



ENGE3410 Ekphrasis: Encounters between Verbal and Visual Arts

Course description

This course will study literature that represents visual arts or, ekphrasis. The term 'ekphrasis' can be broadly defined as verbal representation of visual arts and has become a vibrant field of study for a few decades. We will look at some most famous ekphrastic texts from the beginning of Western literature to this day, focusing on poems evoking either actual or imaginary artworks, but branching out to ekphrasis in fiction and new media as well. In the process, we will reflect on the evolution of the term 'ekphrasis' from a rhetorical device to a site of rivalry and on to a mode of encounter between the verbal and visual medium. The course will explore interactions of multiple media while foregrounding characteristics of each medium.

Learning outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students are expected to be able to:

- Closely read literary texts of ekphrasis;
- Have an awareness of the historical context of ekphrastic texts;
- Critically analyse the respective features of verbal and visual mediums;
- Explore the interaction between the verbal and visual mediums;
- Engage with important ideas and concepts in ekphrastic studies.

Topics and concepts

Ekphrasis: definition and history;
Ekphrasis and genre (epic; drama; poetry; fiction; new media);
Description, narration;
Paragone, ut pictura poesis;
Ekphrasis and transcendence, ekphrasis and memory;
Ekphrasis and sculpture, ekphrasis and narrative;
Iconophilia and iconoclasm;
Iconophilia and critical ekphrasis;
Reverse ekphrasis;
Ekphrasis and gender;
Site and power of ekphrasis;
Private and public museum;
Digital reproduction.

Course components

Lecture: 2 hours per week
Tutorial: 1 hour per week



Assessment

Assessment type	Percentage
Attendance, preparation, and participation	10
Presentation	15
Short paper	25
Term paper	50

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+ / Adequate (Plus): VERY ADEQUATE 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 / Adequate: ADEQUATE 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- / Adequate (Minus): SOMEWHAT ADEQUATE 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 A FEW learning outcomes.

Addresses the task 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 task 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 task and likely does not understand what the task requires. In other words, the work completely misses the point.

Required and recommended readings

Required readings:

Homer, *The Iliad*, Book 18, excerpt (The shield of Achilles)

Shakespeare, *The Rape of Lucrece*, excerpt (1366-1526)

Wordsworth, 'Elegiac Stanzas: Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, in a Storm, Painted by Sir George Beaumont'

Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto 4, excerpt (the dying gladiator)

Shelley, 'Ozymandias', 'On the Medusa of Leonardo da Vinci in the Florentine Gallery'

Keats, 'On Seeing the Elgin Marbles', 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'Body's Beauty'; The Pre-Raphaelite paintings (Tennyson, 'Lady of Shalott')

Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*, Chapter 13

Robert Browning, 'My Last Duchess'

W. H. Auden, 'Musée des Beaux Arts'

Recommended readings:

Heffernan, James A. W. *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashberry*. University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Hollander, John. *The Gazer's Spirit: Poems Speaking to Silent Works of Art*. University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Kennedy, David. *The Ekphrastic Encounter in Contemporary British Poetry and Elsewhere*. Burlington, Vt: Ashgate, 2012.

Krieger, Murray, and Joan Krieger. *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019.

Meek, Richard, and David Kennedy. *Ekphrastic Encounters New Interdisciplinary Essays on Literature and the Visual Arts*. Ed. Richard Meek and David Kennedy. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019.

Panagiotidou, Maria-Eirini. *The Poetics of Ekphrasis: A Stylistic Approach*. Springer, 2022.

Rippl, Gabriele. *Handbook of Intermediality: Literature - Image - Sound - Music*. Ed. Gabriele Rippl. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015.

Reference:

Google Art and Culture (the world's art and culture online):

<https://artsandculture.google.com>

**Feedback for evaluation**

Students are welcome to give feedback to the course at any time. They can do so by communicating to me or the TA.

Course schedule

Week	Lecture Title	Reading	Topics
1	Introduction		The term 'ekphrasis' History of 'ekphrasis'
2	Classical ekphrasis	Homer, <i>The Iliad</i> , Book 18, excerpt (The shield of Achilles)	Description and narration Ekphrasis and epic
3	Renaissance ekphrasis	Shakespeare, <i>The Rape of Lucrece</i> , excerpt (1366-1526)	Paragone Ekphrasis and drama
4	Romantic ekphrasis	Wordsworth, 'Elegiac Stanzas: Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, in a Storm, Painted by Sir George Beaumont'	Ekphrasis and transcendence Ekphrasis and memory
5	Romantic ekphrasis	Byron, <i>Childe Harold's Pilgrimage</i> , Canto 4, excerpt (the dying gladiator)	Ekphrasis and sculpture Ekphrasis and narrative
6	Romantic ekphrasis	Shelley, 'Ozymandias', 'On the Medusa of Leonardo da Vinci in the Florentine Gallery'	Iconophilia and iconoclasm
7	Romantic ekphrasis	Keats, 'On Seeing the Elgin Marbles', 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'	Iconophilia and critical ekphrasis
8	Reading/writing week		
9	Victorian ekphrasis	Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'Body's Beauty'; The Pre-Raphaelite paintings (Tennyson, 'Lady of Shalott')	Ekphrastic poetry by artists Reverse ekphrasis
10	Victorian ekphrasis	Charlotte Bronte, <i>Jane Eyre</i> , Chapter 13	Ekphrasis and fiction Ekphrasis and gender
11	Modern ekphrasis	Robert Browning, 'My Last Duchess'	Site and power of ekphrasis Private museum
12	Modern ekphrasis	W. H. Auden, 'Musée des Beaux Arts'	Site and power of ekphrasis Public museum
13	Conclusion: Contemporary ekphrasis	TBA	Ekphrasis and new media Digital reproduction

**Contact details for teacher(s) or TA(s)**

Professor	
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Course website

Blackboard:
<https://blackboard.cuhk.edu.hk>

Academic honesty and plagiarism

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>. With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed **declaration** that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures. For group projects, all students of the same group should be asked to sign the declaration. For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment. Assignments without the receipt will not be graded by teachers. Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.