

B.A. (Honours) in Contemporary English Studies

Course Title	: Multimodal Writing from Paper to Screen
Course Code	: ENG3011
Recommended Study Year	: 3 rd or 4 th Year
No. of Credits/Term	: 3
Mode of Tuition	: Sectional
Class Contact Hours	: 3 hours per week
Category in Programme	: Disciplinary Elective (Contemporary Language Studies Strand)
Prerequisite(s)	: Nil
Co-requisite(s)	: Nil
Exclusion(s)	: Nil
Exemption Requirement(s)	: Nil

Brief Course Description

What is writing? How does it differ from speech and what are the interrelations between writing, speech, script, and language? What are the differences between alphabetic and non-alphabetic writing systems? How has writing (and language) evolved with technologies (paper, printer, telegraph, typewriter, computer, etc.)? This course aims to engage with these questions by introducing a new semiotics of writing, which is more compatible with contemporary developments of digital writing practices. We will examine various forms and types of materialized and mediated writing, such as calligraphy, conceptual art, shop signage, emoji-filled online posts (and books), and bullet comments, to demonstrate the material, medial and semiotic differences (and interactions) between ‘traditional’ and digital forms of writing. Students will gain a historically and culturally grounded understanding of writing, as well as hands-on training in analysing multimodal features and indexicalities of written texts that they encounter in everyday life.

Aims

This course aims to:

1. Introduce students to latest scholarship in sociolinguistics, social semiotics, and digital discourse in order to cultivate a new understanding of writing;
2. Offer several case studies about modernization of writing systems to showcase the entanglements of writing, technology, and politics;
3. Demonstrate various affordances and limitations of different writing media and technologies;
4. Equip students with the skills of contextually and critically analysing a broad range of written texts.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Explain the interrelations and differences between writing, speech, script, and language;
2. Critically consider historical representations of (non-)alphabetic languages in Western scholarship;
3. Explain case studies of language/script reforms covered in the course;

4. Apply analytical tools developed in recent scholarship to analyse the affordances and indexical meanings of a range of written texts;
5. Create multimodal texts about a chosen writing system appropriate for a specific audience, purpose, and situation.

Indicative Contents

The contents of the course will cover historical, comparative, and empirical aspects of writing systems, writing technologies, and practices. A series of newly developed concepts and notions drawn from sociolinguistics, social semiotics and digital discourse will be introduced to help students to theorize writing and analyse written texts. Below is a tentative list of weekly lecture topics.

Concepts and notions in describing language and writing

Languages and classification of writing systems in the world

Writing and speech: dichotomy or interdependence?

Alphabet and its perceived advantages over (Chinese) characters

Modernization of character-based writing systems: the case of Chinese, Japanese, and Vietnamese

A new semiotics of writing: materiality, multimodality, and meaning

Writing on paper (calligraphy, conceptual art, newspaper)

Writing in linguistic landscapes (advertisements, shop signages, language objects)

Writing on screens (Emojis, online posts, bullet comments, Kongish)

Teaching Method

The course consists of a lecture in which key concepts and analytical frameworks are introduced and a one-hour tutorial in which students present their understanding, arguments, and analysis (LO1, LO2, LO3, LO4). In the lectures and tutorials, students will have the opportunity to work both individually and in groups as well as give feedback to their peers. Whereas individual presentation and writing tasks (LO1, LO2, LO3, LO4) enable students to think critically and work independently, group tasks (LO4, LO5) allow students to exchange ideas and collaborate on more complex projects.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

Group presentation and written assignment: Students' ability to describe, classify and compare major writing systems by drawing on the metalanguage introduced in the course will be tested in group presentation and written assignment (LO4, LO5).

Individual written assignment: Students' ability to critically analyse and assess scholarly publications on theories of writing, writing reforms, and writing practices will be tested through a written assignment (LO1, LO2, LO3, LO4).

Other components of continuous assessment: Students’ knowledge and understanding of major topics in the course will be continuously assessed through tutorial presentation, class participation and a written test (LO1, LO2, LO3, LO4).

Assessment

No.	Assessment Method	Type	Outcome	Percentage
1.	Class participation	Individual	1-4	10%
2.	Tutorial presentation	Individual	1-4	15%
3.	Written assignment (response article)	Individual	1-4	15%
4.	a. Presentation (introduce a writing system) b. Submission of written text (design a guidebook)	Group	4-5	a. 20% b. 15%
5.	Written test	Individual	1-4	25%

Required/Essential Readings

Because of the scope of the course and the nature of the assignments, there are no specific required readings. Depending on the course units and assignments, students will be asked to consult the sources listed below.

Recommended/Supplementary Readings

- Deumert, Ana (2014). *Sociolinguistics and Mobile Communication*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Giannoulis, G. and Wilde, Lukas R. A. (Eds.) (2020). *Emoticons, Kaomoji, and Emoji: The Transformation of Communication in the Digital Age*. New York: Routledge.
- Harris, Roy (2000). *Rethinking Writing*. London: Athlone.
- Hutton, Chris (2006). Writing and speech in Western views of the Chinese language. In Q. S. Tong & D. Kerr (Eds.), *Critical Zone 2: A Forum of Chinese and Western knowledge*, pp. 83–105. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Kress, Gunter (2010). *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication*. London: Routledge.
- Kress, Gunter and Van Leeuwen, Theo (2001). *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication*. London: Arnold.
- Lee, Tong King (2015). Translanguaging and visibility: Translingual practices in literary art. *Applied Linguistics Review* 6(4): 441-65. DOI: 10.1515/applirev-2015-0022.
- Li, Wei and Zhu, Hua (2019). Transcribing: Playful subversion with Chinese characters. *International Journal of Multilingualism* 16(2): 145–161.
- Lillis, Teresa (2013). *The Sociolinguistics of Writing*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Shohamy, Elana, Ben-Rafael, Eliezer and Barni, Monica (Eds.) (2010). *Linguistic Landscape in The City*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Thurlow, Crispin (2021). When globalese meets localese: transformational tactics in the typographic landscape – a Bernese case study. *Social Semiotics* 31(1): 88–107, DOI: 10.1080/10350330.2020.1810544
- Thurlow, Crispin, Dürscheid, Christa and Diémoz, Federica (Eds.) (2020). *Visualizing Digital Discourse: Interactional, Institutional and Ideological Perspectives*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Zhou, Feifei (2020) Typographic landscape, indexicality and Chinese writing: a case study of place-making practices in transitional China. *Social Semiotics*. DOI:10.1080/10350330.2020.1810541

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 course learning outcomes.
- (2) Students shall 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. In particular, plagiarism, being a kind of dishonest practice, is “the presentation of another person’s work without proper acknowledgement of the source, including exact phrases, or summarised ideas, or even footnotes/citations, whether protected by copyright or not, as the student’s own work”. 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/>.