

Jane Austen: Love, Money, & Manners: Desire, Deception, & the Novels of Jane Austen

Faculty: Elisha Cohn, Professor, Literatures in English

Week Two: July 12 – 18, 2026

Schedule: Monday - Friday, 9-12 and 1:30-3:30, except Wednesday afternoon.

Location: Kennedy Hall, room 101

Welcome to Reading Jane Austen!

How to introduce Jane Austen, an author so well known, so canonical, and so widely influential? Why have her six published novels been translated into over 40 languages and inspired innumerable adaptations? How has she come to be known as *the* author who shaped novels and novel-reading? How can we make sense of the enduring legacy of plots that appear provincial and Anglocentric, though they were written during the intensification of British imperial power in the early nineteenth century? And why, then, has Austen's work inspired a feeling of identification and a sense of creative possibility through the generations and across the globe for over 200 years?

I'm a Professor in the Department of Literatures in English specializing in nineteenth century British literature. While I've been teaching at Cornell for nearly 15 years, exploring the pleasures and challenges of reading Jane Austen with students has been one of the greatest joys of my career! In this course, we will delve into her most popular work, *Pride and Prejudice*, to understand how this exquisite comedy of manners, set in a very particular time and place, launched Austen's reputation as a keen-eyed social critic, a writer deeply attentive to the way history shapes everyday life in the aftermath of the French revolution, and of course an endless source of readerly pleasure.

We'll examine the novel closely, getting to know how it is, exactly, that these vivid characters emerge from the printed page and live on today. Exploring Austen's style from the inside, students will have opportunities to experiment with writing in and adapting her style, as well as sample other authors' efforts to reimagine Austen's world. We will also investigate scholarly debates about *Pride and Prejudice*, honing our skills in argumentation (the very skills that make Lizzy so dazzling!). Meanwhile, learning about Austen, her circle, and her world—and encountering her books and other from the period in Cornell's Rare Books library—will enrich the process of reading and discussing Austen's fiction.

My experience has been that there is no writer who galvanizes a group of readers more powerfully and delightfully than Austen. I look forward to reading together with you!

Before class starts, please try to read the whole novel to help us make the most of our time together. We will reread and look closely at many sections together.

- Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Norton edition if possible). I also encourage you to review any adaptations that you know and especially like!

Optional reading:

- Clare Tomalin, *Jane Austen: A Life*

Things to Bring to Class:

- Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Norton edition if possible)
- A notebook and writing implements (both pen and pencil)