

ENG 440 (Single Author): Undisciplining Jane Austen in London

Credits: 3

Contact Hours: 37.5

Pre-Requisites: Any two English DL classes; or instructor's permission

COURSE DESCRIPTION

While Austen lives as a romance writer within the realm of popular culture, her novels are deeply engaged with the political and social issues of her world. Thus, our work in this class will be to read Austen deeply and seriously within the context of the Romantic era. Given Austen's canonicity and her place within the rise of the British novel, we'll examine what it means to bring out the whiteness of her novels and foreground the realist novel's racializing and globalizing impulses. In other words, we will "Undiscipline" Jane Austen. This entails placing her work more firmly within the contexts of transatlantic slavery, global capitalism, and the growing British empire; centering racial logic while rethinking the fields in which Austen's work is most often situated; and devising "new modes and methods" of research and analysis as we put the past and present in conversation (Sharpe, "In the Wake"). We will also place Austen and her world more fully within the context of Hawai'i and *its* world to destabilize the disciplinary boundaries of "British" literature. The result will be not only a more critical and nuanced portrait of a canonical author with lingering appeal, but a more thorough exploration of the historical, political, and cultural context in which these texts were produced and in which we are reading them. Alongside Austen's novels, students will read a selection of primary sources from the 18th and 19th century, as well as critical sources on Jane Austen's fiction and "undisciplining" 18th and 19th century studies.

Students will engage heavily with our location in London to augment their understanding of Austen's novels and the issues they raise. For example, students will explore the museums of London to better understand not only Britain's imperial history, but also to think about how the legacies of the imperial project are seen throughout London today. Students will also witness first-hand the effects of empire by walking through the city, interacting with locals, and seeing how debates over immigration play out within contemporary culture. Part of the work of the class will be to put our novels in conversation with the city itself: its culture, its history, and its people. Our readings and activities will thus be directed towards fulfilling the Study Abroad Student Learning Outcomes to:

- Demonstrate awareness of your own cultural values and biases, especially in relationship to race and identity, and how these impact your ability to work with others;
- Demonstrate knowledge of diversity through examining race, identity, and immigration, within the history of the British empire and its socio-cultural legacies;
- Communicate appropriately and effectively with diverse individuals and groups;
- Demonstrate an increased capacity to analyze issues relating to race, identity, colonialism, and immigration with an appreciation for disparate viewpoints.
- Become familiar with Jane Austen's body of work, her critical history, and the time in which she was writing from a global perspective
- Read a text critically and actively, through performing close readings, textual analysis, and the historical contexts in which it was produced.
- Understand the relationship between literature, culture, and history through situating texts within their historical and cultural contexts

Required Texts:

- Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (1817)
- Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813)
- Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* (1814)
- Jane Austen, *Emma* (1815)
- Jane Austen, *Persuasion* (1817)
- Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince* (1831)
- Course reader with selected primary and secondary sources

Requirements:

- Reading Quizzes: 20%
- Class Notes + Journal Entries: 25%
- Museum Analysis + Presentation: 25%
- Critical Autobiography of Reading Austen in London: 30%

ASSIGNMENTS:

Reading Quizzes (20%):

These short (10 questions), multiple choice quizzes will be given during every class, and will cover the reading for the day. The goal of these quizzes is to ensure that all students are keeping up with the reading and reading closely. Students may not make up these quizzes for any reason; however, I will drop your lowest scores at the end of the semester. In an effort to ensure students arrive to class on time, late students will not be able to take the quiz once class discussion has started.

Class Notes + Journal Entries (25%): Following the practice of 19th-century readers who kept “commonplace books” – scrapbooks and journals full of quotes and ideas from the texts they encountered – throughout the semester you will keep an analogue-style journal to document your learning and engage with the ideas in our readings and class discussions. Studies show that we retain more information, have better focus, and are more creative when we write by hand, so this is also intended to give you a different kind of engagement with the class. I am asking you to do three things with your class notebook:

- Before coming to class, please transcribe two passages that interest you, and jot down just a few notes about why; or practice annotating your passage by highlighting the words, phrases, or images that struck you.
- During class, record notes about our class discussions. These should not be exhaustive; instead of trying to transcribe every word said, jot down some of our main ideas, or key insights and ideas that really struck with you. Aim to fill one page per class period.
- Each week, write a two-page journal entry that reflects on your experience in London, and how your experience relates to some of the ideas we’ve discussed in class.

Museum Visit + Presentation (25%)

This semester-long project asks students to visit The Victoria and Albert Museum, the British Museum, and the National Maritime Museum and write a 7-8 page essay about their relationships

with empire and our class discussions. How do the museums display empire? What do the wide number of imperial artifacts tell us about British relationships with empire and their legacies today? And how does this all relate to our class discussions? You will analyze the presentation of empire from a critical viewpoint, then focus specifically on one exhibit. You should do research on one or more of the artifacts in the exhibit, and pay special attention to how it is presented to the audience (such as an analysis of the placard(s), or location in relation to other artifacts and/or exhibits). You will also present your analysis to the class in a 10-minute presentation.

Final Paper: Critical Autobiography of Reading Austen in London (30%)

At the end of the semester, you will submit a more creative and personal autobiography of reading essay. While more details will be given out in class, this essay will ask you to reflect, critically, on your experience in London and with the texts and topics we've discussed. For this assignment, students will be invited to experiment with form and genre, and will work toward cultivating their unique voice.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

- Week 1: Course Introduction + Undisciplining Jane Austen in London
- Week 2: Austen, *Northanger Abbey*
Primary and secondary sources on the city of Bath and the Gothic
- Week 3: Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*
Primary readings on class, gender, and primogeniture.
- Week 4: Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*
Primary readings on the French and Haitian Revolutions
- Week 5: Austen, *Mansfield Park*
Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince*
- Week 6: Austen, *Mansfield Park*
Primary and secondary sources on slavery and empire
- Week 7: Austen, *Mansfield Park*
Primary and secondary sources on slavery and empire
- Week 8: Austen, *Emma*
Primary and secondary sources on enclosure
- Week 9: Austen, *Emma*
Primary and secondary sources on Bristol and the slave trade
- Week 10: Austen, *Emma*
- Week 11: Austen, *Persuasion*
Primary and secondary on Hawai'i and the British navy

Week 12: Class Wrap-Up

Assessment: All assignments (other than reading quizzes, which are five points each) will be graded on the 100-point scale:

100 – 97 = A+	96 – 93 = A	92 – 90 = A-
89 – 87 = B+	86 – 84 = B	83 – 80 = B-
79 – 77 = C+	76 – 74 = C	73 – 70 = C-
69 – 67 = D+	66 – 64 = D	63 – 60 = D-
59 and below = F		

RELATION TO OVERSEAS SETTING:

This course has been specifically constructed to make use of our location in London, which will greatly enhance students' understanding of not only Austen's novels, but of the world in which she was writing. Austen's novels are deeply engaged with Britain's imperial history; given the fact that this history can be seen all over the city – in its museums, statues, and its diversity, for example – students will gain an incredibly in-depth knowledge of the British empire and its relationship with the development of the British novel. I have built into our class an engagement with these imperial aspects of Britain so students will get a full grasp of the history of the British empire and its effects today. Through assignments, field trips, and cultural events, students will continually put the ideas from our class discussions in conversation with the city and history of London. I will provide students with a list of suggested activities for their assignments, and that relate in other ways to the course – which we will undertake as a course or students will undertake independently. Further, Roehampton generally takes students on a trip to Bath, a city is not only important to a number of Austen's novels, but also contains its own engagement with empire and slavery, given its location next to Bristol, England's main slave-trading port. Much of the money from slavery helped build the city of Bath as we see it today, and students will gain much from being able to see these connections. Finally, I hope to organize a trip to Jane Austen's House.