This course will examine Jane Austen’s place and function in our cultural imagination by thinking about her appearance on screen: in film, in television, on the web, and in social media. Austen’s persistent presence as a cultural reference has been made clear in the ways her work has been adapted. In our class, we will want to think about how and why Austen continues to work as an object of fascination and signification, about what issues we as a culture use her to think through, about Austen love and Austen fandom, and also about what buttons she pushes: there is always some online version of an “I Hate Jane Austen” webpage or anti-fan group to be found. Thinking about her screen presence, we will want to think about questions of adaptation and about the relation of the verbal to the visual and the aural. And of course we’ll discuss all those things Austen loved discussing: marriage and money and dancing, annoyances, style, and wit.

Our class texts will include two Austen novels and some biographical material about Austen herself, as well as several film and television adaptations of her work. We will also spend some time considering Austen’s continuing online existence, and we will read scholarly and critical materials that will help us think through Austen’s media and cultural afterlife.

Class requirements will include exams, online reading/viewing responses, and a paper.