



香港浸會大學
HONG KONG BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

Department of English Language & Literature
DEPARTMENT SEMINAR SERIES

2017 Tin Ka Ping Foundation Seminars

Seminar 1

7 February 2017 (Tue): 3:30 p.m., Room M1008, 10/F, Oen Hall, Ho Sin Hang Campus

An Introduction to a Theory of Ethical Literary Criticism

My presentation argues that core concepts of the ethical literary criticism emerged as humanity underwent two important processes during the history of human civilization: Natural selection and Ethical selection. Natural selection constitutes a biological selection differentiating human beings from other animals in their physical forms; while ethical selection allows human beings to distinguish their cultures from the animal kingdom in the sense that they have acquired ethical consciousness. Theoretically speaking, humanity embraced what may be called the “Sphinx factor” or outcome, as a combination of human and animal factors that emerged to determine the ability of human consciousness to make ethical, rather than natural, choices. The Sphinx factor, I argue, is the central element represented in several literary works.

Seminar 2

9 February 2017 (Thu): 3:30 p.m., M1008, 10/F, Oen Hall, Ho Sin Hang Campus

**Ethical Dilemma, Taboos, and
Choice: How May We Interpret Hamlet’s Indecision?**

Why does Hamlet always hesitate when avenging his dead father after learning the truth of his murder? What are the problems leading to Hamlet’s indecision when exacting vengeance? In my presentation, I will argue that we may attribute Hamlet’s indecision to the converging action of ethical taboos against matricide, patricide, and regicide. From the soliloquies of Hamlet (such as “to be or not to be” and “the mousetrap”) it is apparent that Hamlet’s awareness of the ethical taboo against revenge stays his hand when seeking retributive justice against his stepfather, Claudius, and his mother, Gertrude. What, then, may Hamlet actually do given these competing imperatives? I argue that the Prince of Denmark can, in fact, do nothing—except entertain the dilemma of the ethical choice itself. His posture requires hesitation because he cannot find a way to resolve his ethical impasse.

Nie Zhenzhao is Professor of Comparative and World Literature at Central China Normal University (CCNU), editor in chief of *Foreign Literature Studies* (indexed by A&HCI), executive editor of *Forum for World Literature Studies* (indexed by ESCI and SCOPUS), Director of the International Center for Ethical Literary Criticism at CCNU, Vice-President of the International Association for Ethical Literary Criticism and Vice-President of the Chinese/American Association for Poetry and Poetics (UPenn-based). As author, editor or translator of over twenty books and numerous papers, Prof Nie’s academic accomplishments have achieved significant worldwide acclaim, including lectures, keynote speeches, and visiting appointments world-wide.