

**Department of English**  
**The Chinese University of Hong Kong**  
**ENGE2130/UGED2186: Masterpieces of Literature**

Professor: Prof. Eli Park Sorensen  
Office Location: Fung King Hey 315  
Phone: 3943 8550  
Email: [eliparks@cuhk.edu.hk](mailto:eliparks@cuhk.edu.hk)  
Office Hours: After class or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Why read literature? This course offers a broad look through literary history to understand the enduring value and diversity of literature. For each lecture, we will look at a literary masterpiece — from antiquity to the present — and address three main issues: A) the work and its historical context; B) how to read it; and C) themes that make the work relevant in contemporary society and in our everyday lives. The course is designed as an introductory survey of literary works that have had a major impact throughout the ages. Issue A) is intended to give students a sense of the work's impact in its own time; B) is designed to provide students with the conceptual tools and methodologies to understand a classic work of literature; while C) will provide students with an opportunity to make connections between their own individual concerns and those of the great characters of literature. At the end of the course, students will have encountered some of the most esteemed classics in literary history. No previous studies in literature needed to take this course. Students interested in discussing the ideas, ideals and values of classic literary texts are welcome to attend this course.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Identify salient features of literary texts from a broad range of classics (Analysis and Evaluation)
- Demonstrate knowledge of the historical developments of literature (Knowledge and Synthesis)
- Support interpretive claims about the importance, relevance and value of masterpieces of literature — in their own context and in society today (Comprehension and Application)
- Produce a well-reasoned essay (Creation and Application)

## TEXTS

Excerpts from the following works:

- Homer's *The Iliad* (ca. 760-710 BC)
- Sophocles' *Antigone* (ca. 441 BC)
- *One Thousand and One Nights* (ca. 9th century)
- Dante's *Divine Comedy* (1472)
- Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (1886)
- Kafka's *The Trial* (1915)
- Camus' *The Stranger* (1942)

## CLASS TOPICS

Epic

Drama

The Oral Tradition

Narrative Poem

The Novel

Tragedy

The Philosophical Novel

Modernism

## ASSESSMENT

A) Class preparation, participation and presentation: 30%

B) Exam: 20%

C) Essay: 50%

## GRADE DESCRIPTORS

Grade A / Excellent : Outstanding performance on ALL learning outcomes.

Demonstrates the ability to synthesize and apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would surpass the normal expectations at this level and typical of standards that may be common at higher levels of study. The 'A' grade should be reserved for truly excellent work that exceeds the level expected for the majority of students and are expected to be achieved only by a small minority

Grade A- / Very Good : Generally outstanding performance on ALMOST ALL learning outcomes. Demonstrates the ability to synthesize and apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would fully fulfill the normal expectations at this level and occasionally reaches standards that may be common at higher levels of study.

Grade B+ / Good (Plus): HIGH performance on all learning outcomes, OR HIGH performance on some learning outcomes which compensates WELL for slightly less satisfactory performance

on others, resulting in overall substantial performance. Demonstrates the ability to apply WELL the principles or skills learned in the course in a comprehensive manner that would sufficiently fulfill the normal expectations at this level WELL.

Grade B / Good: SUBSTANTIAL performance on all learning outcomes, OR SUBSTANTIAL performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for slightly less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance. Demonstrates the ability to apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a MORE COMPREHENSIVE manner that would sufficiently fulfill the normal expectations at this level.

Grade B- / Good (Minus): GOOD performance on all learning outcomes, OR GOOD performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for slightly less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance. Demonstrates the ability to apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a COMPREHENSIVE manner that would sufficiently fulfill the normal expectations at this level.

Grade C+ / Fair (Plus): VERY SATISFACTORY performance on the majority of learning outcomes. Demonstrates the ability to apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a SOMEWHAT SUSTAINED manner that would meet the basic requirement at this level.

Grade C / Fair: SATISFACTORY performance on the majority of learning outcomes. Demonstrates the ability to partially apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would meet the basic requirement at this level.

Grade C- / Fair (Minus): SOMEWHAT SATISFACTORY performance on A NUMBER OF learning outcomes. Demonstrates the ability to SOMEWHAT apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would meet the BARE basic requirement at this level.

Grade D+ / Pass (Plus): BARELY SATISFACTORY performance on a A FEW learning outcomes. Addresses the task inadequately by meeting the basic requirement at this level only in some areas while responding minimally with possibly tangential content in others.

Grade D / Pass : ALMOST BARELY SATISFACTORY performance on VERY FEW learning outcomes. Addresses the task inadequately by meeting the basic requirement at this level only in very few areas while responding very minimally with possibly tangential content in others.

Grade F / Failure : Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements. Fails to address the task and likely does not understand what the task requires. In other words, the work completely misses the point.