



## Sex and Sensibility

The Rise of Chick Lit from Jane Austen to Bridget Jones

*There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.* --Edith Wharton



### Course Syllabus for English 575.1BB (J-Term, 2014)

#### *Practicalities*

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#### *Course Description*

In the past decade, the popular fiction “chick lit” has assumed gargantuan proportions, infiltrating into the mystery and young adult genres as well as the subsets *mommy lit* and *hen lit* (the latter, however unfortunately named, aimed at the over-forty reader). With Candace Bushnell’s *Sex and the City* and Helen Fielding’s *Bridget Jones’s Diary* as master plots, the genre has figured prominently in the culture wars since the late 1990s: the anthologies *This Is Not Chick Lit* and its rejoinder, *This Is Chick Lit*, for example, defend competing agendas for the function of the woman writer and the purposes of fiction. This course offers a sustained examination of this postmodern subgenre and shows how these urban period pieces provide an ethnographic report on a shift in the climate of feminism. It seeks to understand the social conditions that gave rise to chick lit, a new incarnation of the courtship novel, and to explain its continued popularity. Through online chats, a course blog, and several types of essays, we will work to decode the ways in which this type of qualitative sociology negotiates romantic and economic concerns, ones dramatized in the literary antecedents of Jane Austen and Edith Wharton.

#### *Tech Support Information*

Help Desk: (603) 862-4242

Hours: M-F 7:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Online Learning Support Form: Submit a question 24 hours, 7 days a week, and receive a response within one business day: <https://itsupport.unh.edu/onlinelearning/>

Additional eUNH student resources: <http://unh.edu/eunh/student-resources>

#### *Required Texts*

Books have been ordered though the UNH Bookstore (Memorial Union Building, 83 Main Street; Store telephone: (603) 862-2140):

1. Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. (Recommended edition: *The Annotated Pride and Prejudice*, ed. David Shapard. Anchor.)
2. Barker, Jo. *Longbourn*.
3. Fielding, Helen. *Bridget Jones's Diary*.
4. Wharton, Edith. *The House of Mirth*. (Recommended edition: Elizabeth Ammons, ed. Norton.)

The instructor's book, *Chick Lit and Postfeminism*, is not required, but recommended. Copies can be purchased at the UNH Bookstore and Amazon.com. You can buy a slightly discounted copy directly from the instructor by cash or check; the instructor is of course happy to inscribe copies purchases made directly or online.

### Important Notes about Writing Assignments

1. Short stories and short nonfiction will be available as pdf files on Blackboard (Bb).
2. Your essays and citation form need to follow MLA style. If you do not already own a recent style guide that contains a section on MLA [Modern Language Association] please purchase one or invest the time with online resources to format your essays properly. This UNH Library webpages offers some useful links:

<http://www.library.unh.edu/research-support/citation-styles>

There are also peer models of the longer assignments available on the course site.

3. A college thesaurus is also required. Use of the Microsoft Word thesaurus, though occasionally useful, is not adequate.

### *Learning Goals*

Learning goals are included in the week-by-week breakdowns, but below appear the overarching goals of the 3-week period:

- The acquisition of a general familiarity and understanding of venerable literary subgenre—the novel of manners—and its vibrant interplay with other media, e.g. TV, film, commodity culture, and fashion.
- The ability to communicate analytically with your peers through the course blog and group chats on our body of texts.
- The ability to examine representative novel of manners texts and germane non-fiction through various styles of writing, e.g. a formal close-reading essay, an op-ed piece, and a short imitative style piece (scene extension or revision).
- Reflection your own interpersonal life and/or that of your community, e.g. the negotiation of your place in a subculture or the dynamics of sex and rituals related to partner search.
- A degree of self-assessment of your own writing through a set of review questions for each of the major assignments and periodic writing tipsheets.

### *Written Work*

See “Course Calendar” file in “Syllabus...” folder of Bb (also attached to the end of our syllabus) for a list of assignment due dates.

**Peer models** for all assignments, i.e. what a ‘real-life’ “A” looks like, in addition to more general grading rubrics, are available in the folder “Assignments...” on Bb.

The **Connors Writing Center** provides free writing assistance to students and members of the UNH community in a no-pressure environment. Highly skilled peer consultants have backgrounds in many different academic disciplines and are trained to work with students on all forms of writing during any stage of the writing process. The Center is closed for in-person conferences during J-Term, but the Online Writing Lab is open. See <http://owl.unh.edu/> for information on how to submit your papers for feedback. Allow a 3-day turnaround time.

#### List of Required Writing Assignments

1. Weekly contributions to course blog and/or Facebook page (5+ posts per week). Our course Facebook page is titled: Sex and Sensibility (UNH English Online Course) See “Course Blog Guidelines” in the “Course Blog” folder of Bb. These posts are due each Wednesday and Saturday night by 11:59 p.m. You can have to do at least 2 by Wednesday and at least 2 by Saturday; the 5+ weekly posts cannot allow be submitted on one day as the goal is a vigorous dialogue between peers and instructor.
2. 1 close-reading essay (3-5 full double-spaced pages) Due date: Sun., 1/5
3. 1 op-ed-type essay (3-5 full double-spaced pages) [Students have the option of opting out of this assignment and writing another close-reading essay or crafting a personal essay that dovetails thematically with the course texts and/or integrates personal experience/observation within the context of a required reading.] Due date: Mon., 1/13
4. An imitative style exercise (1-2 full double-spaced pages) [This assignment is intended to playfully experience the practice of mimicry or parody consonant with “Austen-mania,” the *Sex and the City* phenomenon, and these texts’ infiltration into the ‘tween’, self-help, and style markets. You may also craft an additional scene or alternative ending to one of our texts.] Due date: Mon., 1/13
5. A thesis-driven, source-based essay (7 full double-spaced pages) [Students can use blog posts and/or the close-reading essay to brainstorm, research, and draft sections of this longer critical essay.] Due date: Fri., 1/24

#### Important Notes:

1. All writing assignments must be uploaded to Blackboard (Bb) by 11:59 p.m. of the above due dates.
2. In lieu of item #5 above, you may also do another op-ed essay, one of 7 pages that would might combine close reading, the personal essay mode, but also have sociological data/sources to substantiate its claims.
3. You may write on the same text twice and/or write on a text scheduled later in the syllabus, i.e. the text may be formally slated at the end of the course but you can write on it earlier.

4. With the close-reading essay and the longer, final essay, you are urged to run your topic by the instructor in advance. The instructor is available for in-person and/or phone conferences, though these are not mandatory: choosing not to have a conference will not adversely affect your final grade.
5. The instructor is willing to review introduction paragraphs via email; longer sections and whole papers require a pre-arranged paper conference.

### *Required Online Group Chats*

This course can be done basically anywhere, at any time, with one exception: **you are required to participate in at least two online chat-conference call meetings**. These sessions, through Bb Collaborate, which span about an hour, can serve the equivalent of office hours and paper conferencing, but they are intended primarily to discuss the readings. Instructions for accessing a meeting will be the subject of a separate Bb announcement. It is highly recommended that you have a headset for these chats so as not to create an echo or bring in background noise.

Participating in more than two chats will contribute positively toward your final grade but is not mandatory. The course calendar at the end of the syllabus--a file of its own in "Syllabus..." folder--lists the days for scheduled online meetings. You are also welcome to set up a private meeting by appointment, for a Bb Collaborate, Skype, or phone conference; be prepared though to go beyond discussing your essay for a discussion of the readings. In short, it will help organize your schedule better if you decide in advance to what meeting or meetings you will commit.

### *Grading*

Final grades will be comprised of the following distribution:

- Close-reading essay: 15%
- Op-ed essay: 15%
- Imitative style exercise: 10%
- Longer essay: 30%
- Online chats and optional paper conference: 10%
- Blog or Facebook posts: 20%

### *Academic Integrity: An Important Note about Plagiarism*

I encourage you to work with one another to become better writers and better thinkers by sharing your ideas and giving feedback on each other's work. However, the work you submit to this class is expected to be your own. When you want to refer to someone else's ideas (even the ideas of someone else in this class), you *must* properly acknowledge your sources. Sometimes this involves providing appropriate citations in the body of your writing and additional bibliographic information at the end. Other times it involves using footnotes correctly. If you have questions about how to cite a source properly, consult *A Pocket Style Manual, Fifth Edition*, or ask me. If you submit work that has been copied without attribution from some published or unpublished source, or work that has been prepared by someone other than you, or that in any other way misrepresents somebody else's work as your own, you will face severe discipline by the University! Work that is your own work but has been submitted to more than one class for credit is also considered plagiarism unless you have obtained the permission of all course instructors involved prior to handing in the work.

### *For Students with Disabilities*

If you are a student with a documented disability who will require accommodations in this course, please register with Disability Services for Students in Memorial Union Building, Rm. 118 (603-862-2607) for assistance in developing a plan to address your academic needs. See also <http://www.unh.edu/disabilityservices/>

### *Accessibility of the Instructor*

If you are experiencing computer problems where you do not have Internet access, and you need to contact the instructor about a time-sensitive matter, you may call the instructor's cell at 347-277-1679. The instructor accepts text messages, though try not to text about a matter that would require a lengthy response, i.e. more than one-paragraph long, on the instructor's part.

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### *Schedule and Overview, by Week*

The below schedule is a week-by-week course overview as to give a holistic picture of how the texts and assignments fit together. Several times a week, if not almost every day, the instructor will post an Announcement to Bb with the particulars of what you should be reading, writing, etc., as a check-in. **It is very important to either check Bb regularly (several times a week) or you UNH email account as Announcements and email messages are sent to your UNH email account. If you wish to have your UNH email forwarded to another account (Gmail, Yahoo!, etc.) you are advised to consult with a member of UNH's IT support team as each email browser is different.** An IT support desk is located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> fl. of Dimond Library, down from the Reference Desk. Please check to see that Announcements are not being sent to Spam.

#### Week One (Fri., 12/27-Sat., 1/4)

Students will be introduced to an overview of the novel of manners as a subgenre by listening to the lecture "Introducing the Novel of Manners," located on Bb in the folder "Instructor's Notes..." Engaged with decoding society's customs, dress, and private conduct, it occupies a middle ground between courtly romance and cynical anti-romantic fiction. The novel of manners frequently has a romantic plotline while being critical or reserved in its stance on a specific male-female union. Unlike the popular romance, often called the Harlequin, or its newest manifestation, chick lit, the novel of manners need not end happily. It sometimes ends with death or a frustrated, unfruitful marriage plot; this element of gravity has played a role in the subgenre being critically regarded as 'literary'.

Besides closely perusing the course syllabus, students will read *Pride and Prejudice* as a canonical novel in its own right and a foundational text in the chick lit genre. (Jane Austen has been dubbed "the Mother of Chick Lit".) This Regency era novel serves as an antecedent to chick lit's plotlines and female protagonist-centered narrative. Students will also be responsible for watching several clips from the BBC adaptation of the novel (1996) and Joe Wright's adaptation starring Keira Knightly (2005).

Students will also read *Bridget Jones's Diary*, by Helen Fielding, a parody of *Pride and Prejudice*, and view clips from the hit movie adaptation, which features numerous actors who starred in Austen adaptations. The characters of *Bridget Jones* look forward with anticipation to the next segment of the 1996 BBC adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, with the male protagonist's surname "Darcy." This work, originally a newspaper column, was pivotal in the burgeoning of 'chick lit' at the end of the twentieth century. (*Bridget Jones* has also had a significant afterlife, as is being developed into a London musical, with Fielding one of the collaborators, plus a third installment of the series was recently published.) Recorded video lectures for both novels appear in "Instructor's Notes..." on Bb.

Selected optional read: Mary McCarthy's first published short story, "Cruel and Barbarous Treatment" (1939), with relevant Bb video.

Students will receive guidelines for the close-reading essay, though all assignment instructions will also be available in full in a folder (containing writing tipsheets, e.g. "Beyond *To Be Verbs*") at the course's onset.

The following questions will guide this week's investigation. You may blog on them, though by no means are you limited to these questions for your blog contributions. See the "Guided Reading Questions by Week" folder in Bb for an expanded number of questions.

### Introduction

1. What are some associations we have with the term *novel of manners*? What expectations might we have for this type of writing?
2. What does the name "Jane Austen" conjure to you? If you are familiar with some of Austen's works, what associations, positive or negative, come to mind?

*Pride and Prejudice*, by Jane Austen (a novel of manners classic, and source text for the chick lit genre)

1. Examine closely the opening sentence. How does it introduce the themes and subjects of the novel? How does its tone permeate the novel?
2. To what degree are Elizabeth Bennet and Caroline Bingley foils [contrasting characters]?
3. Austen called Elizabeth Bennet "the most delightful creature to ever appear in print." Three hundred years later, to what degree do we concur with this assessment? Or, is Elizabeth Bennet in some ways a defensive smart aleck with a chip on her shoulder?
4. *Pride and Prejudice* has been dubbed "the greatest love story ever told" and has top polls for "Romance Writer's Favorite Romance." Do we agree? What qualities make this novel "romantic"? Is the novel a more historically specific version of a Cinderella-like fairy tale or does it offer a new paradigm for romance narrative? Why is this Regency era novel still so widely read?
5. Why does Elizabeth have such a strong reaction to X's engagement announcement?
6. Compare the various marriage proposals in the novel.

7. Mr. Darcy was voted by women to be the most “desirable” fictional figure in a BBC poll in 2003, and has retaining his standing as an a romantic hero. Why? What qualities of his are attractive?

***Bridget Jones’s Diary***, by Helen Fielding (a parody of *Pride and Prejudice*, and classic chick lit novel)

1. Compare Elizabeth Bennet and Fielding’s titular protagonist? Which is more compelling? With whom would you rather be friends? Can we deem Bridget a heroine?
2. What are the purposes of the novel’s prefatory New Year’s Resolutions in the larger scope of the novel?
3. How do these texts appropriate and depart from the *Bildungsroman* tradition? (See recorded video lecture on Fielding’s protagonist on this term and an overview of the question.)
4. What overlap do the two “Darcys” share, beyond their surname?
5. Does *Bridget Jones Diary*’s humor work to critique media images of gender in a substantial way? Does its parody of self-improvement culture succeed in bolstering what some would argue is a hackneyed romantic conclusion?

**“Cruel and Barbarous Treatment” (optional):** Why are some terms capitalized?; How does this story comment on and borrow from performance and the stage?; Why might McCarthy appropriate elements from satire and farce?

Blog or Facebook posts may focus, for example, on the famous opening sentence and first paragraphs of Austen’s novel and a comparison between X’s [named withheld] marriage proposals. Or, after being presented with the legal definition of “cruel and barbarous” as one of six categories for divorce on the basis of fault, they could debate the extent to which the protagonist can be judged as guilty.

### Week 1 Key Dates

- December 30 (Mon.): 7 p.m.: Bb Collaborate group chat/office hours #1
- January 1 (Wed.): 2+ blog posts
- January 2 (Thurs.): LAST DAY to ADD a January Term class. Walk-in, phone, fax registration open 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. *Payment or proof of financial aid and professor’s written or emailed permission required for all courses.*

LAST DAY to DROP (with REFUND) Phone, fax, e-mail or walk-in drops permitted 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. only. No permission or signatures required. Full tuition and tech fee refund available.

- January 3 (Fri.): 2 p.m.: Group chat/office hours #2
- January 4 (Sat.): 2+ blog posts

### Week Two (Sun., 1/5-Sat. 1/11)

This week students will read Edith Wharton’s *The House of Mirth* (1905) as one of our finest literary representations of “Gilded Age” New York as well as a vehicle to witness the

thematic crossover of Austen's work, e.g. the role of chaperones, the protagonist's 'class without money' dilemma. *The House of Mirth* is considered Wharton's breakthrough novel. Students will view clips from a sumptuous film adaptation (2000) starring Gillian Anderson as Lily Bart, as well view the instructor's commentary on the novel.

*Sex and the City* author Candace Bushnell read *The House of Mirth* in her early thirties: her fear of succumbing to a similar fate led her to make choices that significantly inform the *New York Observer* column "Sex and the City," from which we will read excerpts and which later became the germ of the wildly successful HBO series. These late stage coming-of-age stories begin on a reference to Wharton: the opening line of Bushnell's pilot column, "Welcome to the Age of Uninnocence," alludes to Wharton's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *The Age of Innocence*. Students will view a recorded video lecturer on the column compilation, which, along with *Bridget Jones's Diary*, serves as a major influence on the chick lit genre offers ethnographic reports on shifts in the climate of dating, feminism, and the status of the thirty-something single woman.

Selected optional read: "The Cost of Living," by Marnie Hanel, a short contemporary nonfiction piece with strong thematic ties to the novel of manners tradition, shares this week's main texts' focus on the intersections of partner choice and forms of capital.

Students will receive guidelines for the op-ed essay, though they have the option of writing another close-reading essay.

The following topics may guide this week's investigation into these urban period pieces:

*The House of Mirth*, by Edith Wharton (a novel of manners classic by the first female recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction)

1. An analysis of Lily Bart's name
2. The novel as a representation of concepts described by Thorstein Veblen in his *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), e.g. "conspicuous consumption" (His colloquialism "keeping up with the Joneses" Wharton has stated derives from her father's wealthy family.)
3. Some critics have read Lily's death as "redemptive," with Cynthia Griffin Wolff arguing that it "recaptures and fixes forever Selden's esteem for her; it apotheosizes her triumphant *tableau vivant*." How do we read Lily's death? Who or what kills her?
4. How does Wharton portray the working class? Look at the characters Nettie Struthers and Mrs. Haffen as well as Lily's fellow workers at the hat shop.
5. Wharton received a flood of mail as the novel was being serialized, much of it came in a great wave with the last installment. It consisted largely of people wanting her to resurrect Lily Bart and marry her to X [name withheld]. Would Lily have been happy with X? What kind of husband would he have made?
6. In *Thirteen Ways of Looking at the Novel* (2005), Jane Smiley asserts that "[e]very novel of fatal decline has intrinsic dramatic excitement... but Lily's decline is so specialized that *The House of Mirth* falls just short of greatness." Defend or contest



this assertion. Is Lily's fall representative enough to be especially meaningful? Is Wharton's inversion of the rags-to-riches narrative best considered a case study, however meticulously crafted, or can the novel be deemed an aesthetic achievement with universal relevance?

*Sex and the City* (excerpt), by Candace Bushnell (a major catalyst for the chick lit genre, its media phenomenon gave momentum to the chick lit genre)

1. Nearly twenty years after its initial publication, is *Sex and a City (SATC)* a period piece of Bull Market, Clinton-era Manhattan or are its plotlines still relevant today? How has the economic downturn changed the way we might read this chronicle of the Manhattan upper-middle class movers and shakers and party-going elite?
2. How has *SATC* shaped your dating experiences or perception of the straight scene? Is the series relevant mostly to the thirty and older crowd?
3. Compare the position women in Bushnell's column to that of the narrator in "The Cost of Living" (optional read). How is their view toward men different or similar?
4. Were you surprised in a book with this title that there is arguably very little eroticism? Why might this be? What is the status of the erotic in this culture?
5. For those who followed the HBO series and saw the movie, has *Sex and the City* changed the status of the single woman? If so, how? Does it have any socially progressive functions?

**"The Cost of Living" (optional), by Marnie Hanel:** Did the narrator make the right decision at the end of the story? Is she too high maintenance? Did she shortchange her boyfriend and what he was offering? Compare and contrast her position and view of partner selection with that of Lily Bart.

**Recommended reading:** Introduction and Chapters 2 & 3 of *Chick Lit and Postfeminism* (2010), by Stephanie Harzewski.

### Week 2 Key Dates

- January 5 (Sunday): Close-reading essay: 3-5 full double-spaced pages  
This is a 'standard' English essay that 'reads' a quote from one of the syllabus' texts and uses that quote as a lens or gateway into other themes, plot dynamics, etc. of the text in question.
- January 6 (Mon.): 10 a.m.: Group chat/office hours #3
- January 7 (Tues.): LAST DAY to DROP (without academic liability, W grade will appear on your transcript, no tuition/fee refund).
- January 8 (Wed.): 2+ blog posts
- January 9 (Thurs.): 2 p.m.: Group chat/office hours #4
- January 11 (Sat.): 2+ blog posts

### Week Three (Sun., 1/12-Sat. 1/18)

Students will read the new fiction release *Longbourn*, by Jo Barker. This novel piggybacks on the popularity of the 2013 anniversary of *Pride and Prejudice* and the popularity of the TV series *Downton Abbey* as it focuses on the lives of the hired help who maintain the

Bennet estate of the work's title. We will debate if it can stand on its own without prior knowledge of Austen's most popular novel and how reading it may change the way we view *Pride and Prejudice* characters and the more general class stratification of the Regency era. For an optional read, students are invited to peruse "The Beast in the Jungle" (1903) by Henry James, and view relevant Bb videos and YouTube clips. (James may be the best-known male writer of the novel of manners and is a major American novelist of the early twentieth century; Ishiguro is a leading figure in contemporary British fiction.) This text shares Austen's and Wharton's focus on male-female relationships and communication systems, but widens the scope of contexts and formal techniques employed by authors of this subgenre.

The below questions may inspire critical discussion:

***Longbourn*, by Jo Barker** (The unsung 'downstairs' characters *Pride and Prejudice* receive their own story in this acclaimed example of 'Austenmania'...)

1. What did you think of Baker's stylistic choice to include multiple characters' perspectives in a single chapter? Do you think it enhanced the book?
2. What were your thoughts on the beginning of Volume Three, which was dedicated entirely to James Smith?
3. How would you compare and contrast the love stories between Sarah and James, and Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy?
4. What did you make of each chapter's introductory quote? Were there any to which you were particularly drawn? Why?
5. Lizzie Bennet is a much-loved heroine. Has *Longbourn* changed your view of her at all? Do you think she acts selfishly in relation to Sarah?
6. *Longbourn* is a book that stands alone as having its own story, characters and themes—how far has the author ensured her novel is not pastiche, that it is a novel with a separate identity?
7. How might *Longbourn* change our view of the Regency period and the setting of *Pride and Prejudice*?

**"The Beast in the Jungle" (optional)**, by Henry James (this short story is difficult, but perhaps his most famous, and considered one of the finest short stories of all time)

1. In *The Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), Eve Sedgwick in her chapter "The Beast in the Closet: James and the Writing of Homosexual Panic," a critical landmark in Jamesian studies, argues that to the extent that Marcher's secret has a content, that content is homosexual: "For John Marcher... the future secret—the secret of his hidden fate—importantly includes, though it is not necessarily limited to, the possibility of something homosexual." Do you find evidence in the text for Sedgwick's assertion? To what extent does the story engage issues of compulsory heterosexuality and "the closet"?
2. How does the title operate metaphorically in the story? Who or what is the beast and the jungle?
3. Critics have argued that the story withholds comic relief and instead operates by the build-up of suspense. Did you find the revelation-like aspects of the concluding pages

intense and powerful? Or, did you so lose identification with Marcher and his secret that the ending scene of him throwing himself on X [plot spoiler withheld] reads as melodramatic or pathetic? Why does he throw himself on X?

Written work this week, besides the regular blog posts, encompasses the op-ed essay (or 2<sup>nd</sup> close-reading essay) and a short imitative style exercise due the last official day of classes. Students will receive guidelines for the final essay, due after the course's formal end date.

### Week 3 Key Dates

- January 13 (Monday):  
4 p.m.: Group chat/office hours #5

Op-ed-type essay: 3-5 full double-spaced pages

This essay enables you to approach an issue in the course readings from a historical-sociological perspective and to offer an opinion grounded by evidence, e.g. statistics, quantitative data, and interviews. Students have the option of opting out of this assignment and writing another close-reading essay or crafting a personal essay that dovetails thematically with a course text and/or integrates personal experience/observation within the context of a required reading.

- January 15 (Wednesday): 2+ blog posts
- January 17 (Fri.):  
10 a.m.: Group chat/office hours #6

Imitative style exercise: 1-2+ double-spaced pages

An imitative style exercise (though it can be longer depending on the scene in question) so as to playfully experience the practice of mimicry or parody consonant with “Austen-mania”, the *Sex and the City* phenomenon, and these texts’ infiltration into the ‘tween’, self-help, and style markets. You may also craft an additional scene or alternative ending to one of our texts.

- January 18 (Sat.): 2+ blog posts

### Wrap-Up (Written Work and Final Chats)

- January 22 (Wed.): 10 a.m.: Final (#7) group chat office hours
- January 24 (Fri.): A thesis-driven, source-based essay: 7+ double-spaced pages  
Students can use blog posts to brainstorm, research, and draft sections of this longer critical essay. Students may bring in outside texts, though outside research is not compulsory, and can compose a comparative essay.

### *About the Instructor*

Stephanie Harzewski joined the English department as a lecturer in the fall of 2010. She is considered an expert on the chick lit and has been interviewed on the genre for publications like *Poets and Writers* and *The Chicago Tribune*. Her book *Chick Lit and Postfeminism* was published by the University of Virginia Press in 2011, was supported in part by a Romance Writers of America Research Grant, and has ranked in the top 10 in Amazon.com's Nonfiction-Women Writers category. She specializes in contemporary Anglo-American literature and Anglo-American women novelists since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. She taught UNH's English first online course in 2011 and its first January Term course in 2012.

### **Full List of Key Deadlines for "Sex and Sensibility"**

December 27 (Fri.): Course start date

December 30 (Mon.): 7 p.m.: Bb Collaborate group chat/office hours #1<sup>1</sup>

January 1 (Wed.): 2+ blog posts<sup>2</sup>

January 2 (Thurs.):

- LAST DAY to ADD a January Term class. Walk-in, phone, fax registration open 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. *Payment or proof of financial aid and professor's written or emailed permission required for all courses.*
- LAST DAY to DROP (with REFUND) Phone, fax, e-mail or walk-in drops permitted 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. only. No permission or signatures required. Full tuition and tech fee refund available.

January 3 (Fri.): 2 p.m.: Group chat/office hours #2

January 4 (Sat.): 2+ blog posts

January 5 (Sunday): Close-reading essay: 3-5 full double-spaced pages

This is a 'standard' English essay that 'reads' a quote from one of the syllabus' texts and uses that quote as a lens or gateway into other themes, plot dynamics, etc. of the text in question.

January 6 (Mon.): 10 a.m.: Group chat/office hours #3

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<sup>1</sup> All chats take place Eastern Standard Time. You are required to participate in at least 2 group chats or one group chat and a private paper conference with the instructor. Private conferences can be arranged via phone, Skype, or Blackboard (Bb) Collaborate. These chats last 1 hour on average.

<sup>2</sup> All writing assignments must be uploaded or posted to Bb by 11:59 p.m. EST of the above due dates.

January 7 (Tues.): LAST DAY to DROP (without academic liability, W grade will appear on your transcript, no tuition/fee refund).

January 8 (Wed.): 2+ blog posts

January 9 (Thurs.): 2 p.m.: Group chat/office hours #4

January 11 (Sat.): 2+ blog posts

January 13 (Monday):

- 4 p.m.: Group chat/office hours #5
- Op-ed-type essay: 3-5 full double-spaced pages

This essay enables you to approach an issue in the course readings from a historical-sociological perspective and to offer an opinion grounded by evidence, e.g. statistics, quantitative data, and interviews. Students have the option of opting out of this assignment and writing another close-reading essay or crafting a personal essay that dovetails thematically with a course text and/or integrates personal experience/observation within the context of a required reading.

January 15 (Wednesday): 2+ blog posts

January 17 (Fri.):

- 10 a.m.: Group chat/office hours #6
- Last day of course
- Imitative style exercise: 1-2+ double-spaced pages

An imitative style exercise (though it can be longer depending on the scene in question) so as to playfully experience the practice of mimicry or parody consonant with “Austen-mania”, the *Sex and the City* phenomenon, and these texts’ infiltration into the ‘tween’, self-help, and style markets. You may also craft an additional scene or alternative ending to one of our texts.

January 18 (Sat.): 2+ blog posts

January 22 (Wed.): 10 a.m.: Final (#7) group chat office hours

January 24 (Fri.): A thesis-driven, source-based essay: 7+ double-spaced pages

- Students can use blog posts to brainstorm, research, and draft sections of this longer critical essay. Students may bring in outside texts, though outside research is not compulsory, and can compose a comparative essay.