I. COURSE AIMS

This course exposes students to the human experience of literary texts by drawing on the central tenet of the Common Core Curriculum: the commonality of human experiences. The course will focus on how literary texts have mirrored our own lives and cultures and how they accentuate our understanding of universal issues such as relationships, scientific development, human conflict as well as our own moral and ethical well-being.

Students will be exposed to different literary texts organized under four universal themes: love and romance, family and culture, war and conflict, and man’s relationship with the world. Coherence across these themes is achieved by one overarching theme of ‘relationships’ starting with love and tension in personal and family relationships. From the family, the focus shifts to a wider context and examines conflict between nations (war poems, protest songs) before focusing on man’s responsibility to himself and fellow man in the wider global context (technology, the environment etc.). Themes and issues from the core texts will be developed through lectures and tutorials and aim to guide students from a personal, specific view of their world towards a more general, holistic perspective.

Hong Kong is a modern, forward thinking metropolis but it is also characterized by deeply rooted cultural values and the chosen texts provide a trigger for students to discuss the themes that they contain. Secondly, they will engage students in critical thinking by enabling them to consider the relevance of the texts to their own world. Literary texts open readers up to human experience, both lived and imagined. Examining literary texts by means of comparing their original historical and sociocultural contexts with our own contemporary context enables us to learn much more about the universal themes of a text that are not always intended by the author. Through the course it is also hoped that students will recognize that literary texts can both help them learn about themselves and their world and can be a source of long term enjoyment. It has been widely reported that students in Hong Kong rarely read for pleasure and this course exploits literary texts as a springboard for enabling students to share experiences, make connections, form opinions, and develop linguistic and cultural awareness as well as promoting a long term reading habit.

The course also builds on students’ previous experiences with literature provided by the NSS (New Senior Secondary) English curriculum which advocates the incorporation of authentic materials such as songs, poems, short stories, drama and film in the compulsory subject of English Language.
II. COURSE ASSESSMENT

100% coursework

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<tr>
<th>Assessment Tasks</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reflective literary Journal</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tutorial Group Presentation</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>End of course essay</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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**Reflective literary Journal**: Students are required to submit a reflective journal (about 20 pages in length) at the end of the course (Date TBC). Details of this journal assignment will be provided during the first lecture and tutorial, and will be available on the course website. The purpose of the journal is to provide students with an opportunity to explore more deeply some of the issues and themes discussed in lectures, tutorial discussions and reading assignments and relate them directly to their own everyday experiences. Students will be encouraged to make their own connections between some of the course themes and their own experiences and observations of the world around them. Through this journal students will also be able to relate their own experiences to other texts that they have come across during the course. These may include newspaper articles, TV programmes, films, stories, images, online blogs as well as other novels.

**Tutorial Group Presentation**: Students will be required to give one group presentation (3-4 students) for 20 minutes during the final tutorial of the course. Topics for these presentations will be negotiated with course instructors and tutors during tutorials. Students will be encouraged to employ multi-media in their presentations and their work will receive feedback from peers as well as course instructors.

Success in these presentations will depend greatly on students’ participation in all prior tutorials because students will need to be familiar with the themes, issues and concepts discussed in tutorials prior to the final one.

**End of course essay**: Students are required to write an essay of approximately 2000-3000 words on one or more of the four course themes. Students will have the opportunity to choose from a list of possible essay topics. These essay topics will be discussed in lectures and tutorials.

**Academic Conduct:**

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and at HKU, it is a disciplinary offence. Any student who commits an offence of this nature will be subject to disciplinary action. Academic dishonesty includes the following: (1) plagiarism, (2) fabricating and falsifying information, and (3), knowingly assisting other students to violate any provision of the Code of Academic Integrity. All students should refer to the University handbook outlining what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it. Please consult your tutor and/or instructors if you have any questions about these matters.
III. COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

This common core course enables students to:

- understand human relationships and the social fabric of human communities;
- to engage in critical, interpretive and analytical exploration of human qualities and experiences; and
- to appreciate the ways in which humans express their experiences through literature and arts

In particular, the course has the following learning outcomes:

1. to demonstrate and articulate appreciation and critical understanding of the complex relationship between literary texts and human experience;
2. to apply and use relevant information from the course themes to make personal responses to texts through writing and discussion tasks on the course;
3. to demonstrate critical thinking and literacy skills when analyzing text and film interpretations of novels;
4. to describe and explain how literary texts and film texts reflect, shape and influence historical perspectives and cultural norms; and,
5. to display an appreciation of the contribution of literary texts to our everyday world in the ways they reflect on our own behaviour, experience and human development.

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<tr>
<th>Course Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Alignment with HKU Learning Outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. to demonstrate and articulate appreciation and critical understanding of the complex relationship between literary texts and human experience</td>
<td>aim 1.4: intellectual curiosity and enthusiasm for learning aim 5.1: to communicate effectively</td>
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<td>2. to apply and use relevant information from the course themes to make personal responses to texts through writing and discussion tasks on the course</td>
<td>aim 1.1: in depth knowledge aim 1.2: intellectual rigor and academic integrity aim 4.1: heighten awareness of own culture and other cultures aim 5.1: to communicate effectively</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. to demonstrate critical thinking and literacy skills when analyzing text and film interpretations of novels</td>
<td>aim 1.1: in depth knowledge aim 1.2: intellectual rigor and academic integrity aim 2.1: respond positively to unanticipated solutions and problems</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. to describe and explain how literary texts and film texts reflect, shape and influence historical perspectives and cultural norms</td>
<td>aim 1.1: in depth knowledge aim 1.2: intellectual rigor and academic integrity aim 4.1: heighten awareness of own culture and other cultures</td>
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<td>5. to display an appreciation of the contribution of literary texts to our everyday world in the ways they reflect on our own behaviour, experience and human development.</td>
<td>aim 1.2: intellectual rigor and academic integrity aim 3.3: respect individual differences and preferences aim 4.1: heighten awareness of own culture and other cultures aim 5.1: to communicate effectively</td>
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IV. STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE

The course is based on a set number of novels (and novel extracts) some of which are temporally and culturally specific. However, the themes that they contain remain universal.

(a) Love & Relationships

In *Pride and Prejudice*, for example, Jane Austen provides an astute commentary on intellectual and cultural aspects of her time (18th and 19th century Britain) but the aspects she details in this novel are still prevalent today here in Hong Kong and elsewhere. These include the reasons why relationships succeed and fail, the pressures imposed by social norms to marry, family conflict, the role of money in marriage, and the timeless question of finding one’s soul mate or the ‘perfect life partner.’ Austen’s novel was repackaged and rejuvenated in Helen Fielding’s contemporary *Bridget Jones’s Diary* showing that texts and contexts may change but the themes and ideas are constant for all of us.

(b) Family & Culture

Amy Tan’s *Joy Luck Club* tackles the modern issue of a changing world and how individual identity, family cohesion and cultural values are challenged and shaped by migration and cultural conflicts. It is divided into sixteen stories in which four Chinese migrant mothers and their American born daughters explore their relationship with each other. The text, together with short poems by Philip Larkin and Rudyard Kipling and extracts from the *Tiger mother* by Amy Chu will be used to focus on the themes of cultural identity and family relationships and conflicts. While *Joy Luck Club* highlights some of the conflicts that may occur within the family between different generations with different cultural values, it also illustrates the importance of the cultural inheritance that is passed from one generation to another and this will also be explored in this section of the course.

(c) The Emotions of Conflict

In the ‘Emotions of Conflict’ section of the course, we will think about why war is a phenomenon as old as mankind, the reasons why war is waged and the impact of war on soldiers and civilian populations. How can killing another human being be justified? This is a question that will be considered, as well as exploring and analysing how films and literature reflect and also shape public attitudes to war. We will look at extracts from a variety of texts, including Homer’s *Iliad*, Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*, Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front*, poems by Rupert Brooke, Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen.

(d) Man’s relationship with the world

Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* main theme of man playing God is almost 200 years old but in today’s modern world the word ‘Frankenstein’ is a part of our lexicon and is synonymous with morally debatable scientific change as in Frankenfood, Frankenfish, etc. Moral, religious and ethical debates still rage over technological advances in science and about what they mean on a personal and global level.