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**PUBLIC LECTURE
OFFERINGS**

THE MAKING OF MODERN WARTIME

What is wartime? When does it begin and when does it end? And how does it feel? This lecture looks back to the period of the Napoleonic wars, fought on four different continents and with the goal of total war, as the first full manifestation of modern wartime and moves to subsequent wartimes, exploring their relevance for thinking about our own experience of wartime. Distinct from those who experience war directly and immediately, those who live at a distance from war, who send soldiers and sailors off to fight in their name, experience wartime. That experience is shaped by distance and by the various forms of media – news, art, letters, performances -- that arise to fill the void of knowledge. But knowledge alone cannot adequately fill that space between battlefield and home. This talk will also show the ways poetry and literature employ everyday, innocuous figures--the postboy, the fireplace, a snowfall, a bridge -- to carry the felt experience of wartime for those on the home front. It asks as well, how war and its violence seeps into and shapes our own every day.

JANE AUSTEN'S OBJECT WORLD

Jane Austen's face and figure have been affixed to ordinary objects of all sorts that circulate across the globe: books, t-shirts, coffee mugs, stuffed dolls, stamps and pound notes. But what role do objects play in the world Austen creates? In fiction renowned for its dialogue and ability to track the inner movements of a character's mind, who cares about things? If we removed the objects from the novels, what would we lose? This lecture offers a wide survey of the novels written by Jane Austen, and asks what value the novelists places on the object world, not as tangible symbols of abstract ideas, but as actual, material things in the world. What do they tell us about Austen's world? And to what degree are her characters and her plots, dependent upon things?

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SILENT READING AND THE INVENTION OF INTIMACY

In the history of reading, silent reading was a late development, but its consequences were profound. Not only did reading become increasingly isolated and personalized, but it fostered a new sense of interiority and intimacy. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, children were taught to read by interior vocalization, the sound of words shifting to the eye and mind rather than the mouth and ear. As silent reading became the norm, it fostered the conception that the written word granted greater immediacy to our thoughts and feelings and those of others. The written word replaced the spoken as the vehicle of truth and knowledge. In other words, you would know more about other people if you read about them than if you spoke with them. Using examples from novels and poetry of the early nineteenth century, this lecture would track how writers themselves absorbed this change and used their work to both amplify and question it.

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION TOPICS

THE HISTORICAL NOVEL: WHAT MAKES A NOVEL “HISTORICAL”?

What ideas about history made the historical novel possible when it emerged two hundred years ago, and what keeps it popular today? This discussion will explore what history means in fictional form and why it has appeal at certain historical moments, for certain marginalized groups, in certain places.

JANE AUSTEN BEYOND ENGLAND.

2. Recognizing the 250th anniversary of Austen’s birth in December, 1775, this is a discussion about Austen’s global appeal, based on the acknowledgement that she is read (and copied and adapted) more frequently outside Great Britain than within it. Who owns Austen now?

HOW DOES SYMPATHY WORK?

3. This discussion would treat the various theories of sympathy and how they manifest in literary works and criticism, starting with the age of sentimentalism in the eighteenth century and extending into more recent discussions in philosophy and literature. What activates or checks our sympathy when we read? Is sympathy a necessary component of reading literature?

WARTIME POETRY: IS THERE SUCH A THING AS WARTIME POETRY?

4. This discussion looks at wartime poetry from a range of periods and places and asks what common preoccupations or themes might unite them. But it also asks about how we make or recognize literary genres.