

B.A. Honours in Contemporary English Studies

Course Title	: Picturing Language: Literary Studies in Ekphrasis
Course Code	: ENG3007
Recommended Study Year	: 3 rd or 4 th Year
No. of Credits/Semester	: 3
Mode of Tuition	: Lecture-tutorial mode
Teaching Hours	: 3 hours per week
Category	: Discipline Elective
Prerequisite(s)	: Nil
Co-requisite(s)	: Nil
Exclusion(s)	: Nil
Exemption Requirement(s)	: Nil

Brief Course Description

This course takes a historical, analytical, and creative approach to the partnership of words and images. Throughout the term, we will explore the ongoing kinship and tension between the sister arts through the role of paintings and portraits in literary texts across periods and genres. By studying the presence of visual artifacts in poetry and prose, as well as in new media, we will come to understand how they are more than mere descriptions of works of visual art; they also function as expressions of identity and class, as sexually charged and politicized acts, and as evocations of time, memory, and mortality. Moving from epic poetry to modernism to the contemporary novel to digital technologies, we will arrive at a deeper recognition of the power of ekphrasis in literary representation, material and virtual. In the process, we will also revisit the provenance and evolving usage of the term “ekphrasis” by artists and scholars. In cases where the images being written about actually exist, we will consider the original alongside the text to note differences and similarities in the translation from one medium to the other. The course will also give you the opportunity to create your own works of ekphrasis in order to demonstrate your knowledge.

Aims

This course aims to:

1. Enhance your awareness of the partnership of and tensions between words and images in literary texts across historical periods and genres;
2. Introduce you to the multilayered meanings and roles of paintings and portraits in literature through case studies drawn from poetry and prose ranging from the epic to the contemporary novel to digital media;
3. Analyze the abovementioned through a range of collaborative activities targeting the development of critical and creative thinking skills;
4. Enable you to apply your knowledge in final projects that ask you to create your own works of ekphrasis, accompanied by critical commentaries.

Learning Outcomes

As a result of taking this course, you will be able to:

1. Analyze the formal and thematic features of literary works of ekphrasis, with attention to their historical, social, and cultural context;
2. Apply knowledge in assignments that provide original arguments about how ekphrastic works contribute to or complicate our understanding of identity, society, and media;
3. Develop critical and creative abilities by collaborating with peers;
4. Identify the different possibilities and perspectives that shape ekphrastic narratives and their interpretation.

Indicative Content

This course will be organized under the main theme of ekphrastic representation and will be divided into three units covering ekphrasis in poetry, prose, and new media, respectively. You will be introduced to the history of ekphrasis through concepts and definitions taken from literature, philosophy, art history, and media theory to help you grasp the changing usage of the term from ancient to modern times, from a rhetorical tool to a form of verbal mimesis. Throughout the semester, we will examine a range of case studies across times, contexts, and media in order to understand ekphrasis as a dynamic, nuanced practice that continues to evolve and elicit debate amongst artists and scholars alike.

The course will be structured as follows:

1. What is Ekphrasis? Introduction to relevant concepts and definitions, ancient to modern;
2. Ekphrasis and Poetry: this unit will include selected case studies from epic, modern, and contemporary poetry;
3. Ekphrasis and Prose: this unit will include selections from classic prose texts and novels;
4. Ekphrasis and New Media: this unit will include an introduction to ekphrasis and ways of seeing in the digital age, with particular attention to genre, performance, and reader response in the face of participatory and hybrid media.

In all three units, we will attend to how ekphrasis not only builds in tensions between words and images as distinct modes of representation, but also how it provides vital social and cultural commentary throughout history on issues including identity, class, gender, the role of the artist, memory, and impermanence.

Teaching Method

We will use a range of approaches to explore our sources in this course, which will consist of a combination of mini-lectures, group and class discussion, and other participatory activities, including collaborative online assignments and presentations. This multifaceted approach will ensure that ILOs 1 and 3-4 are achieved. Alongside lectures, the primary teaching mode will be immersive and interactive, requiring the analysis, comparison, and production of ekphrastic texts with particular attention to history, context, and genre. The adoption of such a teaching mode, which builds in the aforementioned ILOs, will in turn lead students to apply their knowledge in assignments that make original arguments about ekphrastic representation, thereby fulfilling ILO 2.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes will be measured through continuous assessment. Students' progress will be measured via their participation during lectures and tutorials, group presentations, essays, and final projects.

No.	Assessment Method	Learning Outcome
1	Participation	1-4
2	Essay	1-2; 4
3	Presentation	1-4
4	Final Project	1-2; 4

Assessment

No.	Assessment Method	Type	Percentage
1.	Participation. Requirement: contribute to lectures and tutorials via class discussion and completion of individual and collaborative activities	Individual	15%
2.	Essay. Requirement: close read an ekphrastic case study from our syllabus	Individual	25%
3.	Presentation. Requirement: in your assigned groups, conduct an oral comparative analysis of two works of ekphrasis, accompanied by a poster or PowerPoint	Group	25%
4.	Final Project. Requirement: create your own work of ekphrasis, accompanied by a critical commentary	Individual	35%

Required Readings

- Auden, W.H. "Musée des Beaux Arts" and "The Shield of Achilles." *W.H. Auden: Collected Poems*, ed. Edward Mendelson. Vintage, 1991.
- Browning, Robert. "My Last Duchess." *Robert Browning: The Major Works*, ed. Adam Roberts. Oxford World's Classics, 2009.
- Byatt, A.S. *The Matisse Stories*. Vintage, 2009 [Selections].
- Clark, Tiana. "BBHMM: After watching the music video." *The Journal* 41.1 (Winter 2016-17). Web.
- Coverley, M.D. *Accounts of the Glass Sky*. Electronic Literature Collection (2002). Web.
- Donne, John. "Elegy V: His Picture." *The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Donne*, ed. Charles M. Coffin. Modern Library, 2001.
- Falco, Edward, Mary Pinto, and Will Stauffer-Norris. "Chemical Landscapes Digital Tales." Electronic Literature Collection (2006). Web.
- Frayn, Michael. *Headlong: A Novel*. Picador, 2000.
- Homer. *Iliad*, trans. Robert Fagles. Penguin Classics, 1998 [Book 18].
- Keats, John. "Ode on a Grecian Urn." *John Keats: The Complete Poems*, ed. John Barnard. Penguin Classics, 1977 (3rd edition).
- Larsen, Deena. "Carving in Possibilities." *frAme: Online Journal of Culture and Technology* 6 (2001). Web.
- Lawrence, Jacob. *One-Way Ticket: Jacob Lawrence's Migration Series & selected ekphrastic responses of African American poets*. MoMA, Interactive Exhibition, 2015. Web.

- Leong, Michael. "Lines of Sight: Visual Art in Asian American Poetry (The work of nine ekphrastic poets)." *The Margins*, 2015. Web.
- Marvell, Andrew. "Last Instructions to a Painter." *Andrew Marvell: The Complete Poems*, ed. Elizabeth Story Donno. Penguin Classics, 2005.
- Petit, Pascale. *What the Water Gave Me: Poems after Frida Kahlo*. Black Lawrence Press, 2011 [Selections].
- Rossetti, Christina. "In an Artist's Studio." *Christina Rossetti: The Complete Poems*, ed. Rebecca W. Crump. Penguin Classics, 2001.
- Shelley, Percy Bysshe. "On the Medusa of Leonardo da Vinci, In the Florentine Gallery." *Percy Shelley: Selected Poems and Prose*, ed. Jack Donovan. Penguin Classics, 2017.
- Szirtes, Georges. *Reel*. Bloodaxe Books Ltd., 2005 [Selections].
- Tennyson, Alfred Lord. "The Lady of Shalott." *Alfred Lord Tennyson: The Major Works*, ed. Adam Roberts. Oxford World's Classics, 2009.
- Virgil. *Aeneid*, trans. Robert Fagles. Penguin Classics, 2008 [Books 1 & 8].
- Wilde, Oscar. *Oscar Wilde: The Major Works, including The Picture of Dorian Gray*, ed. Isobel Murray. Oxford World's Classics, 2008 [Selections].
- Williams, William Carlos. "Pictures from Breughel." *Pictures from Breughel and Other Poems*. New Directions, 1967.
- Wilner, Eleanor. "Instructions to Painters by Wang Wei, Eighth Century." *Reversing the Spell: New and Selected Poems*. Copper Canyon Press, 1998.
- . "Last Self-Portrait, as Rembrandt, for Instance." *The Girl with Bees in Her Hair*. Copper Canyon Press, 2004.
- . "Vermeer's Girl: A Restoration." *Tourist in Hell*. University of Chicago Press, 2010.
- Woolf, Virginia. *To the Lighthouse*. Vintage, 2019 [Selections].
- Wordsworth, William. "Elegiac Stanzas: Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, In a Storm, Painted by Sir George Beaumont." *William Wordsworth: The Major Works (Including The Prelude)*, ed. Stephen Gill. Oxford World's Classics, 2000.
- Yoseloff, Tamar. "Portrait of a Couple Looking at a Turner Landscape." *Fetch*. Salt Publishing, 2007.
- . "Studies for a Portrait of a Young Woman, Delft." *Barnard's Star*. Enitharmon Press, 2004.
- . "The Two Fridas." *Sweetheart*. Dufour Editions, 1999.

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/>.