

# *Construction of Literature Courses for English Majors in Local Teachers' Colleges in the Context of New Liberal Arts*

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**Abstract:** Local teachers' colleges and universities have increasingly exposed its limitations under the influence of traditional teaching, which has been dominating for many years and victimized Chinese students, therefore, literature course should reasonably revise the talent training program; optimize the curriculum; at the same time, it should deepen teaching management, build a course teaching design based on OBE and POA concepts and implement a dynamic and diversified course assessment and evaluation system, so that the macro talent training objectives and curriculum system and the micro classroom model and teaching evaluation are organically combined together. It provides a way to imitate and learn from the reform and innovation of literature courses, and at the same time, under the construction concept of new liberal arts, it returns to the humanistic nature of English literature courses and can greatly improves students' linguistic and humanistic cultivation, and highlights the disciplinary characteristics of English major literature courses.

## **1. Introduction**

Local higher normal colleges and universities, integral to China's higher normal education and broader higher education system, play a crucial role in determining the quality of teacher education through their management, talent cultivation, and curriculum setting. However, under the influence of traditional teaching methodologies, which prioritize a "knowledge and skills-centered" approach, these institutions have increasingly encountered limitations that fail to meet the demands of contemporary development. In response to these challenges, the concept of "New Liberal Arts" was introduced by the central government in 2018, followed by the joint launch of the "Double First-Class" initiative by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Science and Technology, and 11 other departments in 2019, to comprehensively promote the construction of new engineering, new medical sciences, new agricultural sciences, and new liberal arts disciplines. The English major, as an integral part of the New Liberal Arts, plays an irreplaceable role in cultivating students' interdisciplinary thinking, integrating Chinese and Western cultures, promoting international exchange, and narrating China's stories to the world.

The issuance of the "National Standards for the Teaching Quality of Undergraduate Foreign Language Programs" provides a solid foundation for the training of foreign language professionals and the development of curricula. Central to the construction of literature and arts programs in

teacher training institutions is the enhancement of students' comprehensive humanistic literacy and core competencies, enabling them to stand at the forefront of the times and foster integration and cross-disciplinary innovation between literature/arts and other disciplines<sup>[1]</sup>. The construction of literature courses for English majors within these institutions must address challenges by revisiting and revising their talent training plans in accordance with the New Liberal Arts framework, rationalizing course offerings to avoid unnecessary overlap of resources, and designing teaching and assessment methods that are oriented towards student output. These efforts represent a crucial and obligatory direction for the contemporary development of literature courses for English majors in the new era.

## **2. Rational Revision of Talent Cultivation Plans and Increase in Practical Elective Hours**

The National Standards have once again affirmed the humanistic essence of the English major, clearly delineating its characteristics through the core teaching contents of English language, English literature, and English culture. The spirit, literacy, and global perspective of humanism are positioned at the forefront of educational objectives, significantly increasing courses in British and American literature, cross-cultural studies, and comparative culture and literature. Such courses have returned to their pivotal role, receiving widespread attention and consensus. In alignment with these objectives, the placement of British and American literature courses within the talent cultivation plans of English majors has been revisited and revised.

Firstly, it emphasizes the pedagogical nature of local teacher training colleges by incorporating numerous education and teaching-related courses, including theories of teacher education, practical training, and extension courses; the mandatory and elective courses in teacher education practice teaching should amount to 18 credits and add to 288 hours, accounting for nearly 12% of the total teaching hours.

Secondly, it increases the practical hours for mandatory and elective professional courses, ensuring a balanced distribution between theoretical and practical hours to empower students theoretically and reinforce practical application<sup>[2]</sup>. This also involves the expansion of elective courses, incorporating a wide array of English cultural and literary subjects as electives. Literature courses comprise 35.3% of the total course hours for English major, with practical course hours constituting 41% of the literature course hours and elective courses making up 31.1% of the total English major course hours. Literature, representing the pinnacle of a nation's linguistic culture and a crucial channel for understanding a language, signifies the humanistic core of the English major. The cultivation of cultural and literary knowledge not only enhances students' interest in language learning but also fosters critical, innovative, and collaborative thinking.

Thirdly, the addition of general education and interdisciplinary courses aims to integrate Chinese and Western cultures<sup>[3]</sup>. English major curricula should embody the function of ideological and political education, achieving holistic education. English literature courses are ideally suited for conducting ideological and political education and interdisciplinary integration, starting from comparative studies of Chinese and Western cultures and cross-cultural communication to guide students in personality development, thought education, and value orientation. Accordingly, the English major curriculum includes courses such as an overview of Chinese culture, selected readings in Chinese literature, as well as cross-cultural communication, the history of Western civilization, and introductory readings of Western philosophical classics, featuring both Chinese traditional literature and world literature to dismantle the monolithic culture of literature and allow students to experience the charm of the "global literary community."

### 3. Optimizing Curriculum Structure and Establishing a Literary and Cultural Course Cluster

Curriculum setting forms the foundation of university educational construction and is crucial for enhancing teaching quality and cultivating high-quality talents. Under the demands of the New Liberal Arts paradigm, it is essential to reconsider the distinctive features of each course comprehensively and establish a literary and cultural course cluster<sup>[4]</sup>. This entails managing the relationships between courses, reorganizing overlapping content, recognizing and affirming inter-course correlations, and ensuring the completeness and extension of knowledge within the course cluster.

With the reduction of course hours at various universities, especially after the addition of pedagogical courses at teacher training institutions, the hours allocated to specialized courses, particularly literature courses, have been significantly compressed. Given this context, it becomes vital to re-integrate, reduce, and newly develop courses in connection with existing ones to avoid repetition, enhance the utilization rate of course hours, and reduce the waste of human, material, and time resources, ensuring mutual support and coherence.

The restructured course cluster progresses from basic to advanced levels, from introductory to theoretical stages, forming a three-tier ladder of interdisciplinary communication. This adjusted course sequence aligns with students' cognitive patterns and logical development, accommodating a gradual deepening of knowledge from practice to theory. The first tier includes foundational courses such as "English Reading," "Overview of English-speaking Countries," "Myths of Ancient Rome," "Introduction to Society and Culture of English-speaking Countries," and "History of Western Civilization," focusing on solidifying reading skills and understanding the basics of English-speaking countries and Western civilization, including the origins of Greek mythology. Building on this groundwork, the second tier introduces courses like "Introduction to Literature," "Selected Readings in English Literature," and "Literary Theory and Criticism," which delve into the works and appraisals to imbibe and comprehend Western culture and spirit, alongside learning how to critique literature using theoretical approaches. Subsequently, the third tier offers advanced and interdisciplinary courses. These crucial knowledge points progress from simple to complex, optimizing the efficiency of limited course hours and integrating teaching content, not only refining students' knowledge structure but also saving time and labour.

### 4. Deepening Teaching Management and Forming a Literary Teaching Team

The construction of literature courses in English majors, centering on literature, encompasses curriculum and disciplinary development, fostering a teaching and research team characterized by mentorship and mutual assistance. Based on the requirements of curriculum optimization, for the ease of teaching and scientific research, establishing a literary teaching team has become necessary. Leveraging this, the construction of a literary MOOC series, literary lecture series, high-quality literature course development, and literary research teams are undertaken<sup>[5]</sup>. Teaching research, an essential component of the teaching management team's routine work, involves crafting suitable teaching syllabi, methods, and techniques aligned with the literature course cluster. On the foundation of teaching, the research carried out by the team propels scientific research, applying for institutional, provincial, and national teaching reform projects and literary research projects. This enhances the research team's guidance and influence, thereby promoting teaching through research and fostering the professional growth of individual teachers and the overall quality of education and instruction.

## 5. Constructing Literary Course Teaching Designs Based on OBE and POA Philosophies

Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and Process-Oriented Approach (POA) theories, which are guided by results and student output, represent advanced pedagogical philosophies. OBE emphasizes designing teaching goals, methods, and evaluating teaching effectiveness based on the ultimate learning outcomes of students. POA focuses on an output-driven and input-facilitated hypothesis, emphasizing both the process and results of output. Its teaching philosophy is encapsulated by "student-centeredness," "integration of learning and application," and "holistic education."

Guided by these two educational philosophies in the design of literary course teaching, we can approach from both macro and micro dimensions. Firstly, from the macro perspective of teacher training institutions' educational objectives, the learning outcomes upon graduation must consider the requirements and expectations of all in education, such as the government, schools, employers, students, and their parents. These outcomes should encompass improvements in knowledge, practical skills, and general competencies. Regarding practical skills, students' abilities of analysing and appreciating such works are enhanced, along with their understanding of Western literature and culture, thus further facilitate cross-cultural communication. English major students must enhance their literary critical thinking and cultural identification skills; bolster cultural confidence and patriotic sentiment and broaden their international perspective to understand global cultures and civilizations from the standpoint of the human community.

Secondly, from the micro perspective of teaching, a closed loop of instruction and learning should be manifested. Teachers design a series of tasks before, during, and after class, forming a complete teaching loop of driving, facilitating, and evaluating. They scaffold students based on a thorough understanding of their foundational knowledge, provide appropriate assistance, and find suitable input materials in a tiered and phased manner. Keeping abreast with educational technology, the continuation of flipped classroom instruction in literature, constructing a series of micro-courses in literature, and utilizing a blended online-offline-online teaching model is essential. By moving the introduction of basic literary knowledge and literary criticism theories online, the offline classroom focuses on teacher-led, student-centered literary work appreciation and criticism practices. Online post-class discussions and review sessions for evaluation, reflection, and continuous teaching improvement significantly enhance students' literary output capabilities.

## 6. Implementing a Dynamic and Multifaceted Course Assessment and Evaluation System

The process is multifaceted and multi-dimensional, encompassing group cooperation, blended online and offline activities, periodic achievements, and outcome that should all be documented. Considering that individual student development varies, it is advisable to establish personal learning profiles to track student progress. Hence, in the assessment and evaluation of student performance, a combination of regular grades, periodic assessments, knowledge checks, and skills evaluations is essential. Evaluations should be diverse, including both objective knowledge assessments and subjective evaluations. The variety of assessment methods should include online and offline evaluations, shifting from solely teacher-based assessments to a combination that includes self-assessment, peer review, and teacher-student combined evaluations, providing students with a clearer understanding of their role and efficacy in the learning process and an objective assessment of their peers. During the evaluation process, it is crucial to align the learning objectives with course requirements, giving students a clear sense of purpose and a feeling of accomplishment. Finally, when teachers evaluate students, the assessment objectives should be diversified, moving from a singular focus on knowledge to a comprehensive evaluation that encompasses knowledge, skills, and general competencies. We hope you find the information in this template useful in the

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## 7. Conclusion

The development of literature courses for English majors at local teacher training colleges should rely on the backdrop of the New Liberal Arts construction, embracing the humanistic, research-oriented, and critical thinking characteristics of literature courses, in conjunction with the needs of blended online and offline teaching in the new era. It aligns the macro objectives of talent cultivation and the curriculum system with the micro-classroom mode and teaching evaluation, providing a reference model for teacher accreditation and innovative reform in literature course teaching at teacher training colleges. Moreover, under the construction philosophy of the New Liberal Arts, it calls for a return to the humanistic aspects of English literature courses, enhancing students' linguistic and cultural cultivation, and highlighting the disciplinary characteristics of literature courses in English majors.

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