

Lingnan University
Department of Philosophy

Course Title	: Philosophy and Literature
Course Code	: PHI3264
Recommended Study Year	: 3 rd Year
No. of Credits/Term	: 3
Mode of Tuition	: Sectional approach
Class Contact Hours	: 3 hours Lecture/week
Category in Major Programme	: Programme Elective – Aesthetics Profile
Prerequisite(s)	: N/A
Co-requisite(s)	: N/A
Exclusion(s)	: N/A
Exemption Requirement(s)	: N/A

Brief Course Description

This course will deal with the central questions concerning the nature and function of literature, the way in which it is created, appreciated, and evaluated. Among the topics to be discussed will be the relationships between the literary work, the author, and the reader. Problems in the philosophy of literature will lead to a discussion of the relationship between philosophy *and* literature, i.e. the relationship between philosophical themes and literary themes, between moral philosophy (ethics) and literature, between the constraints placed on literary discourse and other types of discourse, among them philosophical discourse.

Aims

The aims of the course are fourfold: to make the students acquainted with the key concepts and the main themes and arguments in philosophy and literature; to help students reflect on the way in which they read and appreciate literature; to give the students some basis for passing considered judgements on a literary work of art; and to encourage students to reflect on the value of literature.

Learning Outcomes

This course is designed to enhance basic intellectual skills as well as to promote an enhanced understanding of a number of philosophical issues raised by, and expressed in literature. Completion of the course should grant students the ability to:

1. Respond critically to the philosophical dimensions of works of literature
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the basic issues involved in philosophical reflection on literature
3. Assess claims made about the philosophical, and in particular, ethical importance of literary works

Engagement with this course also enhances more general expressive and communicative skills..

Indicative Content

1. What is literature?
 - a. The tradition of literature
 - b. Definitions of literature
 - c. The concept of a literary work
 - d. The notion of a literary practice
2. Literature and its near relations
 - a. Literature and fiction
 - b. Narrative and literature
3. The appreciation of literature

- a. The notion of reading a literary work
- b. Understanding, interpretation and appreciation
- 4. The author and his work
 - a. The death of the author
 - b. Authorial intention and interpretation
 - c. Theories of authorial intention
- 5. Literature and emotion
 - a. Romantic theories of literature
 - b. Real emotions and fictional emotions
 - c. 'How can we be moved by the fate of Anna Karenina?'
- 6. Literature, knowledge and truth
 - a. Constraints on literary discourse
 - b. The cognitive status of a literary work
- 7. Literature and morality
 - a. Literature and moralism
 - b. Literature as a source of moral insight
 - c. Literature and moral philosophy
- 8. Literature, criticism, and philosophy
 - a. The ancient quarrel between literature and philosophy
 - b. Criticism and philosophy
 - c. Philosophy of criticism
 - d. The relationship between literature and philosophy

Teaching Method

The course will be taught partly as lectures, partly as a seminar with an introduction and discussions.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

Student's successful engagement with the lectures and readings, and corresponding progress towards the learning outcomes outlined above, will be measured by means of mid-term and final examinations comprising both short-answer and more substantive, reflective essay questions (to assess LO 2, 3). These examinations will determine whether students have engaged successfully with the required readings for the course and with content presented in the lectures and tutorials. Students' knowledge of key positions, distinctions, arguments, and relevant facts will be tested. The examination questions will assess the ability to draw the course materials together, the ability to articulate and organize ideas in written form, as well as the ability to synthesize ideas and form an individual opinion on important questions that have been the subject of extensive debate in the literature. In addition, students are expected to participate in discussions in class (to assess LO 1, 2, 3).

Assessment

10% Participation

40% Mid-term Examination

50% Final Examination

Required Readings

A selection of articles and chapters on various topics in the philosophy of literature. Short literary works may also be assigned as required reading.

Supplementary Readings

Beardsley, Monroe C. *Aesthetics. Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*, 2nd ed., Indianapolis:

- Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1981.
- Currie, Gregory. *The Nature of Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Davies, David. *Aesthetics and Literature*. London: Continuum, 2007.
- Davies, David, and Carl Matheson, eds. *Contemporary Readings in the Philosophy of Literature*. Peterborough: Broadview, 2008.
- Feagin, Susan. *Reading with Feeling. The Aesthetics of Appreciation*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996.
- Freadman, Richard and Seumas Miller. *Re-Thinking Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Gaut, Berys. *Art, Emotion, and Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Iseminger, Gary, ed. *Intention and Interpretation*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992.
- Lamarque, Peter. *Fictional Points of View*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996.
- Lamarque, Peter, and Stein Haugom Olsen. *Truth, Fiction and Literature. A Philosophical Perspective*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1994.
- Livingston, Paisley. *Art and Intention*. Oxford: Clarendon, 2005.
- Patai, Daphne and Will H. Corral, eds. *Theory's Empire*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.
- Pettersson, Anders. *Verbal Art: A Philosophy of Literature and Literary Experience*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000.
- Stecker, Robert. *Interpretation and Construction*. Malden: Blackwell, 2003.

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/>