

B.A. (Honours) in Contemporary English Studies

Course Title	:	Painting and Poetry
Course Code	:	ENG383
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

This course exposes students to an array of paintings and poems and encourages a bi-disciplinary approach to the relationship between these two art forms. The Roman poet Horace in his *Ars Poetica* (c. 13 BC) expressed the dictum "ut pictura poesis"-- "as is painting, so is poetry"—and since that time (in fact even before) the two art forms have been closely linked as related kinds of 'poetry'. Sometimes, it has been paintings that have inspired poems and sometimes the other way round. Shakespeare, for example, has been the inspiration of hundreds of paintings that depict scenes from his dramas. Similarly, a highly allegorical painter like Brueghel has inspired a large number of poems.

The course offers a small anthology of poems and paintings (poems 'about' paintings, paintings 'about' poems, paintings and poems linked by a particular zeitgeist) which will form the focus of study. Through exercises in appreciation, understanding and interpretation, a number of questions will be raised. Is the poem simply a verbal description of the work of art, or does the poet interpret the painting? Could you reconstruct the painting from the poem without actually seeing it? Why does the poet dwell on some features of the painting and ignore other aspects? What is the difference anyway between appreciation and interpretation? What does it mean to 'see' a painting and 'read' a poem?

Aims

The course aims to introduce students to the rich and dynamic field of ekphrasis and to develop an understanding of the importance of this phenomenon, especially in the modern period. In addition, the course aims to enhance students' awareness of the ways that text and visual image can interact and provide inspiration, one for the other. By exposing students to a varied sample of ekphrasis pairs drawn from different

historical periods and varied artistic styles, the course hopes to bridge the fields of poetry and visual studies.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course students will be aware of:

1. Some important historical/theoretical works linking painting and poetry;
2. The differences and similarities in the way that paintings and poetry represent the world;
3. The varied dynamic relationships that may exist between a painting and a poem;
4. The value (and limitations) of comparing poems and paintings;
5. The particular ways that a student of the Arts can talk about poems and paintings meaningfully and with interest.

Indicative Content

1. Horace and the history of the relationship between poetry and painting
2. Modern theories of this relationship (Wallace Stevens in particular)
3. Appreciating and Interpreting Art Works
4. Paintings and Poems (a selection):
 - Paintings based on Shakespeare
 - Classic and Romantic Cases
 - Modern Ekphrasis

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

Students' progress towards the learning outcomes outlined above will be measured by continuous assessments on the students' engagement with the lectures, tutorial discussions, readings, presentations, and written assignments.

Teaching Method

The course will consist of one two-hour lecture per week (15 weeks) in which the key background knowledge and concepts for discussion will be introduced and particular examples of painting and poetry explored. This will be followed up by a one-hour tutorial in which students will discuss the concepts presented. The paintings and poems will be made available to the students via a Visual Arts database established on the web. Students will present for a 1-hour period on a topic that is agreed by the instructor. This will be done in small groups.

Assessment

Continuous Assessment: 100%

Three 'commentaries': 60%

One term paper: 40%

Required Readings

The poems and paintings discussed in the course will be available on a CD-ROM which has been specially prepared for the course

Supplementary Readings

Abse, Dannie and Joan, *Voices in the Gallery: Poems and Pictures*. London: The Tate Gallery, 1986.

Altick, Richard D., *Paintings from Books: Art and Literature in Britain, 1760-1900*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1985.

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

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

McClatchy, J. D., editor, *Poets on Painters: Essays on the Art of Painting by Twentieth-Century Poets*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

Meisel, Martin, *Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.