British Authors: Mary Wollstonecraft and Jane Austen

This course gives you the opportunity to engage in concentrated study of two key women writers in England during the period around 1800, both of whose works were published and read in their own historical periods; both of whose biographies exercised a strong influence on how and when people read their works; and both of whom have strong effects in, around, and on the contemporary world of the 21st century in which we currently live: Mary Wollstonecraft and Jane Austen. We will study major works of both authors and situate these works historically, politically, culturally, and critically. Readings by Wollstonecraft include *Mary: A Fiction* (1788), *Vindication of the Rights of Man* (1790), *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), *The Wrongs of Women; Or, Maria* (1798). Readings by Austen include “Love and Friendship”; *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Mansfield Park* (1814), and *Persuasion* (1818). We will also read influential biographies of both Wollstonecraft and Austen, including William Godwin’s *Memoirs* of Mary Wollstonecraft and James Edward Austen-Leigh’s *Memoirs* of Jane Austen. Finally, we will think, both directly and indirectly, about how these figures and their texts have been put to work in late-20th- and 21st-century culture, which will include thinking about recent biographies, criticism, adaptations, and mash-ups.

**Required Texts**


*Mary; Maria; Matilda.* By Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Shelley. Ed. Janet Todd. ISBN: 978-0140433715


*Broadview Bundle of 3 for students taking ENG 486 AND ENG 385: all three above texts, excluding Sense and Sensibility.* ISBN: 978-1-77047-286-0

*Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters.* By Jane Austen and Ben H. Winters. ISBN: 978-1594744426


**Suggested Texts**

A Note on the New Technologies

There is an inflexible no-digital-technology policy during class meetings. For the short time of the day that you are in this class, put away your mobile phones, your computers, your ipods, and any other digital devices you might possess. This is strictly an old technologies class for students, by which I mean you are welcomes to bring and use pens, pencils, paper, and books. If I notice you texting or otherwise engaging with new technology during class time, you will be asked to leave and counted absent.

Outside of class time, you are required to be in frequent commerce with your URI email address and our Sakai portal. If you have not yet had cause for opportunity, please familiarize yourself with Sakai and login several times per week throughout the semester to it and to your URI email.

Course Requirements

Participation – 25%

*Participation and attendance at class meetings.* This class requires active participation. Within the classroom, active participation involves listening to and engaging with what your classmates or I am saying as well as contributing to the conversation yourself. Because your presence is significant to a productive and valuable group dynamic, you are, of course, encouraged to attend all class meetings. More than two absences will reflect negatively upon your overall course grade; more than five absences will result in failure of the course. Please rely upon your own judgment to come to class or not come to class. I do not wish to receive emails containing excuses about your absence from class. If you experience an emergency that will require sustained absence from class (2+ absences that URI will excuse for the sake of the emergency), please use the proper channels through URI to make that situation known, at which time it would also be appropriate to make me aware of the situation.

*Reading and responding to assigned texts.* You are responsible to come to class prepared to discuss all of the assigned texts listed for each class meeting. Many texts, particularly (though not exclusively) poems, may require you to read them two and even three times before you reach a working grasp of their arguments and formal complexities. I may, from time to time, assign informal homework assignments to help you interact with given text(s) effectively or give pop quizzes during class time. There will be times when I will randomly choose to ask you about a given text within the context of class discussion. If it is obvious that you have not read the text, your participation grade will be compromised. Please keep in mind that part of your work, part of the discipline, of reading historical literature is to be mindful of the English language itself. Please have a pocket dictionary with you at all times during your study for this class (study, of course, includes both reading and writing) so that you can expand your command of English. Please also familiarize yourself with the *Oxford English Dictionary* and get used to follow-up consulting it if you do not use it as a first dictionary resource. OED is available online to all students through the URI library interface.

Formal Written and Oral Work (75%)

*Oral Presentation (15%) / Persuasive Essay (25%)*

On one occasion during the semester, you will be required to give an oral presentation and then post a formal-written version of the presentation to Sakai Dropbox no later than one week after your presentation is given.
When you submit the essay to Sakai, include your first and last name; date of presentation; and the name of the assignment in the file name. A hypothetical example would be: Jennifer-Jones_Persuasive-Essay_2-1-11.doc

The oral component of this assignment should include an in-class presentation of 10 minutes that outlines the thesis of your persuasive essay; points to one to two passages in the text that support your thesis; and offers crisp close readings of the passages(s) offered to support your claims about it/them in service of the thesis. Your classmates’ role will be to respond to your ideas through comments and questions.

The written component of this assignment should be a 5pp persuasive essay the support for which comes from close reading (as opposed, for example, to outside research).

*Oral work must be performed on the date it is assigned; it cannot be made up.
*You may work individually or in pairs on this assignment.
*You may offer handouts on the day of your presentation, but this is not a requirement.

Final Assignment: Research Paper OR Creative Project (35%)

The final assignment gives you the choice: a.) write a research paper on a topic of your choice that brings to attention at least one text we have studied in class and includes a bibliography of at least five sources, three of which must be annotated (10 pp + annotations and Works Cited page); or b.) produce a creative project that engages in some dynamic way with at least one text we have studied in class. Creative projects will require a critical preface. This preface must meet no specific page length; please write a preface that properly introduces the goals and purposes of your project.

*For the creative project, you may work individually or in pairs.

Please submit your formal work on the date it is due. If you do not submit your work on time there will be three repercussions, which include the following: a.) you will receive a 1/3 grade reduction from your earned grade for every day an essay is late, and an F after one week has passed proceeding a deadline; b). you will not receive commentary back from me (only a letter grade) on late essays; and c.) you will lose the privilege of revision, should that privilege be extended to the class at any time.

I will only accept formal written work that is properly formatted according to MLA standards. If you fail to submit an essay that is properly formatted, I will return it to you ungraded and you will not receive comments upon resubmission.

Note: WMS 500 students have a slightly different final assignment, which is a 15-25 page seminar paper with a bibliography that includes a minimum of eight sources, five of which must be annotated.

*Note that you cannot earn a passing grade in English 486 or Women’s Studies 500 unless you submit all formal work.

Disabilities in the English Classroom. If you have a documented disability, please contact me within the first week of the semester so that we may work out reasonable accommodations to support your success in this course. You will need to follow up your request for accommodation with an official letter from
Disability Services, which can also offer you resources to help ensure your success in the college environment. Contact: Disability Services for Students, Office of Student Life, 330 Memorial Union, 874-2098.

Academic Honesty and Integrity. All written work must be your own. Please review the URI web page on “Academic Honesty & Integrity” (http://www.cba.uri.edu/AcademicHonestyandIntegrity/) as well as the text I have ordered for you on the subject.

Reading Schedule

January 25: Introduction to Course

January 27: “Introduction: The Romantics and Their Contemporaries” (Sakai Resources); “Appendix C: Letters” from Memoirs of the Author of the Vindication of the Rights of Woman by William Godwin (1798) (Broadview | Sakai Resources)

February 1: Godwin, Memoirs of the Author of the Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1798): Chapters I through VI (Broadview)

February 3: Godwin continued: Chapters VII through X; “Secret Love” by D.A. Miller (Sakai Resources)

February 8: from A Memoir of Jane Austen; and Other Family Recollections (1870) by James Edward Austen-Leigh (Sakai Resources); Jane Austen “Love and Friendship” *NOTE: Print all online texts and read them in hard copy.

February 10: from Mary Wollstonecraft: A Revolutionary Life (2002); from Jane’s Fame: How Jane Conquered the World (2011) (Sakai Resources) *NOTE: Print all online texts and read them in hard copy.

February 15: Wollstonecraft, Mary: A Fiction (1788) (Penguin)

February 17: from Appendix A: Declaration of the Rights of Men And Of Citizens (pp 353-354); Edmund Burke, from Reflections on the Revolution in France (pp. 371-378); Richard Price, from A Discourse on the Love of Our Country (355-370) (Broadview: The Vindications)

February 22: Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Men, in a Letter to the Right Honorable Edmund Burke; occasioned by His Reflections on the Revolution in France (Broadview)

February 24: VRM continued

March 1: Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, Introduction and Chapters I through VI (Broadview)

March 3: Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, Chapters VII through XIII (Broadview); Appendix D: Contemporary Reviews (Broadview: The Vindications)
March 8: Mary Wollstonecraft, *Maria: The Wrongs of Woman* (1798) (Penguin)

March 10: *Maria* continued

March 15: Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility* (1811): Volume I (Broadview)

March 17: *Sense and Sensibility* continued: Volume II

March 22: Spring Break

March 24: Spring Break

March 29: *Sense and Sensibility* continued: Volume III

March 31: Appendix B: Sensibility (pp. 386-406); Appendix C: The Picturesque (pp. 407-410); Chapters 1-10 (more of you like) of *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters* (by Jane Austen and Ben H. Winters) (Quirk Press OR Sakai Resources) *NOTE: Print all online texts and read them in hard copy.

April 5: Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* (1814): Volume I (Broadview)

April 7: *Mansfield Park* continued: Volume II

April 12: *Mansfield Park* continued: Volume III

April 14: “War in the Air” from *War at a Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime* by Mary A. Favret (2010) (Sakai Resources) *NOTE: Print all online texts and read them in hard copy.


April 21: *Persuasion* continued: Volume II


*NOTE: Print all online texts and read them in hard copy.

April 28: Final Project Due

*Critical components of all final projects as well as persuasive essays are due in Sakai Dropbox by Tuesday, May 10 at noon.