Jane Austen: Her Life, Times, and Novels

Instructor: David Shapard
PhD in History, UC Berkeley and Jane Austen scholar

Jane Austen is one of the greatest English novelists. Her novels retain an extraordinary popularity despite being more than two hundred years old. This course seeks to illuminate both the very different world in which her works arose and the timeless qualities that give them such a continuing appeal. It begins with an overview of her life and her literary career, followed by an examination of the society in which she lived. Here the focus will be on two topics that are central to her novels: the life of the landed elite who dominated England at the time and the role and position of women in society, especially as they relate to romance and marriage. We will then proceed to an exploration of two of her most popular novels, Pride & Prejudice and Persuasion, with additional background about Austen’s historical and cultural references. There will be opportunities for class discussion about such issues as: Why did Jane Austen choose these subjects? What are her main themes and how are they expressed through her characters? What narrative techniques does she use to bring the stories to life? Participants are encouraged to read Pride & Prejudice and Persuasion and seek out some of the many film adaptations.

Schedule: Mondays, October 4 – November 8
Time: 1:30-3:00 PM

The United States in the World Since 1763

Instructor: Ryan Irwin
Professor of History, UAlbany

Expansion has been the defining feature of American history. The US began as a continental project and became hemispheric before emerging as transoceanic and then a global superpower. This class tells the story of that evolution, focusing on questions of national identity and narrative: Who are we as a nation, how has that expressed itself in foreign policy, and what themes emerge when you look at that story over a 250-year period?

Each lecture will cover one of six epochs in the story of American expansion, starting with the American revolutionaries and ending with the debates over US foreign policy today. We will explore such themes as the tension between individual state sovereignty and union; the role of racism in empire building; capitalism and the search for markets; and the role of such leaders as Thomas Jefferson, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, and Ronald Reagan. The lectures will raise such questions as: What would the American Revolution mean within a larger conversation about empire in the English-speaking world? What was the impact of industrialization on American expansion? Was American global supremacy truly attainable without colonialism? Will expansion continue to shape the American story?

Schedule: Tuesdays, October 5 – November 9
Time: 1:30-3:30 PM

NOTE: This class will be presented in person at the DRC and at the same time made available on Zoom. All registrants for this course will receive a Zoom link.

The Music of Jean Sibelius: The Unique Inimitable Voice of Finland

Instructor: Ann-Marie Barker Schwartz
Director, Musicians of Ma’alwyck

This course will examine the life and musical output of Finnish composer Jean Sibelius, whose symphonies, tone poems and violin concerto comprise the end of the romantic musical tradition in a distinctive Nordic, dark-hued fashion. An examination of his compositions and the music world’s reaction to them provides a glimpse into this reclusive and enigmatic figure.

Schedule: Wednesdays, October 6 – November 10
Time: 1:30-3:00 PM
COURSE ANNOUNCEMENT

HILL was looking forward this fall to our return to the Delmar Reformed Church (DRC) for three in-person courses, one of them offered simultaneously on Zoom. Reluctantly, we have had to alter our plans in view of the growing number of Covid-19 cases in the Capital region.

We will, however, be offering all three courses on Zoom. One of the courses will be a hybrid course - taught live while simultaneously broadcast on Zoom. This course, taught on zoom by Professor Irwin on the history of American foreign policy, will also be made available in person at the DRC to a limited number of attendees. HILL will contact a small number of early registrants to offer the in person option.

Registration & Fees:

Registration is required for each individual to attend a course. A fee of $35 is charged for each selected course. Please go to the HILL web site and click on the following link: www.hillclasses.org to complete the registration form, learn the amount owed and how to make payment.

Please register no later than September 30th

COVID Protocols:

The HILL web site provides detailed safety requirements that are necessary to attend the hybrid course because of the COVID threat. In short, all attendees are required to show proof that they are fully vaccinated to enter class and must wear a mask during class. We will continue to monitor the CDC and health department’s guidance.