

Olli at American University

SYLLABUS for STUDY GROUP #630

Spring 2023

**Study Group:** “The Odd Couple: Sir Walter Scott and Jane Austen

**Day:** Eight Mondays (11:45 a.m. to 1:15 p.m.)

**Dates:** Feb. 27, Mar. 6, 13, 20, 27, Apr. 3, 10, 17

**Leader:** Dr. Linda R. Freeman

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**Texts:** Sir Walter Scott: Waverley. New York. Penguin Classics, 1985.

ISBN: 0-14-043071-7

Jane Austen: Persuasion. New York. W.W. Norton. Norton Critical Edition, 1995.

ISBN: 0-393-96018-8

**Note:** These books are paperbacks. There may be more recent versions now.

**Goals:**

We will read, discuss, and compare two nearly contemporary books: Scott’s first novel, Waverley, published in 1814 and Austen’s final novel Persuasion, published posthumously in 1818. His book immediately was wildly successful, influencing other writers then and since around the world. Her book was well received by a smaller, more discerning audience that over time has grown to enormous proportions today.

As we read, we will attempt not only to understand and enjoy these remarkable literary achievements but also to consider their moral, psychological, and political dimensions. We will look at author biographical material and the larger historical context of the books as well as their artistry and how they accomplish their powerful effects. Woven through our discussions will be considerations of two major literary periods, 18<sup>th</sup> century Enlightenment and 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanticism.

**Format:**

Study group meetings will be a mix of informal lectures with group discussions. Active participation by group members will be essential to the success of each meeting. Because the amount of reading is heavy, the reading assignments for the first four classes (on Waverley) will

run a little over 120 pages a week. This is by no means impossible for intrepid OLLI participants, but it should be planned for. We will take Persuasion at a slower pace.

**Schedule:**

This part of the syllabus is subject to adjustment.

Feb. 27—Intros; syllabus; class policies; literary genres; elements of the novel; Scott bio; timeline; Bonnie Prince Charlie; film versions; discussion of Waverley, Chapter 1 through Chapter 17

Mar. 6—Discussion of Waverley, Chapter 18 through Chapter 34; class system; British money; religion in Scotland

Mar. 13—Discussion of Waverley, Chapter 35 through Chapter 54; narration and narrators; languages; coincidence

Mar. 20—Discussion of Waverley, Chapter 55 through Chapter 71; elements of the novel applied; historical novels; common form; long-term effects of Waverley's publication

Mar. 27—Discussion of Persuasion, Chapter 1 through Chapter 8; Austen bio; literary realism; verisimilitude

Apr. 3—Discussion of Persuasion, Chapter 9 through Chapter 14; free indirect discourse; irony

Apr. 10—Discussion of Persuasion, Chapter 15 through Chapter 20; the literary Romantic Period

Apr. 17—Discussion of Persuasion, Chapter 21 through 24; elements of the novel applied; summing up; possible future courses; evaluations, etc.