IMPLEMENTING THE ENGLISH CURRICULUM: TEACHING CARIBBEAN POETRY

Level: Masters

Duration: One semester

Credits: 3

RATIONALE

All teachers of English, at all levels of the educational system, must be able to teach poetry. However, many teachers in the Caribbean avoid engaging with the poetry content of the curriculum because they do not like poetry, and do not feel competent to teach it. This course is intended to prepare teachers to teach poetry, starting from an exploration of Caribbean poetry, which captures their own experiences of life in the Caribbean. It introduces students to different models of poetry teaching and critique, as well as to different strategies from which a teacher may select to enhance students’ understanding and response to poetry. In doing so, the course aims to develop teachers’ own love for Caribbean poetry; to improve their understanding of the challenges and opportunities of teaching Caribbean poetry; and to help them build a repertoire of strategies for teaching and assessing their students’ appreciation of poetry.

General Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Describe different perspectives on the nature and purpose of teaching poetry;
- Identify the challenges and opportunities for enhancing students’ appreciation of Caribbean poetry in their national curriculum;
- Analyse the curriculum’s orientation to poetry;
- Explore factors shaping responses to Caribbean poetry (personal experience, the role of text and context);
- Identify their own orientation to teaching Caribbean poetry;
- Select appropriate strategies for teaching and assessing students’ response to Caribbean poetry
- Respond appropriately to identified challenges;
- Select from among a repertoire of strategies for teaching and assessing Caribbean poetry.

CONTENT

1. Perspectives on poetry and poetry teaching;
2. The proposed structure, role and functions of Caribbean poetry in your national curriculum;
3. Implementing the curriculum – models of instruction (subject-centred; teacher-centred; student-centred);
4. Responding to Caribbean poetry – theoretical positions and pedagogical approaches:
   a. exploring personal experience (reader response theory/the role of individual learning styles and multiple intelligences);
   b. the influence of context - critical and cultural theory, and identification of different dimensions of experienced context:
      - historical (slavery, colonisation, immigration);
      - cultural (the influences on Caribbean poetry of forms of popular culture and high culture; of experiences of ethnicity; of gender);
      - linguistic;
      - the physical environment;
   c. analysing language (metaphor, simile etc.);
   d. entering into the process (student-as-writer)


TEACHING/LEARNING APPROACHES

Lectures and discussions;
Journalling;
Group work;
Workshops;
Performances by visiting poets, musicians etc.
Online poetry archive.

RESOURCES:

- Online poetry archive;
- Poets reading their work
- Examples of other Caribbean indigenous cultural forms – music, visual art, performance art; film
- Anthologies of Caribbean poetry
- Selections from the works of Walcott, Brathwaite; Rahim; Goodison, Senior; Phillips; Brown; Agostini.

ASSESSMENT

Portfolio – 100% - to include:
- A collection of poetry selected by the teacher to teach an identified group of students (30%)
- A unit for teaching poetry within the national curriculum, including unit plan, lesson plans and examples of instructional materials for a range of intelligences (30%)
- A journal recording the students’ responses to reading and teaching Caribbean poetry over the course of the semester (20 %)
- An essay (2000 words) exploring possibilities for the role of poetry in a revised curriculum (20%)