COURSE OUTLINE Term 1 (September 2026)

Department of English

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

ENGE3360 – Special Topics in Creative Writing

Professor: **Jo LUSBY**
Office location:
Email:
Office hours:

Tutors:

Description:

This course introduces the basics of the contemporary book publishing industry. We will look at various aspects of the creation, production, and circulation of books within traditional and new media landscapes. Students will explore how a manuscript develops, from initial idea through to finished volumes. We will examine editorial practice, commissioning, copy editing, design, production, marketing, and sales. We will explore questions of what makes a book *a book*, what it means to be published, and how technology is affecting and changing one of the world's oldest industries. Through practical workshops, industry-informed seminars, and guided course reading, students will gain insights into the roles of authors, agents, editors, and publishers, as well as the commercial forces shaping today's book market. We will discuss topics including the use of AI in writing and publishing, non-traditional publishing such as webfiction and audio drama, and mainstream publishing's treatment of marginalized and under-represented groups. By the end of the semester, students will have the chance to "launch" a publishing house with a catalogue of their peers' writings.

Learning outcomes:

Upon the successful completion of this course, you will:

- gain an understanding of the contemporary book industry, its structures, the role of key stakeholders (i.e. authors, agents, editors, publishers), and the stages of manuscript development from acquisition to publication;
- be able to analyze the editorial and production processes involved in traditional publishing, including commissioning, copyediting, design, marketing and sales, and evaluate how these processes shape the final book;
- critically assess the impact of technology on publishing, including the role of AI and digital platforms, and how they are reshaping authorship, publication, and reading;
- evaluate cultural and ethical issues within publishing, including questions of representation, voice, access, and treatment of marginalized and under-represented groups in mainstream publishing
- apply practical publishing skills in a collaborative project, launching a mock publishing house.

Learning activities:

The learning activities in this course will take a variety of forms. During lectures, I will present key passages from selected academic texts, work(s) of fiction, and recent news media articles on the topic of each class. We will also build close readings together as a full class and in small groups, and you will also have opportunities to develop your own thinking in individual writing tasks. Tutorials will be interactive, offering you the chance to practice your close reading skills collaboratively with a small group of peers, and to present your insights to each other in an oral presentation. Out-of-class activities include reading and taking careful notes on assigned essays and texts in preparation for lecture and tutorial; working with other tutorial members to compose and structure your group presentation; conducting research; and developing your analysis skills in a formal essay.

Key concepts:

Topics	**Contents/fundamental concepts**
The life cycle of a book	Authorship, intellectual property, commissioning, acquisitions, editorial development, copyediting, design, production workflows, distribution, and the distinction between a manuscript and a material book. How text becomes a published object, and how value is added at each stage of the process.
The publishing ecosystem and market forces	Roles of authors, agents, scouts, editors, publishers, marketers, and sales managers; questions of gatekeeping and branding; marketing and sales strategies; readership and audience formulation; commercial risk. How economic and institutional structures shape what gets publishers and why.
Technology, innovation, and the changing book	Digitization, AI in writing and editing, platform publishing, webfiction, audio drama, and the definition of "a book", "a reader", and "an author" in a new media world.
Power, representation, and access in publishing	Diversity and inclusion, marginalization, entitlement to tell a story, cultural authority, and cultural appropriation. You will explore how publishing mediates whose voices are amplified, how markets intersect with identity, and what it means to be "published".

The following workload schedule per week may help you allocate your time this term:

Lecture	Interactive tutorial	Reading	Writing	Preparing for assignments/ examinations/ tutorial activities
In class	In class	Out of class	Out of class	Out of class
2 hrs	1 hr	2 hrs	1 hr	2 hrs
M	M	M	M	M

All elements, both in and out of class, are mandatory.

Assessment Scheme

Task nature	Description	Weight
In-class Participation	Because considerations of the modern book industry are best understood collaboratively with other interested, engaged students, this course values active and curious engagement in all class discussions and writing activities, in both lecture and tutorials.	10%
Group Presentation	Once in the semester during weeks 5-12, you'll offer a 15-20 minute group presentation in your tutorial about a question that has been subject of debate in class. A list of topics from which to choose, and further guidelines, will be provided. Your presentation will include a 2-4 page handout. This assignment will assess your ability to digest and parse the knowledge you have gained in class, developing your own insights and structuring them argumentatively for an audience of your peers.	20%
Mid-term Exam	Week 7. The mid-term exam will be open-book and open-note. It will assess your understanding of the processes, practices, and issues surrounding the book industry and your ability to apply that knowledge. Note: this exam will be device-free.	30%
Final Paper	Due in our final class meeting, you will apply what you have learned about taking a book from idea to printed reality by presenting a brand, identity, and publishing list for your own mock publishing house, in work-shop groups	40%

Course Schedule and Readings (subject to revision):

Week	Topic	Readings/Assignments Due
Weeks 1-3	The Life Cycle of a Book: From manuscript to contract	The Oxford Handbook of Publishing, by Phillips & Bhaskar (OUP, 2021) Supplementary reading TBC
Weeks 4-5	The Publishing Ecosystem and Market Forces	Inside Book Publishing, by Clark & Phillips (Routledge, 2019) Supplementary reading TBC
Week 6	Manuscript to Page	**Tutorial presentations**

Weeks 7-9	Technology, Innovation, & the Changing Book	The Publishing Business: A guide to starting out and getting on, Smith (Bloomsbury, 2018) Supplementary reading TBC
Week 7	Midterm Exam	**In-class midterm exam (open-book and open-note)**
Weeks 10-11	Power, Representation, and Access	**Tutorial presentations** Yellowface, by RF Kuang Supplementary reading TBA
Week 12	Final Paper presentation	Launch of mock publishing house

Required texts (subject to revision):

All texts will be provided via Blackboard or in-class handouts.

Clark, G & Phillips, A (2019): *Inside Book Publishing*, Routledge

Phillips, A & Bhaskar, M (2019): *The Oxford Handbook of Publishing,* OUP

Smith, K (2018): *The Publishing Business: A guide to starting out and getting on,* Bloomsbury Visual Arts

Yellowface, by RF Kuang

eLearning/Course Announcements:

We will be using Blackboard Learn as the eLearning platform in this course. Blackboard Learn will be used for a) dissemination of course materials such as readings, discussion questions, assignment prompts, and rubrics, b) supplementary class discussion, and c) course announcements.

You can access Blackboard Learn at: https://elearn.cuhk.edu.hk/

A demonstration of how to access Blackboard Learn to post and respond to announcements, download resources, and use the discussion forums will be given in the first lecture.

Feedback for evaluation

At the end of the course, students will be asked to complete Course Evaluations for both the lectures and tutorials for the course. Both your instructors and the department value this information highly, as it allows us to understand what we are doing well and how we can improve. We use your feedback to revise our teaching methods and course content. During the semester, I and the TAs welcome student feedback via direct communication (via email or in person). Midway through the term, there will also be an opportunity to provide anonymous feedback via a Surveymonkey survey.

Use of AI tools

Approach 2: Use only with prior permission

Students may use some AI tools in some learning activities and/or assessments on the following conditions:

1. The AI tools to be used are restricted and may only be used with prior direct approval from the Instructor;
2. The input contributed by the AI tools are properly acknowledged and cited; and
3. The input together with the prompts used to elicit the AI responses should be highlighted or included as appendices wherever appropriate.

In case of queries, students should seek advice from the course teacher.

Acknowledging support from AI tools

Students are required to acknowledge all functional uses of an AI tool and cite it when they paraphrase, quote, or incorporate into their own work any content (whether it is text, image, data, or other format) that was created by it.

i. An example of acknowledgement

'I acknowledge the use of (name of AI tool – e.g. ChatGPT (https://chat.openai.com/) to (specify the support, e.g. plan my essay, generate some ideas for the content, ask for examples of data collection instruments, get the dates of historical events, etc.).

ii. An example of citation:

OpenAI. (2023). *ChatGPT* (Mar 20 version). https://chat.openai.com/chat

Students are reminded that due to the rapid development of AI tools, some citation formats may be updated as necessary.

iii. An example of including texts generated by an AI tool in work:

"The following text was generated by an AI tool/language model (ChatGPT):"
[Insert the text generated by ChatGPT here.]

iv. An example of including texts generated by an AI tool and the prompts that were used to elicit the text form the AI tool:

"The following text was generated by an AI tool/language model (ChatGPT):"

v. An example of including texts generated by an AI tool and the prompts that were used to elicit the text from the AI tool:

"[The prompt], as generated by an AI language model (ChatGPT):"
[Insert the text generated by ChatGPT in response to the prompt.]

Students are reminded to learn and use the AI tools responsibly and ethically, and be aware of the limitations.

Improper/unauthorized use of AI tools in learning activities and assessments will constitute acts of academic dishonesty which will be handled in accordance with the University's *Procedures for Handling Cases of Academic Dishonesty.*

Students are reminded to clarify with the course teacher and obtain permission if necessary when in doubt.

Academic honesty and plagiarism

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/ . With each assignment, students will be required to submit a statement that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures.

Statement:
I declare that the assignment here submitted is original except for source material explicitly acknowledged. I also acknowledge that I am aware of University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and of the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations, as contained in the website
http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/

_____	_____
Signature	Date
_____	_____
Name	Student ID

_____ _____

Grade descriptors

Course 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+ / Adequate (Plus): VERY ADEQUATE 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 / Adequate: ADEQUATE 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- / Adequate (Minus): SOMEWHAT ADEQUATE 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 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.