

Carleton University
Winter 2026 Preliminary Course Outline
Department of English

ENGL 4401A/5402W: Studies in 18th Century Literature
Jane Austen, Our Contemporary

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***** This is a preliminary syllabus only—texts and assignments are subject to change.
A complete version will be available closer to the start of the term. *****

2025 marks the 250th anniversary of the birth of Jane Austen in 1775, and the 30th anniversary of the 1995 “Austenmania.” Ever since Amy Heckerling’s film *Clueless* was released in 1995, critics and fans have talked excitedly of a “Jane Austen revival.” Thirty years later, the revival shows no sign of abating and in fact demands that we rethink the very idea that Austen needed to be “revived” in the first place. She has always been popular in the strongest sense of the word, and in this course we will explore the history of her reception beginning in the early nineteenth century and continuing up to the present moment. Topics we will consider include: early readers and critics of her novels; circulating libraries, literary societies, “Janeites,” and book clubs; biographical constructions of Austen as, variously, spinster, recluse, feminist, Regency satirist, patriotic embodiment of “Little England,” and “Aunt Jane”; the canonization and professionalization of her work in the early twentieth century by R.W. Chapman’s 1923 edition of *The Novels of Jane Austen*; and the perhaps surprising popularity of Austen’s novels among soldiers (the original “Janeites”) in the trenches of the First World War. We will also devote time to our own cultural moment and the Jane Austen phenomenon – that is, to Austen’s pervasive and persistent popularity in contemporary popular culture. We will explore Austen as robust global brand: the thriving literary tourism and heritage industry devoted to capitalizing on Austenmania; the love affair with Hollywood; and the seemingly infinite variety of ways in which Austen and her novels have been commodified, consumed, personified, impersonated, ventriloquized, appropriated, remediated, parodied, satirized, and embodied.

Required Texts:

Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*
Austen, *Emma*

Books will be available at the Carleton Bookstore. Other course material will be linked on ARES or accessible online.

Course Requirements:

Adapting Austen assignment – (30% - to be presented in last class)
seminar presentation – 25%
Essay (2000 words) – 35%
Attendance and Class Participation – 10%