

Chick Lit

ENGL 103 900

Summer 2017
Sarah W. Watson

Monday 5:00-8:00pm
sarahtow@sas.upenn.edu

Description:

From *Pride and Prejudice* to *Bridget Jones's Diary*, 'chick lit' has attracted both praise and scorn. The genre is celebrated for its depiction of women's perspectives and experiences yet derided for its predictability in following 'the marriage plot.' In this course, we will explore popular fiction aimed at women. What are the components of this genre? Why is it so widespread and popular? How does 'chick lit' reflect and shape cultural beliefs about gender and sexuality?

Course website: <http://sarahwilmawatson.com/chicklit2017/>

Required Texts:

Stephanie Harzewski, *Chick Lit and Postfeminism* (2011)
Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, Penguin Classics Edition
Helen Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary: A Novel* (1999)
Laura Esquivel, *Like Water for Chocolate* (1995)

All other material will be made available on Canvas or at the Library.

Assessment:

Three in-class presentations (5-7 minutes)	30%
Open-book Midterm examination (two 3-page essays)	30%
Final Paper topic brainstorm (1 page)	10%
Final Paper (6-8 pages)	30%

Note: This is a small seminar intended to foster productive conversation. Participation and attendance are expected from all students. While attendance and participation are not graded by an explicit percentage, clear engagement or disinterest during class can push a final grade on the edge up or down. Similarly good attendance benefits your final grade. If you must miss class due to another obligation please discuss it with me beforehand. If you miss class due to illness please provide a note.

Academic Integrity is central to our lives as scholars and socially productive individuals. Please consult the university's Code of Academic Integrity which can be found at <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/osl/acadint.html>. If you have questions about correct citation or other issues of academic integrity please contact me.

Course Schedule:

- Monday, May 22** Course Introduction
“Silly Novels by Lady Novelists” George Eliot (1856)
“Oprah' Gaffe By Franzen Draws Ire And Sales” NYT (2001)
Chick Lit and Postfeminism, Stephanie Harzewski, ‘Introduction’ (2011)
In class: Discussion of “popular fiction” and “classic literature”
- Monday, May 29** NO CLASS - Memorial Day
- Monday, June 5** Women & Popular Fiction – The Gothic Novel to the Bodice Ripper
Ann Radcliffe, *The Italian*, (1797), selections
Laura Jean Libbey, *Daisy Brooks or, A Perilous Love* (1883), selections
Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance* (1984), selections
Chick Lit and Postfeminism, Chapter 1, ‘Postmodernism’s Last Romance’
In class: Genre Presentations
- Monday, June 12** Women, Reading, and Education
Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), Vol. 1 & Vol 2. Chapters 1-15
In class: Genre Presentations
James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*
- Monday, June 19** The Marriage Plot
Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), Vol. 2, Chapters 16-19 & Vol. 3
- Monday, June 26** Clever Women, Funny Women
Helen Fielding, *Bridget Jones’s Diary* (1999), pp. 2-153.
Regina Barreca. “‘Untamed and Unabashed’: Towards a Theory of Women and Humor in Literature” (1994).
In class: Tina Fey, *Bossypants* (2013), selections

- Monday, July 3** Women, Literature, and the Marketplace
Bridget Jones's Diary, pp. 157-267.
Candace Bushnell, *Sex and the City* (1996), selections
HBO's *Sex and the City*, select episodes

In class: Presentations on Women's magazines - *Godey's Lady's Book* to *Vogue* and *Cosmo*
- Monday July 10** Open book Midterm Exam
- Monday July 17** Thinking Outside the Shoe Box – Non-normative Chick Lit
This is Not Chick Lit (2006), selections
The Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Stories (1994), selections

In class: Radclyffe Publishing House
- Monday July 24** Global Chick Lit

Laura Esquivel, *Like Water for Chocolate* (1989), pp. 3-118
Jane the Virgin, select episodes

In class: Presentations on Global Chick Lit
- Monday July 31** Global Chick Lit, continued

Like Water for Chocolate, pp. 121-246

In class: Presentations on Global Chick Lit
- Friday, August 4** Final Paper Due