The World of Jane Austen; Jane Austen in the World

HIS 383

Satisfies: SBS+, HFA+

Thematic Categories: Arts, Ideas & Culture; Empires, Violence & Global Connections; Race, Religion, Gender & Sexualities

Mon/Wed. 2:40-4:00pm

Professor Kathleen Wilson

Why do we still care about Jane Austen? This lecture, reading, film and discussion course will answer that question by focusing, first, on the social and political contexts and legacies of Jane Austen's famous novels, as well as details of her own life, in the period of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars (1793 to 1820). Topics include class and sociability; the functions of the country house; gender and family relations; the pleasures and dangers of urban culture; slavery and abolition in Austen's novels and in the empire, and the impacts of imperial wars and radical politics on social and political relations of the day. Then we turn to the remarkable popularity of Austen in past and contemporary global cultures, where Austen novels were appropriated by Victorian spiritualists and twenty-first century digital reading groups, filmmakers (both American and South Asian), and national scholarly associations. What accounts for the popularity of these novels over time and culture? We can test out some answers.