FYS 008: Jane Austen- Property and Propriety

Classroom: Howard Hall 308, Tues/Thurs 12:30-1:45 PM
Office Hours: Mon 12-3; Thurs 2-4 and by appointment
Lisa West, 271-3708; lisa.west@drake.edu; Howard Hall 303 office

How I will Reach You:
By e-mail using Drake e-mail address

How You Can Reach Me:
lisa.west@drake.edu – please provide 24+ hours for response, since my daily life is likely on a different time schedule from yours!

This FYS will focus on Jane Austen's novel *Mansfield Park* and its use of property, propriety and romance. We will read 18th century writings about taste, aesthetics, landscape gardens and the "picturesque" as a theoretical background for the novel. We will also read several poems (country house poems, prospect poems, loco-descriptive poems) of the era that also engage in notions of property and propriety – particularly notions of nationalism and "taste." We will, of course, also view the movie. The first weeks will be full of ha-ha’s, questions about wealth and "improvements" and discussion about the possible reasons why landscape is so prominent in this difficult novel that supposedly was Austen’s favorite.

The second half of the course will bring in notions of travel and the gothic – and ruins. We will read Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, Wordsworth’s “Lines Written Above Tintern Abbey” and extend our understanding of the picturesque to travel writing, tourism, more poems and more writing about taste and property. There will also be at least one field trip and one required interview.

We will also work on applying the issues to life today – from our own fantasy yards to movie representations of Austen’s world.

**Course Objectives:**

1) Read some lesser-known Austen novels and watch movies – and discuss the texts critically, focusing on close reading
2) Discuss how “taste” as a concept can be linked to politics, morality and other issues
3) Become familiar with late 18th century ideas of the sublime, beautiful, and picturesque
4) Consider how landscapes and spaces are used today – and to what extent our sense of gardening extends the legacy of Kent, Repton, Gilpin and others
5) Improve writing skills
This course will follow Drake’s policies regarding Academic Honesty. The first instance of plagiarism will result in a failed assignment with no opportunity for revision. The second will result in failure of the class. If I find material downloaded directly from a website, such an instance of academic dishonesty will result in failure of the class and notification of the Dean’s Office at the first instance.

This course will follow Drake’s policies regarding Academic Accommodations. Anyone need accommodations for learning should contact me ASAP and provide the required paperwork. We can work together to meet the learning needs of each individual.

**Assessment:**
20% Paper #1 – landscape analysis of MP
20% Paper #2 – application to landscape of your choice
20% Class Participation (group work, in class presentations, in class writing)
20% Short Papers, written homework assignments, material submitted to or uploaded to Blackboard (interview, “Fanny” papers, etc.). 5 or 10 points per assignment, depending on length
10% final group project
10% final Paper

**Class Expectations:** Come to class on time. Do the reading ahead of time and have at least one passage flagged for discussion. If you miss class, contact a peer so you can be caught up for the next class and receive any handouts you missed. Be respectful of others. Take turns leading group discussions. WRITTEN WORK is due at the start of class or it will be considered late. Bring the reading to class – this means printing out E-Reserves OR bringing your laptop. Do not play with electronics during class or I will a) take them and b) ask you to leave, giving you an absence for the day. Meeting all these expectations is the basis for class participation. For a class participation grade of B or higher, I expect the student to listen to and show respect for others, talk TO others and incorporate others’ ideas in group work, and to make a difference in the direction the class takes. Talking all the time is not the solution....

**Attendance:** I don’t differentiate between excused and unexcused absences. 3 absences are max – and you can do extra work (like a one-page response) to cover class participation grade. More than 3 absences affects your FINAL grade by grade per extra day. More than 5 absences means an F. IF you end up with a major health issue or other issue, you need to see me ASAP about any variations to this policy. IF you are very ill, do not come to class but contact me before class. I don’t think a single illness will affect the attendance policy, but an extended illness is an example of a case where variations to the policy might need to be made. Since I have two school-age children, I am likely to have to cancel class during the term due to someone’s strep throat or sprained ankle. If that happens, we will have a Blackboard assignment. Getting that assignment done within 24 hours of scheduled class time counts as attendance for that day.
Required conference meetings will count like a class. I understand about the need to reschedule conference – we are human – but I expect students to reschedule promptly. Same with library visit or field trips.

**Short Papers:** There will be a significant amount of shared writing in the course, whether “close readings,” personal responses or changes to link materials in the course together. We will use Blackboard “discussion forum” frequently. Short responses will be graded on a 1-5 scale, and longer ones 1-10. No rubric – grade is based on depth of response, individuality, use of details and responding to prompt. Fewer points for repeating class discussion, not going into detail, etc.

**COUNTRY HOUSE REPORT.** I will ask students to get into groups of three or four and pick a country house in England or America as their focus for a 3-5 page report and oral report. The presentation in class needs to include everyone. The writing can be done by assigning members different sections or by group writing. Group grade. The report will not require much analysis or literary thinking but instead will ask for a “case study” to apply concepts of the course to date. All reports will be uploaded to Blackboard for future use. The report will include information on the history of a country house or estate; its connection to national or personal history; important landmarks or improvement; images; and discussion of how this site fits into certain THEORIES and TERMS of the course. Examples might be: Stourhead, Stowe, Blenheim, Cheshire House in England or Monticello, Mount Vernon, or Astor House in America. Dates: mid-17th century to late 19th century. Other options – look into the sites of Austen movies (Lyme Park?) or into former Abbeys turned estates. Due 9/2. This assignment will count for class participation.

**INTERVIEW.** In groups, we will brainstorm questions to ask different professionals in the landscape/property business today. You can do interviewing in pairs – BUT the write-ups need to be separate – and you need to ask different questions. You will write-up a 1-2 page singles spaced “summary” or Q/A interview transcript and upload to Blackboard. You will also write ½ page singles spaced about how you think your interview fits in with course material, what surprised you, or other critical responses. Suggestions for interviews: Christmas tree farm or pumpkin patch, Landscaping companies, Lowe’s or stores that sell outdoor material, mowing/lawn care companies, someone in charge of Pappajohn or other outdoor sculpture, farmer’s market management, places rented for weddings or other events, park and rec departments. Due 9/18. This assignment will count for Short Papers.

**PAPER #1: LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS.** First paper will develop ideas from shorter writings into a paper that analyzes an aspect of *Mansfield Park* based on ideas of landscape, aesthetics or related issues. Open to individual interest. For example, one person might contrast references to the West Indies in the novel and movie; another might look at how the landscape barriers reflect moral barriers; and
another might look at analogies between female bodies and the landscape. Use of academic journals as secondary sources is required. Due 10/7

PAPER #2: APPLICATION: The second paper will be an analysis of a “real” place in your home town or the Drake/Des Moines area. You will focus on how your selection of a place engages one or more course ideas. BE SPECIFIC. No laundry lists. More information later. Due 11/20.

FINAL PROJECT AND PAPER: Groups of 4-5 will select a topic for group class presentation and INDIVIDUAL papers. These can engage popular culture, local history, Jane Austen’s work, or ideas from the course. More information later. Presentations will be the last week of class (probably the last day) and papers due Dec. 12.

READING SCHEDULE - DRAFT
I will provide any updates on Blackboard and revise the syllabus accordingly. Assignments will also be on Blackboard.

T 8/26 – “Why Mow?” by Michael Pollan
H 8/28 – Mansfield Park through Vol I ch 3 (page 25 in my copy). I suggest you keep reading... 
T 9/ 2 – short reports on English country estates. Read Repton selections in back of book 382-387. I suggest you keep reading the novel since there is a LOT for Thursday.
H 9/4 – MP through chapter 11. We will focus on the Sotherton episode.
T 9/ 9 – MP finish Vol I
H 9/11 - MP Vol II through chapter 4.
T 9/16 – MP Volume II finish
H 9/18 – handouts. (“the Miniature”) I suggest you keep reading. INTERVIEW WRITEUPS DUE
T 9/23 – MP Volume III through chapter 5
H 9/25 – MP Vol III through chapter 14
T 9/30 – finish the novel
H 10/2 – work on papers. Maybe Auerbach essay at back of book
T 10/7 – Paper #1 due
H 10/9 – catch up or handouts
T 10/14 – Fall Break - no class
H 10/16 – Duckworth essay at back of book
T 10/21 – Said essay at back of book

H 10/23 – Northanger Abbey Vol I through chapter 7
T 10/28 – NA through Vol I.
H 10/30 – tourism essay; “Tintern Abbey” and ruins
T 11/4 - NA Vol II through chapter 9
H 11/6 – handouts – selections from *Mysteries of Udolpho* and other texts
T 11/11 – finish NA
H 11/13 – Susan Stewart essays on “miniature” and “gigantic.” We might move these earlier
T 11/18 – work on papers
H 11/20 – paper #2 due
T 11/25 – plan for final projects
T 12/2 – work on final project
H 12/4 – final project
Final papers due Dec 12