ENGLISH 410B: SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

The Middle and Later Eighteenth Century

Syllabus for Winter, 1991

I. RATIONALE

The calendar description of the course reads as follows: "The probing of mores and manners by Pope and Johnson, the emergence of the novel with Fielding and Sterne, and the transformation (in 'the age of sensibility') of literary attitudes and practice from classicism to romanticism." To this description should be added a few observations.

The course attempts to achieve a balance between masterpieces of literature and indicators of how ideas and attitudes changed, along with fashions in genre and form, as the eighteenth century progressed.

The course is at once an independent entity and a complementary partner to English 410A, Satire and Sense. Because of its latter status, it shares with the other course the main anthology, edited by Tillotson, and divides the poetry of Pope between the other course and itself. (The writings of Blake are left to English 430A, The Romantic Movement 1.)

The work required of students is as follows: reading all the literary works assigned, reading all the literary and critical works appropriate to their essay topics and to an understanding of the period in general, submission of a major essay (about 4000 words) by March 5, and submission of a take-home examination (about 3000 words) by April 15. The major essay will count for 60% of the final grade, and the examination 40%.

II. TEXTS

1. Eighteenth-Century Literature, ed. Tillotson (Harcourt, Brace, etc.)


3. Fielding, Joseph Andrews (with Shamela) (Riverside)
9. Photocopied material, for which a recovery charge will be made.

**III. ORDER OF TOPICS**

5. The rise in importance of the imagination, exemplified in Collins, "Ode on the Poetical Character" (in Tillotson) (Jan. 24-29)
7. Gray, selections in Tillotson, plus "The Bard" (to be supplied) (Feb. 5-7)
8. Goldsmith, "The Deserted Village" (in Tillotson) (Feb. 12-14)
9. "Study" week (Feb. 18-22)
11. Cult of originality: Brief remarks, with some reference to Young, *Conjectures on Original Composition* (in Tillotson) (Mar. 5)

*Submit essays March 5

11. Cult of the primitive and mediaeval: Macpherson/Ossian, *Cathkin*, and Percy, *Chevy Chase* (both to be supplied) (Mar. 7)
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16. Sheridan, The School for Scandal (Mar. 28)

17. Burns, selections in Tillotson (Apr. 2)

*Submit take-home examinations April 15

IV. ESSAY

The essay is designed to overcome some of the limitations necessarily put on the course. It asks you to read further in the classic works of the period and to apply to them what you have learned about some of the required texts, and vice versa. These are the topics:

1. Tom Jones in the light of Joseph Andrews

2. Tristram Shandy in the light of A Sentimental Journey

3. The epistolary novel as seen in Richardson's Pamela, Fielding's Shamela, and Smollett's Humphry Clinker

4. The sentimental in drama: Steele, Lillo, and Goldsmith

5. Johnson's view of literature in The Rambler, Preface to Shakespeare, and selected Lives of the Poets

6. Changing attitudes to the poor in the poetry of Gray, Cowper, and Crabbe

7. Milestones in Gothic terror: Walpole's The Castle of Otranto, Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho, and Austen's Northanger Abbey

8. Austen's Sense and Sensibility as a commentary on what is found in Mackenzie and Sterne

9. Fielding as a dramatist, on the stage and in the novel

10. Eschatology poetry: Parnell, Blair, and Young
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11. Cowper and Collins as poets of the mid-century

12. The cult of the mediaeval in poetry: Chatterton, Gray, Macpherson, and Percy

13. Burney's *Evelina* compared with Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* as Bildungsroman

14. A topic similar to the preceding topics and approved by your instructor

Choose one of the topics and write an essay of 3500-4500 words on it. Feel free to consult with your instructor about it at any time, and feel invited to do so at least before you begin the actual writing. The essay should be well focused, cogently argued, and clearly expressed. Superior perception and graceful phrasing would enhance it further. It is due March 5. (For guidance concerning format, consult Correct Form in Essay Writing.)

V. EXAMINATION

The examination will be based on the texts assigned in Section III. It will be of the take-home variety, and answers to it should total between 2500 and 3500 words. Due April 15, it will count for 40% of the final grade.