during class. We will rely heavily on class discussion, so your participation and preparedness are essential. You are to be here on-time, well-prepared, and well-rested. If you miss more than 3 classes, your final grade will be penalized 1/3 letter grade per absence. If you miss more than 6 classes, you may fail the course. Furthermore, a failure to participate can adversely affect your attendance. Coming to class without the assigned reading text for the day may be counted as an absence.

Academic Honesty

If you plagiarize an essay or other assignment, in part or whole, you will fail the course in addition to any punishment meted out by the Honor Council. Please see the attached list of English department policies and read carefully the section on academic honesty. This policy governs our class. Please note particularly that work written for another class – even if revised – cannot be handed in as original work in this class. Doing so is considered intellectual dishonesty.

Course Schedule

January

Thur, 10 Introductions
Thur, 17 The Portrait of a Lady: Chpts. I-XIV (17-122)
FOLDER: Banta, “Henry James and the New Woman”
Tues, 22 The Portrait of a Lady: Chpts. XV-XXIX (122-265)

Thur, 24  The Portrait of a Lady: Chpts. XXX-XLII (265-365); “Preface to the New York Edition” (3-16)

Tues, 29  The Portrait of a Lady: Chpts. XLIII-end (365-490)
FOLDER: Martin, “Failed Heterosexuality in The Portrait of a Lady”


February

Tues, 5  The House of Mirth: Book I, Chpts. I-XII (5-109)
FOLDER: Marchand, “Values Made Flesh: Edith Wharton and the Body Aesthetic”

FOLDER: Essay on Wharton and Naturalism: TBA

Tues, 12  The House of Mirth: Book II, Chpt. VI – end (189-256)
FOLDER: Banta, “Wharton’s Women”

Thurs, 14  The Ambassadors: Preface, Books First – Second (1-90)
FOLDER: Wolkenstein, “Henry James in France” (Pay special attention to the section on The Ambassadors)

Mon, 18  Short Essay #1 Due

Tues, 19  The Ambassadors: Books Third-Sixth (93-228)
FOLDER: Anna Despotopoulou, “What woman was ever safe?” Dangerous Constructions of Womanhood in The Ambassadors"

Thurs, 21  The Ambassadors: Books Seventh – Ninth (231-341)

Tues, 26  The Ambassadors: Book Tenth – Twelfth (345-470)
FOLDER: Buchele, “Renunciations in James’s Late Novels” (137-50)

Thurs, 28  The Age of Innocence: Chpts. 1-12 (3-92)

March

Tues, 5  The Age of Innocence: Chpts. 13-26 (93-219)
FOLDER: Dwight, “Wharton and Art”

Thurs, 7  The Age of Innocence: Chpts. 27-end (220-98)
FOLDER: Evron, “Realism, Irony and Morality in Edith Wharton’s The Age of Innocence”

Tues, 12  SPRING BREAK

Thurs, 14  SPRING BREAK

Tues, 19  TBA

Wed, 20  Short Essay #2 Due

Thurs, 21  TBA

Tues, 26  TBA
April

Tues, 2  Presentation of Critical Passages/Research

Wed, 3  Proposals Due

Thurs, 4  EASTER BREAK

Tues, 9  Presentation of Critical Passages/Research

Thurs, 11  Presentations of Critical Passages / Research

Fri, 12  Copies of your 5 pages due to me and to the members of your group for peer review

Mon, 15  Peer Review Evaluations due to your classmates and to me

Tues, 16  Presentations

Thurs, 18  Presentations

Mon, 22  Annotated Bibliographies Due

Tues, 23  Presentations

Thurs, 25  Presentations

  Complete Draft Due

  Final Draft Due Thursday, May 1 @ noon outside my office door.