

**The Ohio State University
Freshman Seminar Program
Proposal Sheet**

Course Information.

1. Attach a sample syllabus that includes the following. Sample syllabi can be found at <http://freshmanseminars.osu.edu>.
 - a) The course goals,
 - b) A brief description of the content,
 - c) The distribution of meeting times,
 - d) A weekly topical outline,
 - e) A listing of assignments,
 - f) Grade assessment information (including whether the course will be graded by letter grades or Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory),
 - g) The required textbooks and/or reading list, and
 - h) The academic misconduct and disability services statements (sample statements can be found at <http://artsandsciences.osu.edu/currofc/resources.cfm>).

2. Attach a brief biographical paragraph that includes the current research interests, teaching awards and honors, and undergraduate courses taught by the participating instructor(s). The paragraph will be included in materials for first-year students.

James Phelan, Department of English

Proposer's Name(s) and Academic Unit(s)

Signature(s) of Proposer(s)

Phelan.1@osu.edu

292-6669

E-mail Address(es) of Proposer(s)

Contact Phone Number

03-03-06

Date of Submission

Signature(s) of Head(s) of Academic Unit(s)

Please indicate how many quarters you would like to offer the seminar and which quarters: ____ AU ___X_ WI ____ SP

James Phelan Department of English

Freshman Seminar Winter 2007 2 credit hours

Jane Austen and Contemporary Popular Culture: Or Literary Fiction, Hollywood Film, and Our Fascination with Romance

This course will examine the phenomenon of Jane Austen's crossover success into British and especially American popular culture, and in so doing, it will introduce students to a range of issues connected with the study of the relation between so-called high and popular culture.

1. The appeal of Austen as a high culture novelist—her sharp ethical discrimination combined with her mastery of so many elements of narrative art.
2. The simultaneous appeal of her plots for popular culture—the girl-meets-boy, girl-loses-boy, girl-gets boy pattern as well as their commitment to a belief in the transforming power of love.
3. The pleasures and challenges of popular narratives that rewrite classics. Our example will be Helen Fielding's rewriting of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* as *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1998).
4. The complexities of adaptation from print narrative to film narrative and how those complexities might influence our responses to the adaptations. Our examples will be the 2005 film version of *Pride and Prejudice* (directed by Joe Wright and starring Keira Knightley) and the 2001 film version of *Bridget Jones's Diary* (directed by Sharon Malone and starring Renée Zellweger).
5. The pleasures and challenges of writing a contemporary literary fiction that deliberately asks to be compared to a classic—our example will be *The Jane Austen Book Club* by Karen Joy Fowler (2004).

By the end of the course, students should have an increased understanding of how aspects of culture that some would like to keep separate come to influence each other and how these influences affect our understanding of each. By the end of the course, students should also have a deeper understanding of the power and reach of Jane Austen's art.

I would like to meet once a week for 90 minutes. I will also arrange two other meetings so that we can screen the two films.

Student activities and grading:

Students will be asked to do dramatic readings of scenes in class and to participate in our discussion. In addition, they will be required to write two short papers on the adaptations and a final short reflection on one aspect

of the course that particularly engaged their interest. Letter grades will be assigned, and each of the four main assignments will count toward 25% of the final grade. That is, participation in discussion and performance of the dramatic readings will count 25% and each of the three writing assignments will also count 25%.

Required texts:

Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

Helen Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*

Helen Joy Fowler, *The Jane Austen Book Club*

Selected film and book reviews

Purchasing the DVDs of the films will be optional

Week 1 Introduction

Week 2 *Pride and Prejudice* (first half)

Week 3 *Pride and Prejudice* (second half); view 2005 film

Week 4 Discussion of the novel and the film adaptation (first short paper due)

Week 5 *Bridget Jones's Diary* (first half)

Week 6 *Bridget Jones's Diary* (second half); view 2001 film

Week 7 Discussion of the novel and the film adaptation (second short paper due)

Week 8 Discussion of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Bridget Jones* in film and fiction

Week 9 *The Jane Austen Book Club* (first half)

Week 10 *The Jane Austen Book Club* (second half), Conclusion (final short paper due)

Plagiarism is the representation of another's works or ideas as one's own: it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of

another person's ideas. All cases of suspected plagiarism, in accordance with university rules, will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct.

Disability issues: Anyone who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Anyone with such needs should also be aware of the the Office for Disability Services in room 150 Pomerene Hall (614-292-3307) which provides services for students with documented disabilities.

James Phelan is Humanities Distinguished Professor of English. He is a recipient of the University's Distinguished Scholar Award and has twice been a finalist for the Arts and Sciences Outstanding Teacher Award. He has written six books and edited five others, and he edits *Narrative*, the journal of the Society for the Study of Narrative Literature. His research specialties are narrative and narrative theory and the English and American novel. He teaches undergraduate courses in these subjects as well as in literature and film. His previous Freshman Seminar (2005) was on *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn and the Culture Wars*.