

B.A. (Honours) in Contemporary English Studies

Course Title	: Tragic Drama across Time and Space
Course Code	: ENG3004
Recommended Study Year	: 3 rd or 4 th Year
No. of Credits/Term	: 3
Mode of Tuition	: Lecture-tutorial mode
Class Contact Hours	: 2-hour lecture per week 1-hour tutorial per week
Category	: Discipline Elective (Contemporary Literary Strand)
Prerequisite(s)	: Nil
Co-requisite(s)	: Nil
Exclusion(s)	: Nil
Exemption Requirement(s)	: Nil

Brief Course Description

This course examines representative plays in the genre of tragedy from its origin in ancient Greece through its renaissance in the 16th and 17th centuries, its Chinese counterpart in the Yuan dynasty, to its “crisis” in the 20th century. In addition to the plays we read, theory and philosophy of tragedy will be introduced as assistance which can deepen our understanding of the form. This course also covers the cultural and intellectual contexts of the plays under discussion such as Greek mythology, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and in the case of Chinese tragedy, the popular belief that “virtue will be duly rewarded and vice punished” (善恶有报). There will be interesting debates over the vital questions that are related to this particular genre of literature.

Aims

This course aims to accomplish the following:

1. to develop an awareness of tragedy as a vital form of human communication;
2. to develop the basic skills of reading and understanding tragedy;
3. to enhance competence in speaking and writing about tragedy;
4. to develop an appreciation of tragedy as a form of art;
5. to cultivate an independent reading habit that will enrich students’ future life.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students are expected to:

1. be able to analyze and comprehend selected tragic texts from Greek to modern times;
2. be able to relate selected tragic texts to the cultural contexts from which they arose;
3. be able to explain the main features of tragedy, those that have remained constant throughout history as well as those that have changed over time;
4. be able to understand relevant critical terms so as to engage in meaningful dialogues with theorists of different times and places about the craft of tragedy;
5. be able to effectively synthesize primary and secondary sources while responding to tragic texts.

Indicative Contents

Readings for the course are selected from the following:

Greek tragedy

Aeschylus. *Prometheus Bound*.

Sophocles. *Antigone*.

Sophocles. *Oedipus the King*.

Euripides. *Hippolytus*.

Renaissance and Neo-classical tragedy

William Shakespeare. *King Lear*.

William Shakespeare. *Hamlet*.

Pierre Corneille. *Le Cid*.

Jean Racine. *Phaedra*.

Modern Tragedy

Henrik Ibsen. *Ghosts*.

Anton Chekhov. *The Cherry Orchard*.

Arthur Miller. *Death of a Salesman*.

John Synge. *Riders to the Sea*

Tennessee Williams. *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Chinese Tragedy (in English translation)

Guan Hanqing. *Snow in Midsummer*

Ma Zhiyua. *Autumn of the Palace of Han* (also known as *Sorrows of Han*)

Tang Xianzu. *The Peony Pavilion: Mudan Ting*

Meng Chengshun. *Mistress and Maid*.

Theories of Tragedy

Aristotle. "Book VI" (from *The Poetics*).

Andrew Cecil Bradley. "The Substance of Shakespearean Tragedy" (from *Shakespearean Tragedy*).

Arthur Miller. "Tragedy and the Common Man" (from *New York Times*, February 27, 1949).

Richard Sewall. "Absence of Tragedy in Asian Drama" (from *Encyclopedia of Britannica*).

Teaching Method

This course consists of three interactive components: lectures, student presentations, and group discussions. During the lectures, the instructor will provide overviews of the four different tragedies selected, not only outlining the major features of each play, but also alerting students to the opportunities for further exploration. Students are expected to research the background of each text in order to acquire a historical as well as a cross-cultural perspective to be demonstrated in their presentations. Students will also be asked to analyze each text in their tutorial groups.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

The progress and achievements in learning will be measured through class discussions, presentations, essays and a test at the end of the term.

Learning Outcome	Assessment Method			
	Brief Essay (AT1)	Brief Essay (AT2)	Presentation (AT3)	In-Class Exercise (AT4)
ILO1 (be able to analyze and comprehend selected tragic texts from Greek to modern times)	x	x	x	x
ILO2 (be able to relate selected tragic texts to the cultural contexts from which they arose)	x	x		x
ILO3 (be able to explain the main features of tragedy, those that have remained constant throughout history as well as those that have changed over time)	x	x	x	x
ILO4 (be able to understand relevant critical terms so as to engage in meaningful dialogues with theorists of different times and places about the craft of tragedy)	x	x	x	x
ILO5 (be able to effectively synthesize primary and secondary sources while responding to tragic texts)	x	x	x	x

Assessment

Continuous Assessment: 100%

The progress and achievements in learning will be measured through class discussions, presentations, essays and a test at the end of the term. In terms of percentage, the final grade for this course will consist of the following two parts:

Assessment Task #1 (30 points):

Write a brief essay to discuss similarities and differences between the tragic texts covered in Unit One and Unit Two.

Assessment Task #2 (30 points):

Write a brief essay to support or rebut the view that tragedy is absent from modern society and Asian drama.

Assessment Task #3 (10 points):

Give a group presentation on assigned texts. The final marks for this category will take into consideration students' attendance record for the whole semester, their contribution to the classroom discussions, and the team spirit they display in group activities.

Assessment Task #4 – In-class Exercise

1. Read an excerpt drawn from one of the tragic texts covered in Unit Three or Unit Four and comment on its thematic significance. (15 points)
2. Write a brief essay on a given topic related to the study of tragedy. (15 points)

Required/Essential Readings

One of the following Greek tragedies will be chosen for one semester:

- Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
Sophocles, *Antigone*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.
Euripides, *Hippolytus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

One of the following Renaissance/Neoclassical tragedies will be chosen for one semester:

- William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*. New York: Penguin Classics, 2005.
William Shakespeare, *King Lear*. New York: Penguin Classics, 2007.
Pierre Corneille, *The Cid, Cinna, The Theatrical Illusion*. New York: Penguin Classics, 1976.
Jean Racine, *Iphigenia; Phaedra; Athaliah*. New York: Penguin Classics, 1964.

One of the following modern tragedies will be chosen for one semester:

- Henrik Ibsen, *Ghosts*. London: Faber & Faber, 2010.
Anton Chekhov, *Plays: Ivanov; The Seagull; Uncle Vanya; Three Sisters; The Cherry Orchard*. New York: Penguin Classics, 2002.
Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*. New York: Penguin Books, 1998.
John Synge, *Riders to the Sea*. New York: Quill Pen Classics, 2008.
Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*. New York: Penguin Classics, 2009.

One of the following Chinese tragedies will be chosen for one semester:

- Guan Hanqing, *Snow in Midsummer*. Bel Air, CA: Silk Pagoda, 2008.
Ma Zhiyua, *Sorrows of Han: A Chinese Tragedy*. Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1997.
Tang Xianzu, *The Peony Pavilion: Mudan Ting*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002.
Meng Chengshun, *Mistress and Maid*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.
Aristotle, “Book VI” and “Book XIII”, *Poetics*. New York: Penguin Classics, 1997.
Andrew Cecil Bradley, “The Substance of Shakespearean Tragedy,” *Shakespearean Tragedy*. London: Macmillan, 1904.
Arthur Miller, “Tragedy and the Common Man,” *The Theater Essays of Arthur Miller*. New York: Viking Press, 1978.
Richard Sewall, “Absence of Tragedy in Asian Drama,” *Encyclopedia of Britannica*
(<http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/601884/tragedy/51130>)

Recommended/Supplementary Readings

- Andrew Cecil Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth*. London: Macmillan, 1904.
- Rebecca Bushnell (ed.), *A Companion to Tragedy*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005.
- Rebecca Bushnell, *Tragedy - a short introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007.
- William Dolby, *A History of Chinese Drama*. London: P. Elek, 1976.
- Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries*. (3rd Edition) Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Terry Eagleton, *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002.
- Patricia Easterling (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- John Lyons, *Kingdom of Disorder: The Theory of Tragedy in Classical France*. West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 1999.
- Claire McEachern (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Tragedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Adrian Poole, *Tragedy - A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- John Sheppard, *Greek Tragedy*. Lenox, Massachusetts: HardPress, 2012.
- George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996.
- Jennifer Wallace, *The Cambridge Introduction to Tragedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Raymond Williams, *Modern Tragedy*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1966.
- Julian Young, *Philosophy of Tragedy: From Plato to Žižek*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Important Notes:

- (1) Students are expected to spend a total of 9 hours (i.e. 3 hours of class contact and 6 hours of personal study) per week to achieve the stipulated course learning outcomes.
- (2) Students should be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work, tests and examinations, and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations. For example, presentation of another person's work (including the borrowing of exact phrases, summarized ideas or even footnotes/citations) without proper acknowledgement of the source is not allowed. Students are required to strictly follow university regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.
- (3) Students are required to submit writing assignment(s) using Turnitin.
- (4) To enhance students' understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course "Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness" is available on <https://pla.ln.edu.hk/>.