

City University of Hong Kong
Course Syllabus

offered by Department of English
with effect from Semester A 2018/19

Part I Course Overview

Course Title: The Art of Life Narrative

Course Code: EN2721

Course Duration: One semester

Credit Units: 3

Level: B2

Proposed Area: Arts and Humanities
(for GE courses only) Study of Societies, Social and Business Organisations
 Science and Technology

Medium of Instruction: English

Medium of Assessment: English

Prerequisites: None
(Course Code and Title)

Precursors: None
(Course Code and Title)

Equivalent Courses: None
(Course Code and Title)

Exclusive Courses: GE2407 Reading Lives, Writing Selves: Autobiography and Culture
(Course Code and Title)

Part II Course Details

1. Abstract

‘The Art of Life Narrative’ is an English course that aims to introduce students to the theory and practice of life narrative in diverse forms. Combining a thematic focus on questions such as identity, gender, history and language with discussion of forms, students will read a variety of texts, such as autobiographical essays, memoir, diary, graphic narrative and documentaries, produced in different cultural and historical contexts. This course adopts a discovery-based approach and emphasizes students’ self-reflexivity and engagement with their own life when exploring, as well as composing, life narratives of the others and those of their own.

2. Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

(CILOs state what the student is expected to be able to do at the end of the course according to a given standard of performance.)

No.	CILOs [#]	Weighting* (if applicable)	Discovery-enriched curriculum related learning outcomes (please tick where appropriate)		
			A1	A2	A3
1.	Recognize formal elements—structures, narrative perspectives, style, rhetorical strategies, etc.—in life narratives and explore how they may represent issues of contemporary interest.			√	
2.	Analyze the theoretical, aesthetic, and creative aspects of life writing evidenced by the particular structures, styles, and thematic elements in each text.		√	√	√
3.	Apply critical thinking and reading skills in the interpretation of diverse life narratives, highlighting their local and global significance, and identifying connections among different traditions.		√	√	√
4.	Reflect on their own learning processes and engage with their own life experience when composing their own creative and critical work.		√	√	√
		100%			

* If weighting is assigned to CILOs, they should add up to 100%.

[#] Please specify the alignment of CILOs to the Gateway Education Programme Intended Learning outcomes (PILOs) in Section A of Annex.

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to self-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

3. Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs)

(TLAs designed to facilitate students' achievement of the CILOs.)

TLA	Brief Description	CILO No.					Hours/week (if applicable)
		1	2	3	4	5	
1.	<p>Lectures Critical introductions to essential concepts and theories open the discussions of specific texts. Students will also be asked to contribute to the discussion.</p>	√	√			√	
2.	<p>Group Life Writing Project Students will form small groups to build a webpage/blog to engage with one of the key themes of life writing—‘memory and place’. They will combine texts and images to engage with a place of their choice. They will share their group project in class.</p>	√	√	√	√	√	
3.	<p>Critical essay Students will demonstrate their understanding and application of their theoretical readings, as well as their knowledge of critical and creative concepts, by writing reasoned discussion of particular texts or issues</p>	√	√	√	√		
4.	<p>In-Class Reading and Creative Responses Students will compose a range of critical reading and creative responses throughout the course. They will deploy creative concepts, narrative techniques and critical reading skills that they acquire in classes to short writing tasks and group discussions.</p>		√		√	√	

4. Assessment Tasks/Activities (ATs)

(ATs are designed to assess how well the students achieve the CILOs.)

Assessment Tasks/Activities	CILO No.					Weighting*	Remarks	
	1	2	3	4	5			
Continuous Assessment: 100%								
In-Class Reading and Creative Responses Students will compose a range of short in-class reading and creative responses to selected texts and topics throughout the course. They are also expected to participate in in-class discussion and activities.		√		√	√		25%	Individual Work
Critical Essay (1200-1500 words) Students will write a critical essay on a topic relating to the genre of life writing. They will demonstrate their understanding and application of their theoretical readings by critically analysing one or two literary text/s.	√	√	√	√	√		40%	Individual Work
Group Life Writing Project Students will form small groups to build a webpage/blog that engages with the theme 'memory and place' in relation to the life stories of their own as well as those who dwell and/or work in the city. Students will need to share their project with the whole class upon completion.	√	√	√	√	√		35%	Group Work
Examination: 0%								
							100%	

* The weightings should add up to 100%.

5. Assessment Rubrics

(Grading of student achievements is based on student performance in assessment tasks/activities with the following rubrics.)

Assessment Task	Criterion	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B, B-)	Fair (C+, C, C-)	Marginal (D)	Failure (F)
Critical Essay	Argumentation	Thesis is clear and appropriate for the writing task. There is a sense of originality in the way the writer has answered the question. Ideas are well supported and conclusions reveal a progression of ideas	The responses contain sharp ideas that are clearly expressed, original, and thoughtfully supported.	Elements of B and D	The topic is clear but there is little originality in the way that the writer has answered the question. Ideas are not always supported. There is little sense of progression as the paper develops.	The essay appears to be off topic or only loosely related to the task. The writer may have misunderstood the question.
	Language	Exceptionally well composed. Words are used with precision and accuracy. A wide variety of sentence structures are used.	Strong control of language and a wide lexical range. Grammatical structures are varied and well constructed. Small errors may persist but the meaning is sharp and clear.	Effective and functional control. Basic ideas are communicated effectively. Errors cause minimal distraction.	There is a high density of errors, causing strain for the reader. The meaning is sometimes lost or unclear	Almost every sentence has some kind of error, which causes serious problems for the reader. The meaning is often lost or distorted.
	Engagement	Sophisticated critical reading and interpretative skills apparent.	The discussion of the primary texts is appropriate and sufficiently detailed. There is a sense of the writer critically engaging with the texts.	Elements of B and D	Some discussion of the primary texts, but mostly in general and broad terms. The selection of primary texts may not be appropriate for the task. Citation methods are not clear or inconsistently applied.	Very little if any engagement with the primary texts
	Presentation	The written assignments are extremely well presented in terms of font, layout, spacing, headings, and citation	The written assignments are well presented in terms of font, layout, spacing, headings, and citation	The written assignments are adequately presented in terms of font, layout, spacing, headings, and citation	The written assignments are poorly presented in terms of font, layout, spacing, headings, and citation	The written assignments are very poorly presented in terms of font, layout, spacing, headings, and citation

In-Class Reading and Creative Responses	Engagement and Support	Demonstrates a very detailed understanding of the course readings. Demonstrates creative and original thought; show a deep self-reflexivity and engagement with the self. Specific and accurate support	Demonstrates a good understanding of relevant texts with some specific support. Demonstrates some creative and thoughtful ideas; gives a sense of self-reflexivity and engagement with the self.	Demonstrates fairly good understanding of relevant texts, but lacking in detail. There may be some inaccuracies. The sense of self-reflexivity needs to be strengthened.	Demonstrates a superficial understanding of relevant texts. Support is not always detailed or accurate. Little attempt to engage with the self; a lack of self-reflexivity.	Demonstrates a minimal understanding of relevant texts and/or lacking in content. Failed to demonstrate any attempt to engage with one's self.
	Ideas	The main ideas of the response are sharp, creative, and compelling.	The response is coherent and contains some elements of creativity and originality.	Main ideas are mostly clear but the response may be lacking in terms of specific or original ideas.	The main ideas are not always clear and the response appears to be lacking in terms of originality or relevance.	The response appears to be off topic or ideas are generally incoherent.
Group Life Writing Project	Ideas	The main ideas are original, thoughtful and demonstrates a strong engagement with the genre of life writing.	The main ideas are thoughtful and contains elements of originality. It demonstrates an engagement with the genre of life writing.	There are some interesting ideas, though the project appears to be lacking in terms of original/thoughtful ideas. It demonstrates an attempt to engage with the genre of life writing.	The project appears to be lacking in terms of originality or relevance. It has a minimal engagement with the genre of life writing.	The project ideas are generally incoherent, or irrelevant to the chosen topic. Failed to engage with the genre of life writing.
	Engagement and Support	The key ideas of the life writing project are very well expressed and supported. Demonstrates a deep sense of self-reflexivity and engagement with the self and the others.	The key ideas of the life writing project are well-articulated and supported. Demonstrates a good sense of self-reflexivity and engagement with the self and the others.	The key ideas of the life writing project are to a large extent conveyed. Demonstrates a sense of self-reflexivity and an attempt to engage with the self and the others.	The main ideas are unclear. A weak sense of self-reflexivity and little attempt to engage with the self and the others.	Failed to convey the main ideas of the project. Failed to give any sense of self-reflexivity or engagement with the self and the others.
	Presentation	The life writing project is extremely well-presented. The chosen approach succeeds in bringing out the major features and	The life writing project is well-presented. The chosen approach to a large extent brings out the major features and ideas of the project.	The life writing project is to a large extent clearly presented. The chosen approach may not	The life writing project is not effectively presented. The chosen approach is not effective in bringing out the key ideas of the	The presentation appears to be incoherent and is in lack of consideration.

		ideas of the project.		bring out all the key features and ideas of the project.	project.	
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General Criteria for Assessment of Language Proficiency

Proficient User	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise and analyze information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations. Can create new and creative insights and texts by reflecting and thinking critically from reading and comprehending texts.
	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent User	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options. Can create new insights and texts by reflecting and thinking critically from reading and comprehending texts.
	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics, which are familiar, or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need. Can create insights and texts by reflecting and thinking critically from reading and comprehending texts.
	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Part III Other Information (more details can be provided separately in the teaching plan)

1. Keyword Syllabus

(An indication of the key topics of the course.)

Autobiography, life writing, narrative, identity, culture, history, language, memory, experience, place

2. Reading List

2.1 Compulsory Readings (**tentative)

(Compulsory readings can include books, book chapters, or journal/magazine articles. There are also collections of e-books, e-journals available from the CityU Library.)

Primary Texts	
1.	Eva Hoffman, <i>Lost in Translation</i>
2.	Orhan Pamuk, <i>Istanbul: Memories of a City</i> (selections)
3.	Spiegelman, Art, <i>MAUS Complete</i> (graphic novel)
4.	Woolf, Virginia, <i>Moments of Being: Autobiographical Writings</i> (selections)
5.	Other primary texts will be distributed by the instructor before the start of the course
Criticisms	
1.	Smith, Sidonie and Julia Watson. <i>Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives (Second Edition)</i> . Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010. (selections)
2.	Bill Roorbach. <i>Writing Life Stories</i> . Ohio: F&W Publications, 2008. (selections)

2.2 Additional Readings

(Additional references for students to learn to expand their knowledge about the subject.)

1.	Anderson, Linda. <i>Autobiography</i> . London: Routledge, 2001.
2.	Eakin, Paul John. <i>How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves</i> . Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999.
3.	Engel, Susan. <i>Context is Everything: The Nature of Memory</i> . New York: W.H. Freeman and Co., 1999.
4.	Olney, James, ed. <i>Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical</i> . Princeton: Princeton University, 1980.
5.	Gornick, Vivian. <i>The Situation and the Story: The Art of Personal Narrative</i> . New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001.
6.	Zinsser, William. <i>On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction</i> . New York: HarperCollins, 2006. (selections)