Course Title: An Introduction to Jane Austen
Course Code: LIT 33 W
Instructor: Dr. Ben Wiebracht

Course Structure:
My guess is that for many of you, this will be your first experience with an online class. Classes like this obviously involve some unique challenges, but they afford some interesting opportunities as well. Please do some exploring on the Canvas site during the first week, and make sure to read the materials at the top of the page introducing you to this platform. This particular class will be making extensive use of several online tools:

Video Lectures:
Each week, I will be posting a 10-15 minute video lecture as a way of introducing you to the themes of the week. These lectures are not live, so feel free to watch them at your leisure, ideally after you have finished the reading.

Discussion:
Discussion, in my view, is the cornerstone of a literature class, just as it was the cornerstone of Austen’s own education. We will be fostering an ongoing and dynamic discussion as a class in two ways: by hosting live discussion sections on Zoom, and by making full use of Canvas’s online discussion boards.

• **Zoom Sessions**: These live discussion sections will be held once a week for sixty minutes, using a program, Zoom, that is similar to Skype (see the Canvas homepage for instructions on how to use Zoom). Because of work schedules and time zone differences, we aren’t all going to be able to log on at the same time. If you can’t make a discussion section, don’t worry: it will be recorded, and you can watch it on your own later. I will be hosting these sections at different times throughout the quarter in order to accommodate as many people as possible.

• **Discussion boards**: This will be the most important online forum through which we as a class will interact. In fact, if you are taking the class for a grade, your major weekly assignment will be to make a substantial post on the weekly discussion board, usually in response to one of the lecture themes. That said, I do not by any means want the discussion boards to be limited to these required written responses. By all means, use them to interact with each other, ask questions of the class as a whole, or share discoveries that you found surprising or rewarding. I myself will be logging in regularly and making posts, and I encourage you all to do the same.

Please contact the Stanford Continuing Studies office with any questions
365 Lasuen St., Stanford, CA 94305
continuingstudies@stanford.edu
650-725-2650
Email:
Feel free to contact me at any point in the course with questions or comments, whether technical or literary.

*Please see course page for full description and additional details.

Grade Options and Requirements:

• No Grade Requested (NGR)
  ○ This is the default option. No work will be required, and no credit given. You may, however, still complete the assignments if you wish, and I will respond to your work just as if you were taking the class for credit.

• Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, No Pass)
  ○ Weekly Chatroom Post: 60%
    One of your chatroom posts each week should be a response to the discussion prompt. These posts will be evaluated on their originality, thoughtfulness, and relevance to the prompt (wide latitude on that last point), and not on style, grammar, or any other technical measure. None of your other posts will be graded, so feel free to write about whatever you find interesting from the reading, the lecture, or your classmates comments and responses.
  ○ Final Essay (5-7 pages): 40%
    In this essay, you will explore in greater depth an aspect of Austen’s work that you found intriguing or compelling. In Austen’s day the form of the essay was sometimes understood as an “intellectual ramble,” or, to quote my favorite definition, a “loose sally of the mind,” rather than a highly structured, linear, thesis-based exercise. I encourage you to think of this assignment in the same way. Do not feel bound to propose and defend a single thesis, or to avoid digressions at all costs. Instead, think of this essay as an opportunity to try out some ideas, and see how well they fly. I am especially interested in the patterns you have noticed in Austen’s novels – whether thematic or structural. To that end, I am asking you to engage with at least two of her novels, but feel free to treat all three that are on the syllabus, or, indeed, all six if you have read the others as well. You are welcome to write more than seven pages if you like, but do not write fewer than five.

• Credit/No Credit (CR/NC)
  ○ To receive credit for the course on a pass/fail basis, you must make a substantial contribution to the discussion board for five of the eight weeks.

*Please Note: If you require proof that you completed a Continuing Studies course for any reason (for example, employer reimbursement), you must choose either the Letter Grade or Credit/No Credit option. Courses taken for NGR will not appear on official transcripts or grade reports.
Tentative Weekly Outline:

Week 1:
- Introduction to Austen and her world
- *Sense and Sensibility*, volume 1
  - Austen’s narrative voice
  - Her understanding of courtship
  - Class and family in the novel

Week 2:
- *Sense and Sensibility*, volume 2
  - The virtue of restraint in English society – differing standards for men and women
  - Role of minor characters in the novel

Week 3:
- *Sense and Sensibility*, volume 3
  - Importance of marriage in Austen’s day, in life and in fiction
  - Relationship of *Sense and Sensibility* to the novel tradition in England

Week 4:
- *Northanger Abbey*, volume 1
  - The Gothic tradition in England
  - The romance vs. the novel
  - Austen as satirist

Week 5:
- *Northanger Abbey*, volume 2
  - The traditional love plot
  - Ways in which Austen undermines it

Week 6:
- *Pride and Prejudice*, volume 1
  - Parenting in Austen’s novels
  - Discrimination – as a good thing

Week 7:
- *Pride and Prejudice*, volume 2
  - Direct vs. Indirect speech
  - Frankness vs. rudeness
  - What makes Darcy so attractive?

Week 8:
- *Pride and Prejudice*, volume 3
  - Conclusions: relevance of Austen today