Dear Students

Thank you very much for the wonderful assignments which I marked – some of them were well researched though quite a lot were not so thorough. I however have all the hope in you that you will work extra hard in the next assignment because for you to be able to make it in the final examination with ease, you have to qualify with a high mark.

The first assignment was supposed to root or anchor you in this course so that the next step will be to apply these principles. You will realise that if you use the Study Guide alone you will not score very high, therefore I strongly urge you to please explore widely and read around on the internet and any other sources. This was the major problem I experienced, the questions were set in a clear and straightforward manner such that question interpretation was not a problem – the only problem was lack of sufficient information, so please do something about that.

The next point I wish to address is the adequacy of answers. Please note that at university level we expect you to write adequately as determined by the mark allocation – some of the answers I received were inadequate and skeletal. This is attributable to lack of information, though of course I am not saying that you must just write a lot of rubbish just to have a long essay.
You also need to write a proper essay where you are required to do so. This means that there must be an introduction, body and conclusion in each essay. Then on each paragraph please write a very clear thesis statement – the opening line must contain a distinct point, then you explain it fully, giving examples where necessary.

Coming to the questions themselves, the following were the common mistakes observed:

1. Ungrammatical and poorly constructed sentences
2. Copying and pasting information from the internet and study guide
3. Failure to acknowledge sources
4. Failure to respond to the question
5. Skeletal responses

Furthermore, if you look at this assignment closely you will realise that this assignment was meant to ground you strongly into the subject by exploring the classical thinkers – Plato and Aristotle. You must always remember that Plato and Aristotle are our classical thinkers and they lived in the 3-4th century BC. Plato was against poetry. For him, poetry corrupts the minds of children, which is why he banished poets from his ideal commonwealth (The Republic). He regarded poetry as immoral and untruthful – for Plato philosophy is superior. Whilst Aristotle, Plato’s student and critic took up the challenge of Plato and asserted the superiority of poetry over philosophy. For Aristotle, poetry gives instruction and delights.

Question 1  
(6x 5=25 marks)

a. The historical sense
- This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional.
- And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity.
• The term "tradition" can represent a "simultaneous order", by which Eliot means an historical timelessness—a fusion of past and present—while it also includes the actual living moment of a poet’s composition.
• A poet’s greatness and individuality is not determined by how he/she has brought something new to the subject or the literary form. Eliot argues that “the most individual parts of his (the poet’s) work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously."

b. Theory of mimesis
• All art is mimetic by nature; art is an imitation of life. ‘Idea’ is the ultimate reality. Art imitates idea and so it is imitation of reality. Plato gives an example of a carpenter and a chair.
• The idea of a ‘chair’ first came in the mind of the carpenter. He gave physical shape to his idea and created a chair. The painter imitated the chair of the carpenter in his picture of a chair. Thus, the painter’s chair is twice removed from reality. Art is twice removed from reality. He gives first importance to philosophy as philosophy deals with ideas, whereas poetry deals with illusion – things which are twice removed from reality.
• So to Plato, philosophy is better than poetry. This view of mimesis is pretty deflationary, for it implies that mimetic art – drama, fiction, representational painting – does not itself have an important role to play in increasing our understanding of human beings and the human world.

c. The heresy of paraphrase
• For New Criticism, a literary work is a timeless, autonomous (self-sufficient) verbal object. Readers and readings may change, but the literary text remains the same.
• New Critics believe that the meaning of a poem is constructed of words placed in a specific relationship to one another. The words are placed in a specific order and this creates a complex meaning that cannot be reproduced by any combination of words.
• This is why New Criticism asserted that the meaning of a poem could not be explained simply by paraphrasing it, or translating it into everyday language, a practice the New Critics refer to as the heresy/desecration/violation of paraphrase.
• They argue that changing a line, an image, a punctuation, a word of the poem, or even changing the order of the lines, will have a different poem.

d. Eliot’s theory of depersonalisation
• The poet must allow his poetic sensibility to be shaped and modified by the past.
His personality should not be more important than his sense of tradition.
He must forget his personal joys and sorrows, and he absorbed in acquiring a sense of tradition and expressing it in his poetry.
His emotions and passions must be depersonalised; he must be as impersonal and objective as a scientist.
The personality of the artist is not important; the important thing is his sense of tradition.
Thus, a good poem is a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written. The poet’s personality is merely a medium, having the same significance as a catalytic agent, or a receptacle in which chemical reactions take place.

e. The Aristotelian concept of plot
Plot is the “first principle,” the most important feature of tragedy. Aristotle defines plot as “the arrangement of the incidents”: i.e., not the story itself but the way the incidents are presented to the audience, the structure of the play. According to Aristotle, tragedies where the outcome depends on a tightly constructed cause-and-effect chain of actions are superior to those that depend primarily on the character and personality of the protagonist. Plots that meet this criterion will have the following qualities: The plot must be “a whole,” with a beginning, middle, and end. The plot must be “complete,” having “unity of action.” By this Aristotle means that the plot must be structurally self-contained, with the incidents bound together by internal necessity, each action leading inevitably to the next with no outside intervention, no deus ex machina. The plot must be “of a certain magnitude,” both quantitatively (length, complexity) and qualitatively (“seriousness” and universal significance). Aristotle argues that plots should not be too brief; the more incidents and themes that the playwright can bring together in an organic unity, the greater the artistic value and richness of the play. The plot may be either simple or complex, although complex is better. Simple plots have only a “change of fortune” (catastrophe). Complex plots have both “reversal of intention” (peripeteia) and “recognition” (anagnorisis) connected with the catastrophe. Both peripeteia and anagnorisis turn upon surprise. Thus, Aristotle considers plot as the chief part of the tragedy because tragedy is an imitation not of men but men in action.
You can also explain the two terms *anagnorisis and peripeteia*

- The two most important elements of the tragedy and of its plot are peripeteia and discovery (anagnorisis).

- Peripeteia signifies a change of a situation into its opposite state of fortune—in tragedy, a change from a good state of affairs to the bad.

- A discovery (anagnorisis) is a revelation of a fact previously unknown.

- The most effective tragedy, according to Aristotle, results from a plot that combines peripety and discovery in a single action.

**Question 2**  
(20 marks)

Let me point out that a number of you lost marks for (a) and (b), because they discussed the theory of mimesis and Plato’s objections to poetry instead of focusing on the FUNCTIONS of poetry. Others discussed Aristotle’s general views on poetry. Please make sure you read the question carefully and interpret it correctly before answering it.

Write a short essay in which you explain the function of poetry according to:

a. **Plato** (6)
   - When Plato examines poetry his tool is rather moral and not aesthetic
   - Poetry does not have a specific meaning, and does not have a truth, but it should be ruled to the test motives. It inspires people.
   - Poetry is the expression of someone’s feelings and thoughts.
   - A poet is a teacher.
   - Poetry helps to explain the real and unreal (the facts and opinions).

b. **Aristotle** (6)
   - The function of art is to:
     - provide aesthetic delight,
     - communicate experience,
     - express emotions and represent life
     - In other words, the poet imitates what is past or present, what is commonly believed, and what is ideal. He believes that there is a natural pleasure in imitation. This is an inborn natural instinct.
• Unlike Plato, Aristotle does not consider the poet’s imitations of life as twice removed from reality, but as revealing universal truths.
• Aristotle considers pleasure as the end function of poetry. Poetry springs from the instincts of imitation and rhythm and harmony. They are indulged in for the pleasure they give.
• Poetry is pleasing both to the poet and to the reader. Aristotle nowhere states that the function of poetry is to teach.
• Poetry makes an immediate appeal to the emotions. For example, tragedy arouses the emotions of pity and fear – pity at the undeserved suffering and fear for the worst that may befall the hero.
• According to him these emotions are aroused with a view to their purgation or catharsis. Thereby they relieve the soul of their excess. We are lifted of ourselves and emerge nobler than before.

   c. Wordsworth
   • Wordsworth says that poetry should express common human feelings and there should be no restriction in the expression of the experiences of the senses and sensibilities.
   • Poetry gives pleasure to readers by presenting the incidents and situations of their lives in a fascinating and unusual way with a colour of imagination.
   • Wordsworth establishes a relation between man and nature in his poetry. Therefore, poetry is the image of man and nature. It’s an acknowledgement of the beauty of the universe.
   • Poetry, to Wordsworth, is a powerful media of supplying knowledge and pleasure to mankind. He considers that man and nature are essentially adapted to each other.
   • Therefore, man has emotional, philosophical, moral and spiritual connection to nature.
   • The poet’s business is to describe human life in its very form and to establish a relationship between man and universe. So, Wordsworth says that poetry is the first and last of all knowledge – it is as immortal as the heart of man.

General Comments

Let me emphasise from the onset that for the majority of you there still is a lot that needs to be done, especially for those with marks in the region of 40 and 30. There is nothing that is
impossible in this course and there is also a lot of room for you to improve; what is called for is a determination and desire to do better. Otherwise for most, the assignments had mediocre marks. Only a few assignments were above expectations and these students’ scores are in the 60’s and 70’s. What is most striking about the assignments which scored low marks is that the question demands were not understood, and the answers followed no clear pattern or order and they were very skeletal. However, what was most worrying was the plagiarism from the internet. Chunks were lifted in verbatim and planted in the assignments in no specific order. The unfortunate

Conclusion

Marking your assignments was quite a pleasure. I am happy to say that I also obtained new knowledge from some of them.

The overall performance was satisfactory. To those of you who obtained good marks; let me say that as your Tutor Marker, I am very pleased when students excel like that. Bear in mind that marks are not given but awarded and where there is evidence of hard work it is rewarded handsomely.

For those of you with a mediocre average mark; I would like to urge you to work harder. Success comes with hard work.

Finally, I would like to advise all you to start preparing for the exams. Remember to read the Study Guide; make use of it exhaustively, as well as any other reading materials you can find. This will help you to prepare for the second assignment. In addition, make your own notes as you read to take note of the significant points in every set text.

Please do not hesitate to call or email us if you have any query concerning any of the course topics.

I wish you all the best in your preparations for the second assignment.

Your Tutor
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