

B.A. (Honours) in Contemporary English Studies

Course Title	: Contemporary Literature in English: Drama and Poetry
Course Code	: ENG3205
Recommended Study Year	: 3 rd 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
Prerequisite(s)	: Nil
Co-requisite(s)	: Nil
Exclusion(s)	: Nil
Exemption Requirement(s)	: Nil

Brief Course Description

This course introduces students to drama and poetry both as literary genres for private reading and as a blueprint for performance or recitation, as for example in drama productions and competitions, speech festivals and poetry festivals. The course is divided into four equal units consisting of one stage play and several poems by two or three authors related to the theme of that particular unit, and connected to the play by common themes and social or personal issues.

In the four selected plays we will study elements of drama, as exemplified by the four set texts, illustrating especially how the plots advance character as the engine of incident, and depict incident (narrative events) as an illustration of character. It will explore the ways in which themes can be developed polyphonically, through the use of different, often competing, conflicting, as well as complementary voices within the play-text and its multiple possibilities for performance and interpretation. These complementary voices may invoke other writers whose poetic works capture or parallel the experiences of the play characters, e.g. *Wit* where poems are cited as intertextual reference in the play-text.

Aims

This course is designed to elicit from the student an appreciation of multiple perspectives - of seeing from more than one point of view, and of understanding complex themes and issues dialectically, rather than didactically. By encouraging students to “project” themselves into the characters of a play or the personas of a poem, in effect mimetically, the course encourages them to develop greater fluency and confidence in the use of oral English. Practical participation in English drama and/or poetry performances in the in-class assessment activities is conducive to better understanding and appreciation of meanings and meaningfulness in dramatic and poetic texts, not only as literary texts but also, importantly, as performance.

The students have the opportunity to: 1) develop an appreciation of drama and poetry as a moral and aesthetic value; 2) enhance basic skills in dramatic and poetic analysis and appreciation; 3) enhance their ability to write and speak more effectively in English through work-shopping, performance-presentation and written and spoken communication; 4)

complete a performance project plan/design on drama and poetry, working collaboratively to develop their creative and critical abilities.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course students will be expected to have:

1. Created a live performance project that demonstrates an understanding of the performative aspects of poetry and drama and sample it in a workshop context;
2. Described and justified their performative choices with a reflective commentary that demonstrates an understanding of other factors;
3. Demonstrated the ability to apply understanding and analysis through presentation, performance, creative work and critical written commentary;
4. Evaluated and reflected on knowledge and skill acquired and argued effectively in writing on their theoretical implications and practical applications.

Learning outcomes will be measured by means of the continuous assessment tasks as well as the exam essay and text commentary.

Indicative Contents

Texts will be selected around a particular theme or themes, and will focus on particular authors or groups of dramatists and poets who share the same concerns. The relationship between Modern and Contemporary Drama and Poetry will be explored.

Themes and Set Texts

Unit One - Feminist drama and poetry: Timberlake Wertenbaker's *The Ash Girl* plus various feminist poets including Adrienne Rich, Sylvia Plath, Liz Lochhead, Carol-Ann Duffy, etc.

Unit Two - China and its Anglo-American literature: David Henry Hwang's *Chinglish* plus various poets writing in English such as poems by Xu Zimou, Marilyn Chin, Agnes Lam and Vikram Seth's *Three Chinese Poets*, etc.

Unit Three - Education, wit and self-knowledge in poetry and drama: Margaret Edson's *Wit* exploring the poems by John Donne poems referenced in the play

Unit Four - Drama as popular entertainment and comic parody in *The Play that Goes Wrong*; plus various contemporary humorist poets from *The Faber Book of Humorous Verse* (ed. Wendy Cope), including Ezra Pound, Stevie Smith, Sophie Hannah,

NOTE: Movie adaptations of some of the drama texts (e.g. *Wit*) are available as DVDs and the latter film directed by Mike Nicholls is accessible online on YouTube. Extracts will be shown from these texts for teaching purposes, but it is important to note that there are often **significant differences** between original play-scripts and movie adaptation versions. There is no substitute for having a copy of the play-text itself.

Teaching Method

The teaching modes will include lecture, discussion, student presentation/ performance and seminars, listening and viewing activities and critical feedback. In addition to large class lectures which aim at providing background information about writers and texts, small group tutorials will be conducted for critical feedback from students. Only through such a constant interplay of critical and hermeneutic activities can we tackle the complex problems of literary meaning and value and explore the relationship between text and performance.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

Students' progress towards the learning outcomes outlined above will be assessed by continuous and summative assessments on the students' engagement with the seminars, tutorial discussions, readings, presentations, and written assignments. Learning outcomes will be measured holistically by means of the 3 continuous assessment tasks as well as the exam essay and text commentary.

Learning Outcome	Assessment Method				
	Performance extract and commentary	Seminar-workshop	In-Class Contribution	Drama and speech festival proposal	Final Exam
Created a live performance project that demonstrates an understanding of the performative aspects of poetry and drama and sample it in a workshop context;	X	X			
Described and justified their performative choices with a reflective commentary that demonstrates an understanding of other factors;	X	X			
Demonstrated the ability to apply understanding and analysis through presentation, performance, creative work and critical written commentary;		X	X	X	X
Evaluated and reflected on knowledge and skill acquired and argued effectively in writing on their theoretical implications and practical applications.				X	X

Assessment

Continuous assessment: 65%		
1	Performance extract and commentary: Group Oral Assessments	15%
2	Text-related drama and poetry seminar-workshop for classmates	15%
3	In-class contribution and engagement with course content	10%
4	Drama and speech festival proposal and research on a choice of ONE drama text and ONE poetry text. (Note: the term paper (Ass. 3) will be approximately 2,400 words in length and 5% be allocated to the draft version of the paper)	25%
Final examination		
to course texts and theoretical perspectives		35%

Recommended Texts

Bennett, S. *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception*. Routledge, 1997.
Cope, W. *The Funny Side. 101 Humorous Poems*. Faber and faber, 1998.
Culpeper, J. *Language and Characterisation: People in Plays and Other Texts*, Pearson Educational, 2001.
Hall, P. *The Necessary Theatre*. Nick Hern Books, 1999.
The Norton Anthology of Literature. Ed/ Kelly J. Mays, 11th or 12th shorter edition Pickering. K. *Studying Modern Drama*. Palgrave Study Guide, Macmillan, 2003

Required Texts

Drama:

Timberlake Wertenbaker: *The Ash Girl* (2001)

Margaret Edson: *Wit* (1994)

David Henry Hwang: *Chinglish* (2011)

Henry Lewis, Jonathan Sayer, Henry Shields: *The Play that Goes Wrong* (2013)

Note: The second drama text, *The Ash Girl* is available as a pdf copy and will be sent to you for reference. It will also be posted on Moodle.

Poetry:

The Norton Anthology or Poetry Foundation. Note: poems will also be included in the course handouts.

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/>.