

B.A. (Honours) in Contemporary English Studies

Course Title	:	Cross-cultural Studies of Literature
Course Code	:	ENG375
Recommended Study Year	:	2 nd & 3 rd Year
No. of Credits/Term	:	3
Mode of Tuition	:	Lecture and Tutorial
Class Contact Hours	:	2 hours Lecture/week 1 hour Tutorial/week
Category in Major Programme	:	Disciplinary Elective
Prerequisite(s)	:	N/A
Co-requisite(s)	:	N/A
Exclusion(s)	:	N/A
Exemption Requirement(s)	:	N/A

Brief Course Description

Analyzing and comparing texts from two independent cultural traditions, this course introduces the student to the principles of cross-cultural research. Readings will be selected from poetry, narrative, and drama in the Western and Chinese canon around a thematic or generic “constant” to facilitate meaningful comparison. Comparisons will be explored around set themes – whether romantic love, friendship, war – or specific literary kinds – satire, allegory, fantasy.

Aims

1. To introduce students to key texts of the Western and Chinese traditions;
2. To develop an understanding of the genre in which each work was written;
3. To explore the commonalities and differences between genres in different traditions;
4. To gain some appreciation for meaningful comparisons;
5. To enhance the understanding of each text (and the tradition from which it emerges) by contrasting it with a different, yet homologous text;
6. To enhance the students appreciation for the literature in English and in Chinese;
7. To heighten the sensitivity to language by studying the inadequacy of translations (all the texts will be read either in the English original or in English translations of the Chinese original): Chinese originals will be studied whenever possible and appropriate.

Learning Outcomes

The course aims at enhancing students’ ability to see similarities as well as differences between Chinese and Western literary traditions. By the end of the semester, students are expected to be able to make meaningful cross-cultural comparisons in international as well as domestic communications.

Indicative Content

- Drama: *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare;
 The Romance of the Western Chamber by Wang Shifu
 (topic: love)
- Poetry: a) selected poems by William Wordsworth
 b) selected poems by Wang Wei
 (topic: nature and landscape)
- Narrative: a) *Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka
 b) *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* by Pu Songling
 (topic: fantasy)

Other possibilities include the following “clusters”

- Drama: *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder
 Teahouse by Lao She
 (topic: local color)
- Poetry: a) Shakespeare’s sonnets
 b) Lyrics of Li Qingzhao
 (topic: love poems)
- Narrative: *Dream of the Red Chamber* by Cao Xueqing
 Pilgrim’s Progress by John Bunyan
 (topic: Allegory)

Teaching Method

This course will adopt three teaching modes: Lecture, where the instructor provides an overall view of each text and each pair of texts to be compared, outlining not only the major features of the texts, but alerting the student to the opportunities of discovery afforded by the comparison; Presentations: students will be required to research the background of each text (or translation) in order to acquire a historical as well as a cross-cultural perspective; and Tutorial, where students in small groups will be encouraged to analyze each text in detail.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

The progress of learning will be measured through class discussions, presentations, exercises and a final examination.

Assessment

Continuous Assessment: 60%

Final Test: 40%

Required Readings

- Kafka, Franz, (Stanley Corngold Trans.), *The Metamorphosis*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1996.
- Pu, Songling, (John Minford Trans.), *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, Hong Kong: The Commercial Press (H.K.) Ltd., 2006.
- Shakespeare, William, *Romeo and Juliet*, London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1994.
- Wang, Shifu, (T. C. Lai et al Trans.), *The Romance of the Western Chamber*, Hong Kong: Heinemann Educational, 1973.
- Wang, Wei, (Tony Barnstone et al Trans.), *Laughing Lost in the Mountains: Poems of Wang Wei*, Hanover: University of New England, 1991.
- Wordsworth, William, (Sandra Anstey Ed.), *William Wordsworth: Selected Poems*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Complementary Readings

- Asker, David Barry Desmond, *Aspects of Metamorphosis: fictional representations of the becoming human*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001.
- Cao, Zuoya, *The Internal and the External: A Comparison of the Artistic Use of Natural Imagery in English Romantic and Chinese Classic Poetry*, New York: Peter Lang, 1998.
- Hill, Alan G., *Letters of William Wordsworth: a new selection*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.
- Kow, Mei-Kao, *Ghosts and foxes in the world of Liaozhai zhiyi*, London: Minerva Press, 1998.
- Warner, Marina, *Fantastic metamorphoses, other worlds: ways of telling the self*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Yang, Vincent, *Nature and self: a study of the poetry of Su Dongpo, with comparisons to the poetry of William Wordsworth*, New York: Peter Lang, 1989.
- Ye, Tan, *Common dramatic codes in Yüan and Elizabethan theaters: characterization in Western chamber and Romeo and Juliet*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997.
- Zhang, Hsiao Yang, *Shakespeare in China: a comparative study of two traditions and cultures*, Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996.