

**DRAFT**  
**Oxford Abroad: Austen & Her Contemporaries**  
ENG296YH (Summer 2023) •

Professor: Alex Eric Hernandez  
Email: [alex.hernandez@utoronto.ca](mailto:alex.hernandez@utoronto.ca)  
Office Hours: By Appt.

A stone slab tucked away in Winchester’s cathedral church marks Jane Austen’s grave, noting that: “the extraordinary endowments of her mind / obtained the regard of all who knew her and / the warmest love of her intimate connections.” It’s a metaphor for the relative obscurity in which she lived her life, a memorial that speaks volumes about the author even as it makes no mention of her writing. This course explores that extraordinary mind and the culture that it brought about, placing Austen in the context of her times in several senses.

Situating her work in dialogue with that of contemporaries in literature, philosophy, and aesthetics, we’ll read several of her novels closely as she traces the complex social dynamics of Georgian England and navigates a moment of global political upheaval whose effects are felt even to this day. We’ll also make a number of detours – in some cases literally – into the texts, cities, and broader geographical spaces that informed her development as an author. Students will learn to read her work more critically and develop some facility with the era’s literature, to demystify Austen’s body of work and return it to its larger context, as well as gain an understanding of some of the classic accounts through which scholars have understood this period.

### **Course Aims**

1. To work through a variety of primary texts from the period spanning roughly 1780-1820, developing an understanding of their styles, arguments, and broad thematic and ideological investments.
2. Survey a number of “classic” secondary accounts of this literature, connecting their claims to the texts of the age and analyzing them accordingly.
3. Develop skills for reading and analyzing this literature, learning to move beyond summary to mount arguments about form, history, culture, etc.

### **Course Requirements and Evaluation**

- **Participation (20%)**: You are expected to attend every lecture and practice active and informed engagement with course materials and fellow students. This course features collaborative close reading, and thus operates under the assumption that you participate. Please be on-time and ready to learn at all class sessions.
- **House Groups**: A key component of this course and its participation requirement is your regular and active involvement as part of a collaborative discussion group, or what I am calling “House Groups.” Typically, we’ll begin each class session with trivia in these small-groups, before moving to discussions that draw upon the week’s reading and focus on a question that I present to you all. From there, we’ll come together to discuss as a class. I will keep track of your presence as part of this

assignment, and expect you to contribute constructively as part of a team of 6-7 students.

\* Note: House Groups will be formed at session 1 or 2 and remain your group for the balance of this course. Please ensure that you are present for this.

### **Department of English Statement on Attendance and Participation**

“English courses at the University of Toronto offer a distinctive sense of community, as they aim to foster opportunities both to listen and to be heard. While the requirements of individual instructors and the constraints and opportunities of various courses may differ significantly, the Department of English expects regular, prompt attendance in all courses and active participation when appropriate. Lectures and in-class discussions provide the foundation and context for all written assignments and other forms of evaluation.

By promoting both oral and written proficiency, the English program offers students a set of broadly effective professional and social skills. Regular attendance and informed participation demonstrate a commitment to fellow students and to the ideal of a shared educational experience.”

- **Journal Project (30%):** You are required to keep a daily journal as part of this course, in which you reflect on your readings, your experiences in Oxford, the UK, and wherever else you go, and anything else you are processing during this summer abroad. Think of this as practice in the kind of slow, thoughtful thinking that Austen and her contemporaries teach us to cultivate. Students should arrive to the course with their journals already purchased, though they may also keep an electronic copy. This assignment is due X.
- **Short Paper (20%):** Write an insightful, well reasoned, essay on any aspect of our readings (or suggest your own). Clocking in at around 1,500 words, I will meet with you to help you develop a strong argument and to refine your thinking about the text/s. This assignment is due X.
- **Term Tests (15% each):** There will be two short exams in this course,, one a mini-midterm (covering all material prior, and another, covering everything else. Questions may include matching, multiple choice, short answers. Test 1 is to take place X; Test 2, X.

### **Office Hours**

If you need to speak to me, please email or see me after class and we will arrange another time to meet. You are always welcome and encouraged to contact me via email. Expect to wait 24 hours after emailing for a response.

### **Accessibility**

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome and encouraged to participate in this course because they form an essential part of our class culture. Hence, to the best of my ability, I've tried to create this course according to Universal Design for Learning principles.

If you have a disability/difficulty/ health consideration that may require additional accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or Accessibility Services at 416-978-8060. In general, accommodations are to be sought well in advance of when they are needed. For more info, see also: [accessibility.utoronto.ca](http://accessibility.utoronto.ca).

### **LiveNotes**

We will be taking group “LiveNotes” in this class, which I will link to and host from the course’s Quercus site. Available through the professor’s OneNote account, this is a way for students to compare digitized lecture-tracking, ask collective questions, and receive targeted feedback from your instructor. Please note, you are *not required* to participate in this though many will find it very helpful. Note as well that this may be one way in which shy students can regularly participate in the course. The course link for this session’s Live Notes are to be found here: [LINK HERE](#)

Make sure to log into your UTOR ID account prior to writing your notes so that your contributions are automatically tagged and saved.

### **Tips and Class Rules**

- Please be respectful and courteous to me, and your fellow classmates: practice paying attention and refrain from texting, web-surfing, email or other personal business during the class period. To do so is rude and unfair to the class.

### **Plagiarism**

Using another person’s language or ideas and representing them as your own is *a serious offense*. Don’t take it lightly. If you plagiarize, you may fail the given assignment and/or the course, be reported to the Dean’s office, and may be subject to repercussions beyond the scope of this course. If you’re in doubt about whether or not you are plagiarizing, talk to me, or visit: <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>.

The University’s *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* outlines what constitutes academic misconduct, the processes for addressing academic offences, and the penalties that may be imposed. You are expected to be familiar with the contents of this document.

### **Required Texts**

Austen, *Mansfield Park*, ed. Sturrock (Broadview Press, 2001); ISBN: 9781551110981

Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, ed. Irvine (Broadview Press, 2002); ISBN: 9781551110288

Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, ed. Grogan (Broadview Press, 2002); ISBN: 9781551114798

Austen, *Persuasion*, ed. Bree (Broadview Press, 1998); ISBN: 9781551111315

Supplementary Materials available online; these may be printed out and brought to class

*NB: Because study abroad can be busy and the pace of reading is frenetic, I strongly recommend that students begin (or indeed finish) reading the four novels that form the heart of course materials.*

## Recommended Texts

Todd, ed., *Jane Austen in Context* (Cambridge UP, 2009)

Copeland, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen* (Cambridge UP, 2006)

Broadview Online: Jane Austen in Context (<https://sites.broadviewpress.com/austenincontext/log-in/>)

## Schedule of Readings

### Week I - August 7 - 10

Session 1. - "First Impressions": The Novel and/as Revolution

*Northanger Abbey*, p.37-137; Alcock, "Receipt for Writing a Novel"; Burke, excerpt from *Reflections on the Revolution in France*

Session 2. - Gothic Fantasies

*Northanger Abbey*, 138-240; Radcliffe, excerpt from *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 251-2; Anna Letitia and John Aikin, "On the Pleasure Derived from Objects of Terror; with Sir Betrand, A Fragment"

Session 3. Field Trip to Bath

Session 4. - Marriage and Social Mobility, c.1810

*Pride and Prejudice*, 43-160; Fordyce, from *Sermons to Young Women* and Gregory, from *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* (394-412); Cave, "An Elegy on a Maiden Name"

### Week II - August 14-17

Session 5 - Austen and Romantic-era Feminism

*Pride and Prejudice*, 161-255; "Appendix D: Women's Roles after The French Revolution," 419-42

Session 6 - Sensible Experiences: Literature, Picturesque, and the Country

*Pride and Prejudice*, 258-385; Gilpin, from *Three Essays on Picturesque Beauty* (Quercus)

Session 7. Field Trip to Stourhead Estate

Session 8 - \*\* MID-TERM TEST \*\*

### Week III - August 21-24

Session 9 - At Home with the Bertrams

*Mansfield Park*, 35-190; "Appendix E: The West Indian Connection," 494-498

Session 10 - Empire Comes Home

*Mansfield Park*, 191-314

Session 11 - Field Trip to London Day 1

Session 12 - Field Trip to London Day 2

**Week IV - August 28 - 31**

Session 13 - Fanny Goes Home

*Mansfield Park*, 315-468

Session 14 - In the Shadow of Napoleon

*Persuasion*, 45-144; Byron, *Napoleon's Farewell* (1815)

Session 15 - Ends and Endings: Austen, the Novel, and Mortality

*Persuasion*, 145-258; "Appendix A: The Cancelled Chapters of *Persuasion*," 259-69

Session 16 - Final Term Test