

Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth*

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1. *The House of Mirth*

In 1897, Edith Wharton and her friend Ogden Codman Jr. published a book on interior design called *The Decoration of Houses*, in which they challenged the excesses of 19th-century house design favored by the moneyed class of New York. Eight years later, Wharton challenged the same excesses and values of the wealthy class she knew so well with *another* book about a house, this time a novel that made her famous: *The House of Mirth*. To begin, we will read an earlier Wharton novella, *Bunner Sisters* (1892). Then we will experience gilded New York with Lily Bart, a 29-year-old society beauty who needs to find a rich husband. We will tend to our exquisite Lily carefully, as she tries to thrive in this 1905 hothouse of mirth.

***Bunner Sisters* is available in several collections, and online at**

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/311/311-h/311-h.htm>

Any edition of *The House of Mirth* will work for this class, and the novel is also online:

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/284/284-h/284-h.htm>

2. Course Outline by Week

Sept 16: Introduction/background to Edith Wharton and her works

Sept 23: Wharton novella, *Bunner Sisters* (1892, published 1916)

Sept 30: *Bunner Sisters* continued, and background to *The House of Mirth*

Oct 7: *The House of Mirth*, Book I, chapters I-VIII

Oct 14: *The House of Mirth*, Book I, Chapters IX-XV

Oct 21: *The House of Mirth*, Book II, Chapters I-VI

Oct 28: *The House of Mirth*, Book II, Chapters VII-XIV

Nov 4: *The House of Mirth* Adaptations: Lily Bart's Legacy