

Department of English

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

**ENGE4240 Special Topics in Literature
(An Introduction to Computational Literary Analysis)**

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Course Description

For the last one hundred years or so, the respected literary critic was one who conducted a patient, private, close reading of an inevitably small number of texts. Today, due to the rampant digitization of hundreds of thousands of texts and radical developments in the accessibility of statistical analysis packages and platforms, the literary critic has been emancipated from working in only this way. This course introduces you to the field of computational literary analysis, which is to say a new way of engaging literary texts that takes advantage of such developments. By way of practice-based learning, you will learn to use the basic functionality of R, the leading language and platform for statistical computing and graphics in the humanities, which will allow you to begin to ask very different questions to those that you have been taught to ask of literature.

Learning Outcome

By the end of the course, you should be able to use R in a meaningful way to analyse and critique literary texts. You should be familiar with the basic architecture and commands of R. As such, you will be able to import texts from various sources and understand the importance of suitably preparing texts for computational analysis. In addition to this, you will be able to conduct a number of statistical operations on literary texts that will expose latent structures or relations resident within a (set of) text(s).

Note

You do not need to be familiar with coding in order to successfully complete this course. It is intended as an introduction for the novice. However, you will need to bring your own laptop (windows, mac, or linux) to class and be willing to install the relevant material to your desktop.

Reading List

Stephen Ramsay, *Reading Machines: Toward an Algorithmic Criticism* (2011)

Matthew Jockers *Macroanalysis* (2013)

Franco Moretti, *Distant Reading* (2013)

Assessment

Seminar Preparation	10%
Seminar Engagement	15%
Mid-term practicum	25%
Final essay	50%

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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.