English 410B
Sense and Sensibility: The Middle and Later Eighteenth Century

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30-2:30

The objective of this course is to provide an introduction to some of the main figures and features of the literary landscape in England in the middle and later eighteenth century. At once a period of great traditionalism and innovation, these years witnessed the culmination of the neoclassical style as well as the rise of a new, more personal mode of literary expression -- the literature of sensibility -- and the emergence of a new genre --the novel. Typically regarded as a period of transformation from "neoclassicism to romanticism," these decades are marked by a great diversity and heterogeneity of critical concepts and literary styles, tensions among which are apparent not only within the period itself, but within specific works. Although several of the texts we will study lie outside of the middle and later years of our century, all will be read with an eye towards illuminating the complex profile of the period. For example, although dominated by the influence of Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson, and the neoclassical emphasis on tradition, decorum, judgement, reason, and restraint, the period is also characterized by a new interest in innovation, feeling, the "primitive," and the spontaneous. We will explore both modes, considering as we do so the cultural and political implications of each. More generally, we will also consider questions which this multi-faceted period raises concerning problems of periodization, literary history, and the relationship of literary production to class and gender.

Required Texts:

Henry Fielding, Joseph Andrews and Shamela (Oxford)
Laurence Sterne, The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy (Oxford)
Jane Austen, Sense and Sensibility (Oxford)
English 410B Anthology (Bookstore)

Evaluation:

500 Word Essay (due Feb. 4) 10%
2000 Word Essay (due March 18) 35%
Participation and Response Papers 20%

Final Exam 35%

Essays are due at the beginning of the class on the due date. Essays handed in after this time will be docked 3 marks per day (including Saturday and Sunday). For example, if an essay is worth 77 but was handed in a day late, it will be given a 74; two days, 71 for up to seven days.

Students must keep a copy of every paper they submit. Essays must follow the MLA rules for documentation. Please be aware of University regulations regarding academic dishonesty.
All classes will involve some informal discussion, and all members must be prepared and willing to participate. As part of the participation mark, students are asked to hand in a minimum of eight response papers, brief, spontaneous statements in which you discuss some aspect of the course or reading which has sparked your interest. I will read these in class and use them as the basis for discussion. Please note, although response statements constitute part of the participation mark, they are not a substitute for active and thoughtful contributions in class.

Reading Schedule:

Jan 7  Introduction
Jan 9  Pope, An Essay on Criticism
Jan 14  Pope, Eloisa to Abelard
Jan 16  Fielding, Joseph Andrews
Jan 21  Fielding, Joseph Andrews
Jan 23  Thomson, from The Seasons
Jan 28  Pope, from An Essay on Man; Young, The Complaint: or Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality
Jan 30  Collins, odes
Feb 4  Gray, "Ode on a Distant Prospect"; "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard"  
(500 word essay due)
Feb 6  Charlotte Smith, sonnets; Frances Greville, "A Prayer for Indifference"
Feb 11  Johnson, "The Vanity of Human Wishes"
Feb 13  Johnson, from The Preface to Shakespeare; from Rasselas; Preface to The Dictionary

Mid-term recess

Feb 25  Sterne, The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy
Feb 27  Sterne, The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy
March 4  Goldsmith, "The Deserted Village"; Crabbe, "The Village"
March 6  Goldsmith, She Stoops to Conquer
March 11  Smart; Cowper: selections.
March 18  Reynolds, from Discourses; Blake, annotations to Reynolds
March 20  Blake, from Songs of Innocence and Experience  
(2000 word essay due)
March 25  More; Williams; Barbauld: selections
March 27  Austen, Sense and Sensibility
April 1  Austen, Sense and Sensibility
April 3  Review