

## **JANE AUSTEN AND HER WORLD: Part II**

**Day and Time: Tuesday, 10-12**

**Place: Dewey Hall Commons, Smith College**

**Moderators: Sherry Wilson and Dudley Williams**

**Last year's festivities around the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Jane Austen's death may be over, but international interest in her novels endures. In an age when gruesome thrillers and murder mysteries dominate the best seller lists, Jane Austen's quiet "novels of manners" provide a welcome respite.**

**This seminar is for those who already love Jane Austen, those who have never read her novels and those who are interested in her life and times.**

**We will examine why she has such eternal appeal. We will read three novels and a novella and learn about the world in which she lived and wrote.**

**We will read**

***Lady Susan*, novella: Tale of a beautiful, charming and ambitious recent widow.**

***Sense and Sensibility*: Does one triumph over the other for Elinor and Marianne?**

***Northanger Abbey*: Catherine Morland discovers life is not always like a gothic novel.**

***Emma*, widely considered her masterpiece: A young woman learns that meddling in other people's love lives can be disastrous.**

**Each class will be divided in two parts: The first hour will be a presentation on some aspect of the novel or Austen's world. The second hour will be a discussion of part of a novel. We will spend several weeks on each novel with a short discussion of *Lady Susan* on the first day.**

**Participants may choose either:**

- 1) To research and present a short report on some topic relevant to the novels. A list of proposed topics is on the back of this page. Or**
- 2) To present and lead a discussion of the novel read for that week**

**Presentations should be 20 to 25 minutes long in order to stimulate discussion. Creative styles of presentation are welcome. A list of resource books will be given to those who enroll.**

**Required reading: The novels and novella, any edition.**

**Suggested topics are:**

*Sense and Sensibility:*

**Inheritance and wills:** The Dashwood women cannot inherit their home and must move to more modest housing. The son from a second marriage gets all the wealth.

**Courtship and Marriage:** Is Marianne secretly engaged to Willoughby? What are the norms for courtship, engagement and marriage?

**Education of a Gentleman:** Edward is educated privately in a small school similar to the one run by Jane Austen's father. His brother is sent to boarding school. Tutors in the home were often employed for young boys.

*Northanger Abbey*

**Gothic Novels of the Era:** Who were the popular writers of Gothic novels? Austen loved such novels but her book is considered a satire on the genre.

**The City of Bath:** A knowledge of the geography of Bath will assist in understanding the book which mainly takes place in that small city.

**The Militia in England:** Henry Tilton's brother is in the militia. Jane Austen's brother also served in that capacity. How does a militia career compare to the regular army?

*Emma*

**Social Status:** Emma and her family are fairly wealthy landed gentry. Robert Martin is a tenant farmer. Jane Fairfax's family is "shabby genteel" so she must become a governess. Among professional men, John Knightly is a barrister and Mr. Perry is the local apothecary while Mr. Elton is the local vicar.

**Education of a Gentlewoman:** Emma has been educated at home by a governess. There is a small school for girls in Highbury where Harriet Smith is educated. What were girls supposed to learn in order to be considered educated? Was this different from boys?

**Medicine:** Mr. Woodhouse is a hypochondriac but he has good reason to fear illnesses. Consumption, diphtheria, even measles could be deadly. Mr. Perry, the apothecary, is clearly a family friend and advisor, but in early 19<sup>th</sup> century England he had little to offer in medical cures. Sea-bathing and "drinking the waters" at spas like Bath were popular.

## **DISCUSSION TODAY**

- 1) Add number of pages to read per week?**
- 2) Decide on topics – have left out ethics, Napoleonic wars and authors other than Gothic novelists**
- 3) What books to display**
- 4) Poster? What could go on it? I'm no artist**
- 5) Have you seen the annotated versions and should we really recommend them?**
- 6) What is name of book you brought about Everything I Know I learned from Jane Austen?**
- 7)**