**English 843 (CRN 23084): “Rereading Jane Austen”**

Talia Schaffer Mon 11:45-1:45pm, 4422

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and by appointment

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ENGL 84300. “Familiar Marriage”. Talia Schaffer. 2/4 credits. (Cross-listed with WSCP 81000). [CRN 23084].

In "Rereading Jane Austen," we will focus on two aspects of Austen study: Austen's development of the form of the marriage plot that would dominate nineteenth-century fiction, and the changing trends in Austen scholarship over the past half-century. One of the arguments this course will make is that the two subjects are linked; that much Austen criticism is grounded in a desire to imagine Austen as a maritally available (or unavailable) subject, subjecting her to versions of the dynamic she herself developed in her major novels. The course will read all the finished novels: *Northanger Abbey, Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice, Emma, Mansfield Park, Persuasion*. We will begin the course with historical investigations of the traumatic shifts in notions of marriage and family that occurred in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, by Ruth Perry, Naomi Tadmor, Lawrence Stone, and Amanda Vickery, and study the emerging ideas of female roles in this period using Mary Wollstonecraft and Hannah More, along with critics Ellen Jordan, Eve Tabor Bannet, and Barbara Caine. As we move on to the major novels, we will pair each novel with crucial Austen critics and theorists of the marriage plot, including Alistair Duckworth, Tony Tanner, Marilyn Butler, Claudia Johnson, Nancy Armstrong, Clara Tuite, William Deresiewicz, Jill Heydt-Stevenson, Mary Jean Corbett, Eve Sedgwick, and D.A. Miller. In reading both the marriage plot and the criticism, one crucial question will be how desire gets constructed in Austen's world. Does Austen endorse erotic desire as a prerequisite for marriage, and if not, how is she constructing desire? Why has so much Austen scholarship become fixated on sexuality in Austen, and what might be at stake in this investigation? In both the fiction and the criticism, we might ask if it is possible, or useful, to imagine Austen’s marriage plot without reference to erotic desire, and if so, what might take the place of desire, or what other objects of desire might be crucial, in this model. Over all, “Rereading Jane Austen” aims to experiment with reading the Austenian marriage plot in terms of Austen’s own contemporary marital paradigms rather than our own post-Foucaultian assumptions, tracking the way Austen’s notion of marriage alters from the early 1790s novels to the late fiction of the 1810s, critically interrogating a history of Austen scholarship, and attending to the subsequent influence of Austen’s marital paradigms. Presentation, research paper, and blog.

Required books:

Buy your books through the Mina Rees Library’s amazon.com link and support our library: http://library.gc.cuny.edu/info/amazon.html

\*Readings with an asterisk are available via the “Rereading Jane Austen” site on Academic Commons: commons.gc.cuny.edu. The password is Schaffer. If you have trouble accessing this site, there is a shadow site on Blackboard you can use.

Required texts

It doesn’t matter to me which Austen editions you use, but for scholarly purposes I recommend Oxford or Penguin, and if you think you want to write on it, you might want to go for a Norton or Broadview edition. Here’s the info for the Oxford editions:

Austen, Jane. *Emma.* 1816. Oxford World’s Classics

978-0199535521

Austen, Jane. *Mansfield Park.* 1816. Oxford World’s Classics.

978-0199535538

Austen, Jane. *Northanger Abbey, Lady Susan, The Watsons, Sanditon.* Oxford World’s Classics.

  978-0199535545

Austen, Jane. *Persuasion.* 1818. Oxford World’s Classics.

 978-0199535552

Austen, Jane, *Pride and Prejudice.* 1813. Oxford World’s Classics.

978-0199535569

Austen, Jane. *Sense and Sensibility.* 1811. Oxford World’s Classics.

978-0199535576

Miller, D.A. *Jane Austen, or, the Secret of Style.* Princeton UP, 2005.

978-0691123875

Course Schedule

Jan 27 introduction and handouts:

\*Wollstonecraft, \*More

\*Juvenilia: Frederic & Elfrida

(Southam, Mazzeno excerpts)

Feb 3 \*Stone: Ch 6, 7

\*Berkowitz

\*Perry: Intro, Ch 5, Ch 6

\*Vickery (\*Bannet)

Feb 10 *Northanger Abbey*

\*Butler, \*Johnson

Feb 17 PRESIDENTS’ DAY – NO CLASS

Feb 20 (MON DAY) *Sense and Sensibility,* first half

\*Sedgwick, \*Hudson Ch 1

Feb 24 *Sense and Sensibility* to end

Miller, Ch. 1, 2

Mar 3 *Pride and Prejudice,* first half

\*Armstrong, Ch. 1, 2

Mar 10 *Pride and Prejudice* to end

\*Duckworth Ch 3; \*Deresciewicz, Ch 2

Mar 17 *Mansfield Park*, first half

\*Tuite, \*Cleere

Mar 24 *Mansfield Park* to end

\*Corbett Ch.2, \*Haggerty

Mar 31 *Emma,* first half

\*Heydt-Stevenson, \*Tanner

April 7 *Emma* to end

Miller, \*Deresciewicz

(optional: Armstrong *Emma* section, 134-160)

**hand in final paper idea**

April 14-22 SPRING BREAK

Apr 28 *Persuasion*, first half

Miller, Ch 3; \*Wiltshire

May 5 *Persuasion* to end

\*Vranjes, \*Cohen

May 12 final discussion

**final paper due**

Learning goals:

In this course students should

1. Become comfortable identifying and critiquing the major assumptions in Austen criticism

2. Gain in-depth knowledge of one of the major *oeuvres* of British literary history

3. Locate and critically engage with relevant research

4. Practice professional skills of conference-paper-length delivery and article-length writing

Requirements and grading:

One presentation (about 20 min.) 30%

One long paper (about 20 pp.) 50%

Effort grade 20%

Presentation:

Everyone has to give one brief presentation. Aim to keep it no longer than 20 min., which means about 8 double-spaced typed pages. Please give me a copy of the presentation afterwards, and bring extra copies for anyone else in the class who might want it. If two people are scheduled for presentations on the same day, you need to meet with each other to coordinate your talks.

In the presentation, you should analyze the critical article or theoretical reading for that day. *Do not summarize it.* Instead, briefly explain what the critic is arguing, isolate areas where you think the critic is wrong (or especially insightful), and suggest alternative ways of explicating the text. You must find one thing you admire about the article before you launch into your devastating critique.

Practice it as if it is a real conference paper. That means: 8 or 9 pages, no more; practice reading it aloud before you deliver it; structure it for listeners, with clear and frequent signposting. Make space for occasional side comments and spontaneous asides. Handouts help.

Essay:

You have the usual 20-pp research paper due at the end of the semester. Throughout the semester you should be monitoring our conversations to figure out what excites you most, what you’d like to explore further. Decide by spring break and try to do some research then, so that you can use the last few weeks of the semester for writing. You are welcome to turn in the final paper at any point in the semester – if you know you want to write on a topic we cover early, try to get the paper done early.

Blogging:

I’ve set up a blog on Blackboard and the Commons. Please post at least 10 comments over the course of the semester (no more than 2 per week though; you can’t do all 10 on one day!). Since we meet on Mondays, I’d like to have everyone post by Friday at 5. (No need to make them long – a couple of lines is fine). You may of course post any time before Friday; if that is a hard day for you, do it Wed or Thurs. You don’t have to have finished the reading in order to blog, and in fact your postings may be better if you are still in the middle of the text.

Here is your all-purpose blog prompt: “If I were going to write my final paper on this, what would I write about?” You need not answer that specifically, but it might get you thinking. The blog is your chance to talk to each other, try out presentation ideas, ask about confusing matters, and float crazy theories.

If you are on the Commons I think you can just get into the blog area normally. If you want to do it through Bb, however, those of you who are not Grad Center students need to see Vin DeLuca at the registrar’s office, room 7201 (registrar@gc.cuny.edu, (212) 817-7500). He’ll register you and then you can contact Achia Samuels to enroll in Blackboard: asamuels@gc.cuny.edu, or (212) 817-7314.

Reserve Readings

Recommended texts, which will be on reserve:

Armstrong, Nancy. *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*

Bannet, Eve Tabor, *The Domestic Revolution: Enlightenment Feminisms and the Novel*

Butler, Marilyn, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*

Copeland, Edward, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen* – e-book at Grad Center

Copeland, Edward, *Women Writing About Money*

Corbett, Mary Jane, *Family Likeness: Sex, Marriage, and Incest from Jane Austen to Virginia Woolf* (available as e-book)

Deresiewicz, William, *Jane Austen and the Romantic Poets* (available as e-book)

Duckworth, Alistair, *The Improvement of the Estate: A Study of Jane Austen's Novels*

Galperin, William, *The Historical Austen*

Heydt-Stevenson, Jillian, *Austen’s Unbecoming Conjunctions: Subversive Laughter, Embodied History*

Hudson, Glenda, *Sibling Love and Incest in Jane Austen’s Fiction*

Johnson, Claudia, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel*

Mazzeno, Laurence W., *Jane Austen: Two Centuries of Criticism*

Miller, D.A. *Jane Austen, or, the Secret of Style*

Perry, Ruth. *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture, 1748-1818* (available as e-book)

Stone, Lawrence. *The Family, Sex, and Marriage* *in England, 1500-1800*

Southam, B.C. *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage* (available as e-book)

Tanner, Tony, *Adultery in the Novel: Contact and Transgression*

Tanner, Tony, *Jane Austen*

Wiltshire, John, *Jane Austen and the Body: “The Picture of Health”*