School of English

Sophister Module Description Template 2025-6

Full Name: The Marriage Plot in English Fiction

Short Name: The Marriage Plot

Lecturer Name and Email Address: Aileen Douglas; adouglas@tcd.ie

ECTS Weighting: 10

Semester Taught: MT

Year: JS

Module Content:

Originating in romance and comedy, the marriage plot became a major element in the novel. In its classic versions the marriage plot permits the satisfaction of desire: of characters and readers alike. It may also be involved in the negotiation of complex moral choice and in the resolution of difficult social issues. This course examines how the marriage plot functions across the history of the English novel. The first half of the course examines important eighteenth and nineteenth century examples of the marriage plot. The second half of the course asks how, in the social circumstances of the twenty-first century—including the availability of divorce and changed concepts of gender—novelists deploy or adapt the marriage plot.

Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course a student should be able to:

1. Recognize and distinguish between the uses of the marriage plot in a range of fiction from the eighteenth to the twenty-first centuries
2. Contextualize the novels studied in relation to their social and historical moments
3. Deploy appropriate critical vocabulary in the analysis of the novel as genre

Learning Aims:

This course aims to develop awareness of the evolution of the novel in English by focusing on one of the novel's most prominent tropes. It also seeks to encourage consideration of how fiction relates to the societies in which it is produced and read.

Assessment Details:

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- Number of Components: 2
- Name/Type of Components; Mid-term assignment; final essay
- Word Count of Components: 1,000 words and 4,000 words
- Percentage Value of Components: 20%, 80%

Preliminary Reading List:

Course texts may include: Fanny Burney, *Evelina* (1778); Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813); Jane Austen, *Persuasion* (1818); George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (1874); Ian McEwan, *On Chesil Beach* (2007); Colm Tobín, *Brooklyn* (2010); P. D. James, *Death comes to Pemberley,* (2011); Jeffrey Eugenides, *The Marriage Plot* (2011).

Please note:

- **Curricular information is subject to change.**
- **Information is displayed only for guidance purposes, relates to the current academic year only and is subject to change.**