B.A. (Honours) in Contemporary English Studies

Course Title : Cross-cultural Study of Literature
Course Code : ENG3375
Recommended Study Year : 3rd & 4th Year for 4-year System
                        : 2nd & 3rd Year for 3-year System
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

Investigating texts from two cultural traditions, this course introduces students to the academic field of cross-cultural research. Readings will be selected from prose narrative, drama, and poetry of the Western and Chinese canons with a view to better understanding literature as a “universal” category of human civilization. The texts selected are organized around either a thematic topic such as romantic love, war and peace, relationship between humans and nature or a generic “constant” such as satire, allegory, and fantasy.

Aims

1. To introduce students to some key texts of the Western and Chinese traditions;
2. To develop an understanding of the genre in which each work was written;
3. To explore the commonalities and differences between genres in different cultural traditions;
4. To gain some appreciation for meaningful comparisons;
5. To enhance the understanding of each text (and the tradition from which it emerges) by contrasting it with a different, yet homologous text;
6. To enhance students’ appreciation for literatures in English and in Chinese;
7. To heighten the sensitivity to language by studying the inadequacy of translations (all the texts will be read either in the English original or in English translations of the Chinese original): Chinese originals will be studied whenever possible and appropriate.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will
1. become familiar with the chosen texts from both the Chinese and Western literary
2. understand the differences between literary genres in which the chosen texts occur;
3. possess the ability to conduct practical criticism over a wide range of literary types;
4. be able to see similarities as well as differences between Chinese and Western literary traditions;
5. be able to make meaningful cross-cultural comparisons in international and domestic communications.

Indicative Content

Drama:  
*Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare;  
*The Romance of the Western Chamber* by Wang Shifu  
(topic: love)

Poetry:  
a) selected poems by William Wordsworth  
b) selected poems by Wang Wei  
(topic: nature and landscape)

Narrative:  
a) *Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka  
b) *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* by Pu Songling  
(topic: fantasy literature)

Other Possibilities include the following “clusters”

Drama:  
*Our Town* by Thornton Wilder  
*Teahouse* by Lao She  
(topic: local color)

Poetry:  
a) Shakespeare’s sonnets  
b) Lyrics of Li Qingzhao  
(topic: love poems)

Narrative:  
*Dream of the Red Chamber* by Cao Xueqing  
*Pilgrim’s Progress* by John Bunyan  
(topic: allegory)

Teaching Method

This course consists of three interactive components: lectures, student presentations, and group discussions. During the lectures, the instructor will provide an overview of each pair of texts to be explored, not only outlining the major features of the texts, but also alerting students to the opportunities of discovery afforded by the comparison. Students will be required 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. In terms of percentage, the final grade for this course will consist of the following two parts:

Assessment

1. Continuous Assessment: 60%

   **Assessment Task #1:** Write a brief essay to identify similarities, differences and connections in terms of narrative mode between the selected texts covered in Unit One (24%).

   **Assessment Task #2:** Write a brief essay to compare and contrast the cultural and historical factors pertaining to the texts covered in Unit Two (24%).

   **Assessment Task #3:** Give a group presentation on assigned texts (12%). 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.

2. Final test: 40%

   **Assessment Task #4 – Final Test**

   1) Read a Chinese poem alongside a Western poem on the same subject matter and comment on their similarities and differences. (20%)

   2) Read the given excerpts and comment on their thematic or stylistic significance to the respective plays from which they are taken. (20%)

Alignment of Learning Outcomes and Assessment Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Assessment Tasks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LO1 (become familiar with the chosen texts from both the Chinese and Western literary traditions)</td>
<td>AT1, AT2, AT3, AT4</td>
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<tr>
<td>LO2 (become comfortable with the theoretical concepts that can facilitate a structured understanding of literature)</td>
<td>AT1, AT2, AT3, AT4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LO3 (understand the differences between literary genres in which the chosen texts occur)</td>
<td>AT1, AT2, AT3, AT4</td>
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<td>LO4 (possess the ability to conduct practical criticism over a wide range of literary types)</td>
<td>AT1, AT2, AT3, AT4</td>
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<td>LO5 (be able to see similarities as well as differences between Chinese and Western literary traditions)</td>
<td>AT1, AT2, AT3, AT4</td>
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<tr>
<td>LO6 (be able to make meaningful cross-cultural comparisons in)</td>
<td>AT1, AT2, AT3, AT4</td>
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Required Readings:


Complementary Readings: