



Jane Austen's Philosophy of Virtue

Hilary (Winter) 2025

Term Dates:	January 13 – March 22, 2025
Department:	Literature (crosslist: Philosophy)
Difficulty:	Intermediate
Instructor:	Tim Jacobs (t.jacobs@davenantinstitute.org), tljacobs.com
Meeting Time:	Mondays 7:00pm – 9:00pm (Eastern Time)
Zoom Link:	Populi > click My Courses tab > click course > click Conferences (left menu).

Course Description

Jane Austen should not be known primarily as a Regency period romance author but rather as a profound social critic and commentator. While set within romantic plotlines, her themes are those of virtue. C.S. Lewis says that her heroines learn “good sense, courage, contentment, fortitude.” Lewis is taken in by Austen’s humor and humility and emphasizes how profoundly Christian her moral vision is. Christian philosopher Alastair MacIntyre sees in Austen an embodiment of Aristotelian virtue, particularly as it includes affection for people and true courage that come through genuine practice. Virtue involves both an accurate theoretical knowledge that often defies social custom, but also discernment to practice the virtues within one’s society, not as a contrarian but as one who is more Christian than cultural. The goal of this course is not merely to deepen the appreciation of a beloved author by fans, but it is more for the purpose of cultivating a virtuous life by learning from great minds. This course will primarily involve seminar-style discussions of Austen’s works as well as commentators. As such, it will require prior familiarity with and reading of at least some of Jane Austen’s novels

Objectives

1. To grow in literary analysis.
2. To understand Jane Austen’s depiction of virtue within her Christian commitment.

Course Format

Class sessions will involve a combination of lecture and seminar-style discussion on readings. Students are expected to read required texts before class and come ready for discussion. Readings will be 50–100 pages per week.

Course Delivery

Classroom Resources

- [Populi](#) online classrooms are used for all course content, including assignments, grades, announcements, course records, and more.
- [Zoom](#) links & recordings are provided on the Populi course page Conferences tab. Class sessions are two hours weekly (2.5 in summer) for ten weeks (8 weeks in summer) and recorded for absent students (not for dissemination outside of class).
- [Discord](#) may be used for additional student and instructor interaction as well as Davenant community discussions.

Attendance: Required for all students taking courses for credit. If the scheduled time does not work for

a particular student, they may drop the course according to the Drop Policy in the Academic Catalog.

Auditors: No requirements, but may participate in all class activities.

Late work: Grade reduction of -5% per calendar day upon instructor discretion. No assignments will be accepted after the last due date without an approved extension.

Course Texts

Start reading before the term! Audiobooks are acceptable. TV and movie adaptations are a last resort within the term. Feel free to watch movies before reading to aid understanding. For recommendations, see [Handout - Jane Austen Guide](#).

Jane Austen's six novels: *Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice, Mansfield Park, Emma, Persuasion, Northanger Abbey* (≈ 2280 pages).

Requirements

1. Attendance (20%)

Read required texts beforehand and come with texts, notes, and questions in hand. Please include your first and last name on Zoom. **One unexcused absence is permitted.**

2. Summaries & Reflections (50%)

For each of Jane Austen's six main novels, students will submit a 600-800 word paper (≈2-3pp), single spaced, with the headings below. **Due:** One week after each novel discussion ends. -5%/day/.



1. **Plot Summary** (100-150 words). Don't be comprehensive, trying to cover everything. Provide only the main movements of the plot and necessary context.
2. **Reflection** (400-500 words). Identify and discuss the 1-2 main themes in relation to character development and virtue.
3. **Application** (100-150 words). Apply the same theme(s) you discussed. What can this theme realistically look like in today's culture, perhaps in your life or those around you? What lessons can you learn for your life?

3. Term Paper (30%)

- **Length:** 1,500 words (5pp).
- **Instructions:** Students should take notes throughout the course with this paper in mind. Select a single theme and write a paper comprehensively assessing Jane Austen's portrayal of it throughout all six novels. Discussion of virtue must be included. Discuss how your theme/virtue of choice is displayed in different situations, circumstances, or contexts. Do different circumstances or personalities display the same virtue in different ways? Does a particular relational dynamic in one novel highlight a vice while in another novel it displays a virtue? Organize your paper as an argument, citing novels as needed. Do not organize your paper by novel sub-sections. You do not have space for this nor for summarizing plots. In your writing, assume the reader is well acquainted with the novels.
- **Grading:** Academic style, clear and unique thesis (within the first 3 sentences), substantial source interaction, single cumulative argument with supporting evidence, not overly descriptive, accurate concepts and viewpoints. -5%/day/.
- **Sources:** At least 2 academic secondary sources (+ Austen novels). At least 2 footnotes per page.
- **Formatting:** Times New Roman, double-spaced, 12-pt font, footnotes, Title page, Bibliography.

Course Calendar

Subject to change. [Click here](#) for the most current syllabus.

Week	Dates	Topics & Readings	Assignments Due
1	Jan 13	Intro to Jane Austen Tools for Literary Analysis  Handout - Jane Austen Guide  Map of the Life of Jane Austen *Note: Please be avidly reading novels.	
2	Jan 20	<i>Sense and Sensibility</i> (1811)	
3	Jan 27	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i> (1813)	Summary & Reflection: <i>S&S</i>
4	Feb 3		
5	Feb 10	<i>Mansfield Park</i> (1814) [possibly start <i>Emma</i>]	Summary & Reflection: <i>P&P</i>
6	Feb 17		
7	Feb 24	<i>Emma</i> (1815)	Summary & Reflection: <i>Mans. Pk.</i>
8	Mar 3	<i>Northanger Abbey</i> (1817, posthumous)	Summary & Reflection: <i>Emma</i>
9	Mar 10	<i>Persuasion</i> (1817, posthumous)	Summary & Reflection: <i>North. Abby</i>
10	Mar 17	Conclusion	Summary & Reflection: <i>Persuasion</i>
	Mar 31		Term Paper

Institutional Policies

Drop Policy

The policies below apply to changes made after the registration deadline two weeks prior to term. To change registration before the term starts, please log on to Populi. To change registration after the term starts, email the registrar at registrar@davenantinstitute.org. See the Academic Calendar section for exact dates.

Drop Date (100% Refund): Before the term starts, students may drop with a 100% tuition refund. Registration fee is non-refundable.

Drop Date (50% Refund): Within the first two weeks of a term, students may drop the course with a 50% tuition refund. Registration fee is non-refundable. To drop, please email the registrar.

Withdrawal: Within weeks three and four of a term, students who drop a course will receive no refund and will earn a “W” on their transcript. Students cannot drop after this time will receive a letter grade. To drop, please email the registrar.

Attendance & Class Meeting Time Scheduling

Attendance is required for all students taking courses for credit. Most classes are scheduled for evenings or weekends, especially core classes. If the scheduled time does not work for a particular student, they may drop the course according to the Drop policy.

Extension Policy

All coursework and exams must be submitted no later than two weeks after the term end date. Before that time, homework extensions are at the discretion of the instructor. If a student requires more time, the student may submit a formal extension request by emailing the registrar at registrar@davenantinstitute.org. If approved, an extension will be granted to the student for a specific period of time agreed upon by the student and instructor. Extension requests will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and will generally be granted for medical and family emergencies only.

Minimum Grade Requirement for Degree Students

Students enrolled in one of our degrees must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 (B average). If the students' GPA falls below 3.0, Davenant will initiate conversation with the student to judge whether the student is ready for their program. If the student earns a grade lower than a “C” (2.0) on a course required for their degree, they must retake the course in order to graduate. Their new grade will replace their former grade. If a degree student earns a grade lower than a “C” (2.0) on an elective, they are not required to retake the course, but they may request to retake the course or a close equivalent as a substitute for their former grade.

Grading Scale

Passing: ≥93:A • ≥90:A- • ≥87:B+ • ≥83:B • ≥80:B- • ≥77:C • ≥73:C

Retake if Core: 70–72:C- • ≥67:D+ • ≥63:D • ≥60:D- • <60:F.

For a complete list of policies, see the Academic Catalog at davenanthall.com