

ENGE1610  
Introduction to Literature

#### Course Description:

This course will introduce students to methods of reading literary texts from the major genres of fiction, poetry, and drama. It will illustrate basic literary terms and concepts, and closely study a variety of literary texts written in different times and countries. The emphasis will be on close reading, analysing how the meaning of a literary text is informed by its formal elements and literary conventions. At the same time, the course will also give students an awareness of the interaction between text and context, creative writing and critical reception, and the inheritance and transformation of literary tradition.

#### Content, highlighting fundamental concepts:

Introduction to Literature: defining 'literature,' discussions of 'canon,' how to read literature

Poetry: Rhyme, meter, diction, poetic speakers and poetic personas, lyric/narrative poetry, various techniques such as metaphor, symbolism, and irony

Fiction: Plot, theme, setting, point-of-view, use of dialogue and prose, creation of characters

Drama: Stage properties and conventions, tragedy and comedy, styles of acting, the power of live performance

World Literature: Understanding literature written in times and places different from one's own

#### Learning Outcomes:

Students who successfully complete this course should be able to

- Read literary texts closely and carefully
- Understand the literary terms and concepts learned in the course
- Write capable essays exploring the ideas presented in literary texts
- Develop an enjoyment of literature which will continue beyond the classroom

#### Learning Activities:

Lecture (1 hour 45 minutes in class weekly)  
Tutorial (45 minutes in class weekly)

#### Assessment Scheme:

Tutorial attendance and participation 10%  
Presentation 15%  
Three short essays (one on poetry, one on fiction, and one on drama) 75%

There is no final examination in this course

Learning Resources for students:

There is no required text in this course. Reading materials will be provided to students.

Other resources:

Poetry:

*The Poetry Handbook: A Guide to Reading Poetry for Pleasure and Practical Criticism* by John Lennard (2<sup>nd</sup> edition; Oxford University Press, 2005)

*Finding a Voice* by John Dent-Young (Hong Kong Educational Publishing, 1989)

Fiction:

*How Fiction Works* by James Woods - Tenth anniversary edition (Picador, 2018).

Drama:

*Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Studies* by Christopher B. Balme (Cambridge University Press, 2015)

Feedback for evaluation:

Students are welcome to give feedback on the course at any time. They can do so by communicating with the course teacher directly or by email, or by talking to or emailing the course TAs

Course schedule:

| Class/ week | Content   | Readings  |  |
|-------------|---|---|--|
| 1           | Introduction<br>Defining literature<br>Reading literature                 |   |  |
| 2           | Poetry<br>Rhyme, meter (esp. iambic pentameter), diction/word choice      | For the Poetry unit, we will read about 4-5 short poems in class each week and analyze and discuss them |  |
| 3           | Poetry<br>Speakers and Personae   |   |  |
| 4           | Poetry<br>Some poetic forms and modes (lyric, epic, ballad, sonnet, etc.) |   |  |
| 5           | Poetry  |   |  |

|    |   |  |  |
|----|---|--|--|
|    | Some poetic techniques (irony, symbolism, metaphor)   |  |  |
| 6  | Fiction<br>Plot, setting, characterization, dialogue, point-of-view   | For the fiction unit, we will read one or two short stories a week and analyze and discuss them  |  |
| 7  | Fiction<br>Theme and meaning  |  |  |
| 8  | Fiction<br>Theme and meaning  |  |  |
| 9  | Drama<br>Defining Drama/Theatre<br>Stage conventions<br>Styles of acting<br>Comedy (brief introduction)           | For the Drama unit, we will read some short excerpts from Shakespearean comedy and all of (or most of) a classical tragedy from ancient Greece (written and performed about 429 BC). The play is <i>Oedipus the King</i> or (in Greek) <i>Oedipus Rex</i> . The author is Sophocles. I will give you an English translation you should read. |  |
| 10 | Drama<br>Tragedy (introduction);<br>Tragic heroism, the tragic chorus, structure of tragedy, the value of tragedy |  |  |
| 11 | Drama<br>Gesturing towards “World Literature”; understanding a world different from our own                       |  |  |
| 12 | Drama<br>Tragedy – exploring the place of tragedy in a specific society (ancient Athens in this case)             |  |  |

Teacher’s contact details:

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Academic honesty and plagiarism:

Students in ENGE1610 need to submit copies of their formal essays to Veriguide. The Chinese University of Hong Kong has implemented a zero tolerance policy against plagiarism.

Grade Descriptors:

**Grade A / Excellent: Outstanding performance on ALL learning outcomes.**  
Demonstrates the ability to synthesize and apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would surpass the normal expectations at this level and typical of standards that may be common at higher levels of study. The ‘A’ grade should be reserved for truly excellent work

that exceeds the level expected for the majority of students and are expected to be achieved only by a small minority

**Grade A- / Very Good: Generally outstanding performance on ALMOST ALL learning outcomes.**

Demonstrates the ability to synthesize and apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would fully fulfill the normal expectations at this level and occasionally reaches standards that may be common at higher levels of study.

**Grade B+ / Good (Plus): HIGH performance on all learning outcomes, OR HIGH performance on some learning outcomes which compensates WELL for slightly less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.**

Demonstrates the ability to apply WELL the principles or skills learned in the course in a comprehensive manner that would sufficiently fulfill the normal expectations at this level WELL.

**Grade B / Good: SUBSTANTIAL performance on all learning outcomes, OR SUBSTANTIAL performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for slightly less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.**

Demonstrates the ability to apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a MORE COMPREHENSIVE manner that would sufficiently fulfill the normal expectations at this level.

**Grade B- / Good (Minus): GOOD performance on all learning outcomes, OR GOOD performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for slightly less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.**

Demonstrates the ability to apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a COMPREHENSIVE manner that would sufficiently fulfill the normal expectations at this level.

**Grade C+ / Fair (Plus): VERY SATISFACTORY performance on the majority of learning outcomes.**

Demonstrates the ability to apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a SOMEWHAT SUSTAINED manner that would meet the basic requirement at this level.

**Grade C / Fair: SATISFACTORY performance on the majority of learning outcomes.**

Demonstrates the ability to partially apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would meet the basic requirement at this level.

**Grade C- / Fair (Minus): SOMEWHAT SATISFACTORY performance on A NUMBER OF learning outcomes.**

Demonstrates the ability to SOMEWHAT apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would meet the BARE basic requirement at this level.

**Grade D+ / Pass (Plus): BARELY SATISFACTORY performance on A FEW learning outcomes.**

Addresses the course inadequately by meeting the basic requirement at this level only in some areas while responding minimally with possibly tangential content in others.

**Grade D / Pass: ALMOST BARELY satisfactory performance on VERY FEW learning outcomes.**

Addresses the course inadequately by meeting the basic requirement at this level only in very few areas while responding very minimally with possibly tangential content in others.

**Grade F / Failure: Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.**

Fails to address the course and likely does not understand what the course requires. In other words, the work completely misses the point.