

Sample Research Proposal

Identify the course, yourself, and your research project's title.

Introduce your project in terms of its main focus.

Summarize what you propose to study and what you hope to learn: your focused topic, your questions, and your working thesis.

Explain how the research is both valid and valuable in terms of the outcomes.

Map out how you intend to carry out the research. Indicate both secondary and primary research.

Film Studies 302

Proposal: Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* as Fiction and Film

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For many years, I have been a Janeite, that is, a big fan of Jane Austen's novels and the film adaptations that have been made of them. For my term paper in Film Studies 302, I propose to study the 2005 film adaptation of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, the version directed by Joe Wright, in order to explore the Jane Austen phenomenon: her enduring fascination for readers, filmmakers, and filmgoers almost two centuries after her death.

Project Purpose, Description, and Outcome: What I would like to look at specifically is a comparison-contrast of how the novel and the film explore one of the key concepts captured in the title: prejudice. In particular, I plan to analyze the presentation of prejudice as it relates to gender. With this issue in mind, my main question is what sense do these texts (novel and film) make of prejudice as it relates to relationships between men and women? These would be secondary questions that I need to explore:

- What did prejudice mean for Austen, and what does it mean today?
- In the novel and the film, how is the problem of prejudice presented as an issue of gender, and is the problem ever solved?
- How do the novel and the film treat the issue similarly and differently? What do the similarities and differences mean about the past and the present, about fiction and film?
- How is prejudice central to the main relationship between Elizabeth Bennett and Mr. Darcy?
- What about secondary characters and secondary relationships: Is prejudice at work elsewhere in the story?

My working thesis is that the film highlights an issue of gender inequality already present in Austen's novel so that viewers can "read" that prejudice into their own experiences. In part, this potential in Austen's novel explains our continuing interest in her stories.

This study of gender prejudice will help me (1) develop new insights into the treatment of this theme in fiction and film, (2) understand better the nature of film adaptations, and (3) explain a small part of the Jane Austen phenomenon. In concrete terms, this project will lead to a 10-12 page paper and a 10-minute class presentation.

Project Plan: My primary research will involve rereading the novel and reviewing the film. Part of that research might involve searching an e-book version of the novel.

In terms of secondary research, I have done an initial search of our library's online catalog, of WorldCat, and of EBSCOhost for books and articles relevant to my topic. While some of the works below predate the 2005 film, they should still provide me with useful ideas for my project.

Writing a Research Proposal

For some research projects, you may need to submit a research proposal for approval before you actually undertake the full project. Typically the proposal relates to research you might do as part of an individual studies course, a group assignment, field research, a service-learning project, a co-op assignment, or a senior thesis project in a capstone course.

A project proposal seeks to explain what you plan to research, why, and how. In it, you show that the research is valid (makes good scholarly sense), argue that the research is valuable (will lead to significant knowledge), communicate your enthusiasm for the project, demonstrate that your plan is workable within the constraints of the assignment, and gain your instructor's approval.

The goals of a proposal, then, are to clarify your own thinking about a research topic, to convince your instructor that it is indeed a fruitful line of investigation, and to get helpful feedback about how to proceed.

Parts of a Research Proposal

For some projects, putting together a research proposal may involve completing a form or following a set formula. Whether you are following a form or drafting your proposal from scratch, here is an outline of the five elements of a proposal.

1. **Introduction:** Outline the subject and purpose of your research project. State why the topic is important and worthwhile, and provide any background or context that the professor needs to understand your line of thought.
2. **Project Description and Expected Results:** Provide a detailed discussion of what you propose to study. Declare the main topic or issue plus specific subtopics. List the key research question for your project plus a set of related questions that will guide your investigation of both primary and secondary material. These related questions should expand upon your key question, your initial hypothesis, or your theory. Project the outcomes that you expect from your research, including their value for yourself and for others.
3. **Project Plan (Research Methods and Procedures):** Explain how you plan to find answers to your questions, how you plan to research your topic. At this point, it would be useful to explain your primary research (the firsthand investigation), as well as the research tools you plan to use (e.g., catalogs, reference works, lab equipment, survey software). Include a working bibliography of your initial resources.
4. **Timetable or Schedule:** List deadlines that are part of the assignment and deadlines that you've set for yourself.
5. **Request for Approval:** Ask for feedback from your professor on your project plan and request approval to proceed.

Provide details demonstrating that you have a good grasp of fitting research methods.

Supply a working bibliography indicating your preliminary survey of possible resources.

Format sources in the documentation system to be used in the paper.

Map out a realistic research schedule indicating major milestones in the project.

Request both input and approval from the reader.

Primary Sources

- Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice: An Authoritative Text, Background and Sources, Criticism*. Ed. Donald J. Gray. New York: Norton, 2001. Print.
- . *Pride and Prejudice*. Project Gutenberg. Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. 1 June 1998. Web. 1 Nov. 2011.
- Pride and Prejudice*. Dir. Joe Wright. Universal Pictures, 2005. Film.

Secondary Sources

- Baker, William. *Critical Companion to Jane Austen: A Literary Reference to Her Life and Work*. New York: Facts on File, 2008. Print.
- Cartmell, Deborah, and Imelda Whelehan. *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007. Print.
- . *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text*. London; New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.
- Cohen, Paula Marantz. "Trends in Adaptation: Will and Jane Go Celluloid." *Michigan Quarterly Review* 44.3 (2005): 533-540. Print.
- Crusie, Jennifer. *Flirting with Pride and Prejudice: Fresh Perspectives on the Original Chick-Lit Masterpiece*. Dallas: BenBella, 2005. Print.
- Franklin, Nancy. "Everybody Loves Jane." *New Yorker* 21 Jan. 2008: 82-83. Print.
- Grandi, Roberta. "The Passion Translated: Literary and Cinematic Rhetoric in *Pride and Prejudice* (2005)." *Literature Film Quarterly* 36.1 (2008): 45-51. Print.
- McFarlane, Brian. "Something Old, Something New: 'Pride and Prejudice' on Screen." *Screen Education* 40: 6-14. Print.
- Parrill, Sue. *Jane Austen on Film and Television: A Critical Study of the Adaptations*. Jefferson: McFarland, 2002. Print.
- Stovel, Nora Foster. "From Page to Screen: Dancing to the Altar in Recent Film Adaptations of Jane Austen's Novels." *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal* 28: 185-198. Print.
- Sutherland, Kathryn. *Jane Austen's Textual Lives: From Aeschylus to Bollywood*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007. Print.
- Todd, Janet M. *The Cambridge Introduction to Jane Austen*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006. Print.
- Troost, Linda V. "Filming Tourism, Portraying Pemberley." *Eighteenth Century Fiction* 18.4 (2006): 477-498. Print.

To get a better sense of how Jane Austen fans react to this novel and film, I may research some Austen discussion groups.

Timetable for Project: Here is my schedule for completing this project:

1. Finish rereading the novel and reviewing the film: November 14.
2. Complete secondary research: November 21.
3. Develop outline for paper: November 24.
4. Finish first draft of paper: December 1.
5. Revise, edit, and proofread paper: December 6.
6. Develop presentation: December 7.
7. Submit paper and do presentation: December 9.

Project Approval: Dr. Rajan, I would appreciate your feedback on my proposed project, as well as your approval of my plan.