SYLLABUSES FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

LITERARY AND CULTURAL STUDIES

The MA in Literary and Cultural Studies (MALCS) introduces students to a wide range of theoretical, literary and filmic texts, exploring historical and contemporary issues within modernity and globalization. The curriculum consists of 7 courses and a capstone experience in the form of a dissertation or an equivalent project, and will be offered in a full-time (1-year) and part-time (2-year) mode. The maximum period of registration for full-time and part-time students is 2 academic years and 3 academic years respectively, which is subject to the approval of the Board of the Faculty on recommendation of the MALCS Programme Chairperson.

An interdisciplinary approach will be adopted in the curriculum. All our courses are largely shaped by critical and cultural theory, and look at texts, for example film and literature, through the perspectives of post-structuralism, deconstruction, psychoanalysis, feminism and Marxist and post-colonial criticism. Teaching will be in English.

The objectives of the MA in Literary and Cultural Studies are:
1. To broaden and deepen students’ knowledge of cultural theories and different approaches in comparative literature, film and cultural studies.
2. To cultivate critical thinking through engagement with the key debates in literary, film and cultural studies.
3. To encourage appreciation of diverse cultural practices and contexts within a global frame, with emphasis on but not limited to those of Hong Kong, modern Chinese, and Asian culture.
4. To develop skills in critical analysis necessary to carry out independent research in the field of literary, film, and cultural studies.
5. To provide the knowledge and enhance the skills required for advanced degrees and/or enhancement in arts, cultural writing and other creative practices.

Coursework teaching conforms to the undergraduate teaching year. For full-time students, the capstone experience must be completed by August 1 in the academic year of study and its title should be submitted for approval by March 1 of that year. For part-time students, the capstone experience must be submitted by August 1 in the second academic year of the study, and its title should be submitted for approval by March 1 of that year.

The semester courses offered by the curriculum may vary from time to time. The curriculum objectives and courses are designed to align with the five departmental strategic themes:
- Film, Visual and New Media Studies
- Literary and Cultural Theory
- Gender and Sexuality Studies
- Hong Kong and China Studies
- Urban, Postcolonial and Global Studies

For full-time students, one core course and three electives will be taken in the first semester, and three electives will be taken in the second semester of the academic year of study. For part-time students, one core course and three electives will be taken in the first year of the study and three electives in the second year. Courses are assessed by 100% coursework. Currently these courses are as follows but not all of them will be offered each year:
CORE COURSE

CLIT7005. Approaches to Literary and Cultural Studies (9 credits)

This course examines critical perspectives in the study of texts and cultures of capitalism in a global context. Approaches informed by Western Marxism, post/structuralism, postmodernism, feminism, postcolonialism, and psychoanalysis are discussed for the different paradigms and implications for literary and cultural studies. Examinations of popular artifacts that straddle between art and industry serve as the basis to interrogate the strict divisions between high/low cultures, center/periphery, and mainstream/ independent/alternative positions. Topics of discussion may include the interfusion of high and low culture, gender and cultural criticism, narrative and film adaptation, film genre and myth/ideology, creativity and resistance, the public sphere, and cultural globalization. Besides regular lectures with discussions and screenings, orientation, consultation sessions, writing workshops, independent library research and departmental seminars also form part of its learning activities.
Assessment: 100% coursework

ELECTIVE COURSES

CLIT7006. Fabrications of Identity (6 credits)

This course explores the formations of identity in literature, visual culture and theoretical discourse. It examines the politics and ethics of representing identity and difference, especially sexual difference and cultural difference in various local, national, and global settings. Drawing upon theoretical writings of feminism, deconstruction, race studies, performance theory, queer theory, and theory of simulation among others, the course engages literary and visual texts as creative and dialogic acts staging interconnected identities that demand close reading and inter-textual referencing. Topics may include: identity and hegemony; femininities and masculinities in contexts; visual pleasure and spectatorship; masquerade and performance; colonialism and hybridity; the politics of sex and race, and identities in cyberspace. Selective texts will be studied for their imaginative, innovative, and progressive staging of alternatives that speak to and counteract the given identities of monocultures and essentialisms.
Assessment: 100% coursework

CLIT7007. The Art and Politics of Narrative (6 credits)

If narrative is to do with storytelling, this course focuses on the art and politics of storytelling. What underpins the central focus of the course is the complex relation among representations of identity, ideology, history, and human agency. The course examines a variety of narratives across a range of cultures, genres, and media including poems, short stories, plays and films, and it introduces ways of reading them from theoretical, philosophical and cultural perspectives. Students will learn to read narratives within their historical and cultural context with the help of Marxism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, psychoanalysis, and feminism. They will study how narratives function to contest, challenge and transcend various forms of cultural identity constructed by nationalism, state ideology, patriarchy, orientalism, occidentalism, capitalism and urbanism. Selections of narratives may range from the realist modes to surrealism and fantasy. With the former, fundamental issues such as mimesis, reality and alienation effects, as well as the political unconscious will be tackled whereas in the latter, innovative ways of contestation are produced when imagination goes on exile.
Assessment: 100% coursework
CLIT7008. From Colonialism to Globalization (6 credits)

This course addresses the cultural, intellectual and historical effects of what is arguably the dominant story of the last several hundred years: the emergence of, resistance to and eventual transformation of the modern, global system of colonialism. By the 1930s, 85 percent of the world was at one point a colony or ex-colony; this is to say that the world, from the “local” places of the South and East to the metropoles of the West, has been un-formed and re-formed by the experience and structures of colonialism and its afterlives. This course uncovers some of this history and complexity by examining foundational texts, concepts and ongoing debates within the study of colonialism, decolonization, and what is often thought of as the “new” era of globalization or unimpeded capitalism. Readings can range from classic colonial literature to prototypical postcolonial films, but will also include some of the key statements from the leading critics of colonialism and capitalism. Key terms might include but are not limited to: nationalism, colonial discourse, hegemony, Third World, orientalism, subalternity, hybridity, imperialism, difference, sovereignty, neoliberalism.

Assessment: 100% coursework

CLIT7009. Modernity and its Paths (6 credits)

The historical and epochal term “modernity” is at once familiar and difficult to pin down. Is this an age of modernity still or postmodernity? And what does this term – or the related quality of “being modern” in some way – mean in Hong Kong, Chinese and global contexts? The elusiveness of the term suggests its critical importance, while also being the result of the range of meanings, contexts and histories attached to it. This course will examine key texts, thinkers, and debates that have theorized, illustrated or challenged the concept and periodization of “modernity.” It will necessarily involve studying related, cognate terms like modernism, “the” modern, postmodernism and modernization. While this course cannot and will not seek to cover these issues in exhaustive detail, it will nonetheless provide a critical introduction to some of the major ideas and debates underlying modernity and its critique, as well as its later, post-World War II developments. Primary texts will be theoretical but also historical, literary and/or cinematic.

Assessment: 100% coursework

CLIT7010. Questioning Sexual Difference (6 credits)

This course continues the interrogation of gender and sexual difference initiated in CLIT7006 Fabrications of Identity. Drawing on theorists who have built on Freud’s understanding of human sexuality through the Greek myth of Oedipus as well as those who have actively countered Freudian psychoanalysis, this class explores a range of perspectives that challenges our commonsense understanding of sex and gender. Topics may include the history of sexuality, sexual revolutions, sexual subcultures, alternative or “dissident” sexualities, socialism and sexuality, feminist critiques of consumerism and domesticity, postmodern bodies, the politics of sexual orientation, transvestitism and transsexuality, queer identity and desire.

Assessment: 100% coursework

CLIT7011. Hong Kong and Beyond (6 credits)

This course explores Hong Kong culture in various local, national and global contexts in comparison with cities in China and other parts of the world. Through analyzing selected socio-cultural phenomena, literary, filmic and other cultural texts and sites, we examine how the forces of modernization, nationalism, colonialism and globalization have affected the shifts in cultural and political dynamics, and have prompted the changes in the imagination and re-imagination of urban cultural politics. We may draw from theoretical approaches and critical concepts of various
disciplines and persuasions. Topics covered may include the questions of history and agency; the cultural tropes of crisis, hybridity, transition and transgression; personal, collective memories and urban affectivities; critical cultural policy and the politics of urban space; the spectacles of urban renewal, tourism, consumption and popular culture; and, everyday life politics, local cultural resistance and decolonizing alternatives.
Assessment: 100% coursework

CLIT7012. Dissertation Seminar (6 credits)
*Students who opt for dissertation-writing must take this course.*

This seminar supports students as they face the challenges of doing independent literary, film, and cultural studies scholarship as they prepare to write their dissertations. In order to help students in the initial stages of their dissertation research, this course begins with an overview of critical methods currently in use that can be applied to the analysis of a variety of cultural texts. Taking the text, textual strategies, intertextuality, and discourse as starting points, discussion will move from the definition of an object of study to practical critique within the theoretical parameters of literary and cultural studies. The course revolves around student-led presentations, workshops, debates, panel presentations, and lectures arising from issues and concerns generated by the students’ research. Students will analyze key concepts arising from their exploration of the scholarly literature on their dissertation topics, compare the strengths and weaknesses of various research methodologies, and embark on the research for their own project.
Assessment: 100% coursework

CLIT7013. Postmodernism (6 credits)

This course will explore a wide variety of phenomena characteristic of late 20th century culture. Notions such as fragmentation, irony, pastiche, playfulness, kitsch & camp, etc. will be examined. Making use of the city as guiding image, we will ask how postmodernism inflects questions of the stability of knowledge, the meaning of the subject, and the spectacle of the postmodern world. We will ask questions about the nature of global flow of goods, media, money, design, and concepts as they move between east, west, north, and south. Literature, film, theory, visual arts, architecture, music, TV shows and others will be discussed in the attempt of gaining a decently comprehensive understanding of what has been going on recently in world culture, and of how we are determined by these phenomena. The dynamics of a constantly reshaped connection between knowledge, sensation, language and the social contexts of the body will be closely examined.
Assessment: 100% coursework

CLIT7014. Film and Popular Culture (6 credits)

This course aims to examine the intricate relation between cinema and popular culture. Through the analysis of examples from the cinema of the Euro-American and Asian traditions, issues in connection with the interfusion of high and low culture, class structure and the popular arts, authorship, stars, and film genre, cultural myth and ideology, the global circulation of film, and audience and the cinematic public sphere will be discussed. With the specific emphasis on the multifaceted relation between cinema and popular culture, the course will explore how in some instances popular cinema is always in a dialectical relationship with what we might call “counter/art/independent” cinema while in other occasions, the popular and the independent cannot be easily separated.
Assessment: 100% coursework
CLIT7015.  Law, Literature and Film (6 credits)

Law, literature and film come into contact on multiple levels: novels and films about the law influence the way society understands legal institutions and processes, and the law in turn regulates cultural and artistic production. This course introduces graduate students to the burgeoning fields of ‘law and literature’ studies and ‘law and film’ studies by exploring the ways in which literary, legal, and filmic discourses intersect. We will juxtapose novels, films, trial transcripts and critical theory in order to re-examine the boundaries between the three disciplines. Texts for discussion to be chosen from works by Gustave Flaubert, Oscar Wilde, E.M. Forster, Franz Kafka, plus a selection of films by both local and overseas directors.
Assessment: 100% coursework

CLIT7016.  Contemporary Chinese Literature and Film (6 credits)

This course will examine contemporary literary and filmic texts from Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and the Chinese diaspora. Students will read representative short stories, essays, poetry, critical texts, and view selected films from the Post-Mao period to present. Texts will introduce students to major intellectual currents and literary and film movements of this period, including socialist and critical realism, modernism, postmodernism, and nativism. This course will also explore how forces of colonialism, urbanization, and globalization have drastically changed these Chinese societies. Students are expected to use literary, cultural and various interpretive theories to examine the historical changes taking place in Chinese societies over the past few decades, to understand the social problems and cultural aspirations that the Chinese have been preoccupied with, the patterns of urban life associated with various forms of consumption, and to approach those changes from both a historical and global perspective.
Assessment: 100% coursework

CLIT7017.  Utopian and Dystopian Visions in Modern Literature and Film (6 credits)

Utopia, an ideal city located in a different spatial dimension, has long haunted philosophers bent on defining optimal forms of social organization. At the same time, its counterfactual dimension made it a compelling subject for writers of fiction from the earliest years of the modern period (the Renaissance). With the advent of socioeconomic modernity and scientific progress, it seemed to many that technology held the key to solving the problems of humanity. However, it was precisely in the late 19th and early 20th century that utopian fiction began to take a turn to dystopic visions. The ideal societies of utopian thinkers, based on science, rationalization and uniformity, inspired many writers to frightening representations of a world devoid of humanity. This course will explore some of these representations, questioning the relationship between fiction, political idealism and critical deconstruction by using a selection of film, literature and visual texts. Moving beyond the thematic approach, it will also reflect on the status of fiction as “another order” of reality (Foucault’s heterotopia, Marie-Laure Ryan’s theory of possible worlds).
Assessment: 100% coursework

CLIT7018.  Realism/Surrealism (6 credits)

Through a selection of literary and visual narratives, the course explores the intricate relation between realism and surrealism in culture and the arts. The first portion deals with some fundamental issues in the debates surrounding realism: mimesis, reality and alienation effects as well as the political unconscious. The second half turns to literary and filmic genres which are normally not grouped under the rubric of realism. Focus shifts to the fairy tale, ghost story, mockumentary, quasi-realism, and science fiction film. With this variety of fantastic narratives, the course continues to reflect upon
questions of realism raised in the first module by focusing on issues related to defamiliarization, the architectural uncanny, and crisis consciousness.
Assessment: 100% coursework

CLIT7019. World Cinema (6 credits)

This course explores the meaning of “world cinema” within an increasingly complex circulation of motion pictures as part of a globalized cultural economy. A range of films from around the world serve as cultural artifacts, closely examined to tease out their aesthetic contribution to global film culture. Questions will also be raised regarding the impact of global capitalism, and the effects of cultural hegemony on “independent” national cinemas, “art” cinema, “festival” films, and the transnational cinematic aesthetic that characterizes these developments.
Assessment: 100% coursework

CLIT7020. Research Methodology (6 credits)

This course serves as an advanced study of selected traditions within the field of literary and cultural analysis. It offers an in-depth study of particular theories, authors, sub-fields, or problems of literary and cultural analysis. The on-going debates in literary and cultural theory that continue to inform, transform and question the ways we represent, analyze and engage the world we live in will be covered by this elective. Some questions we pose are: What are the limitations in our existing ways of understanding the world we live in? What is the relation between subjectivity, the imaginary, the real, and the material world? We will focus on inquiries dealing with Marxist, formalism, structuralist/post-structuralist, feminist, psychoanalytical, as well as postcolonial theories.
Assessment: 100% coursework

CLIT7999. Capstone Experience: Dissertation (15 credits)
CLIT7998. Capstone Experience: Portfolio/Individual Project (15 credits)

Students who have received B grade or above in 4 or more courses, and with the approval by the MALCS Programme Chairperson, may present a dissertation of 10,000 to 15,000 words as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the MA degree. Students who opt for dissertation writing must take the elective “CLIT7012 Dissertation Seminar”.

All students have the following options:

- To compile a portfolio of coursework for the MA curriculum. Students choosing the Portfolio option are required to revise approximately four individual papers (of 2,500 to 3,000 words each) from several different courses into a final paper of a total of 10,000 to 12,000 words with a mission statement (of 1,000 words) and/or a conclusion (of 1,000 words) on how these essays contributed to the students’ understanding of a specific issue in the area of literary and cultural studies within the context of the curriculum.
- To conduct an individual project to develop and produce an approved creative work under supervision. The student will submit a written report of around 5,000 to 8,000 words on the relationship between the project and the coursework undertaken for the MA degree.
- Students who opt for portfolio/individual project must take a regular course in lieu of CLIT7012.

Dissertation involves 360 hours of learning activities which include research, writing workshops, dissertation writing as well as regular supervision, emails and feedback on draft materials. Portfolio/Individual Project involves 300 hours of learning activities which include mini-lectures,
research, library workshop, writing workshops as well as regular supervision, emails and feedback on draft materials.

For full-time students, the capstone experience must be completed by August 1 in the academic year of study and its title should be submitted for approval by March 1 of that year.

For part-time students, the capstone experience must be completed by August 1 in the second academic year of the study and its title should be submitted for approval by March 1 of that year.

Assessment: 100% coursework