This seminar will explore the institution of marriage, the foundation of modern society. While laws and customs surrounding marriage vary from one society to another--often enormously--historically, marriage has been an effective institution. Most human beings who have lived in historical times have married, and most marriages function more or less well from the point of view of society. We will examine a particular subset of married couples, those whose marriages work unusually well or unusually poorly. These married couples are all well known historical or literary figures (with the exception of a few fictional couples we will read about), and all are now deceased. The marriages are complicated and interesting, which is why I chose them. We will read the following books: Kate Moses, Wintering: A Novel of Sylvia Plath; Kimberly J. Largent, Defining Moments in the Lives of Mary Todd Lincoln and Varina Howell Davis: First Ladies of the Civil War; and Marguerite Merington, editor, The Custer Story: The Life and Intimate Letters of General George A. Custer and His Wife Elizabeth.