

# Value Education in the Course of "Selected Readings of English and American Literature"

Du Haixia

*Lecturer in School of Foreign Languages, Xinxiang Medical University*

---

**Abstract:** In addition to formal beauty and emotional power, literature also conveys ideas and values. Therefore, many scholars have begun to think about the value education of British and American literature courses, and value education has also become a hot topic of education reform in the context of China's new liberal arts era. In this context, based on years of teaching practice, the author attempts to analyze methods of value education in the course "Selected Readings of English and American Literature", in order to explore a new path for the practice of value education in English literature.

**Keywords:** Selected Readings of English and American Literature; value education education; "community with a shared future for mankind"

---

In addition to formal beauty and emotional power, literature also conveys ideas and values. Therefore, many scholars have begun to think about the "value education" of British and American literature courses, and ideological and political education has also become a hot topic of education reform in the context of China's new liberal arts era. In this context, based on years of teaching practice, the author attempts to analyze the ideological and political implementation methods of "Selected Readings of British and American Literature" in order to explore a new path for the practice of ideological and political education in British and American literature.

## 1. Connotation of Value Education

Value education means that "In all courses, we make full use of the main channel of classroom teaching, strive to explore the ideological and political education elements contained in the courses themselves, and adhere to the principles of organic integration In the process of systematically and scientifically teaching knowledge, we consciously carry out the educational methods of theory transmission, thought leadership, value guidance, spiritual shaping and emotional stimulation" (Zhang Rongjun Tang Yunqing 2020). The "Guiding Outline for Ideological and Political Construction of Colleges and Universities" specifically puts forward the central content of value education: "closely focus on strengthening students' ideals and beliefs, with loving the party, the country, socialism, the people, and improve the content of courses centering around political identity, systematically carry out socialism with Chinese characteristics and the Chinese dream education, socialist core values education, legal education, labor education, mental health education, Chinese traditional culture education". According to the spirit of this document, literature courses should guide students to deeply understand the core values of socialism and the ideological essence and value of the times of excellent traditional Chinese culture, and organically integrate ideological and political elements into classroom teaching in a way that conforms to the characteristics of literature. Teachers should dig the moral education elements which contained in literary works and the ideological and political education functions they carry. Such classroom teaching not only requires updating the teaching content, but also needs to introduce the latest theoretical achievements and practices of socialism with Chinese characteristics into the classroom and

transform them into high-quality teaching resources.

## **2. Necessity of Value Education**

Value education is a must for the development of times. The English curriculum system, which focuses on basic language skills and practical courses, has cultivated a large number of outstanding English talents for the country, met the needs of social and economic development, and made important contributions to the process of my country's reform and opening up. However, China in the 21st century has undergone tremendous changes in politics, economy, culture, technology, and diplomacy, and is becoming an important force influencing the world. In this new situation, China is no longer a mere learner or borrower, but also strives to become a contributor and a responsible person, contributing Chinese wisdom and Chinese solutions to world development, and showing cultural soft power. The "Chinese Culture Going Global" and "One Belt One Road" and "Community with a Shared Future for Mankind" proposed by the Chinese government are all manifestations of the responsibility of a major country under the new situation. These new positioning, new measures and new goals have all put forward new requirements for the training of foreign language talents. Teachers should integrate value education into all professional courses. Foreign language education in China has the great responsibility and mission of "training foreign language talents to serve the national foreign strategy", and excellent and high-quality foreign language talents are indispensable for Chinese culture to go out and tell the Chinese story, as well as for "building the Belt and Road" and building the community of human destiny. The teaching of foreign languages should therefore actively implement the concept of value education, and take on the mission of establishing moral education. This is achieved through specific teaching activities, and should be implemented in specific foreign language courses. The course "Introduction to English and American Literature", which is offered to English majors in higher education, has this responsibility and mission.

Besides, value education is also a must for cultivation of English talents. From the perspective of the internal development of the discipline, the development of the English major has entered a bottleneck period, and a breakthrough is urgently needed to achieve rebirth from the cocoon. The ideological and political construction of the curriculum provides an important opportunity for this. In recent years, the establishment of English department in Chinese colleges and universities has been criticized. Although many of these statements are somewhat biased, not all criticisms are nonsense. It is an undeniable fact that professional English and college English are constantly converging. Students majoring in English are regarded as "walking on one leg", with only language ability but no professional expertise, and are not welcomed in the job market. How to solve this dilemma? In fact, many colleges and governments have been exploring the reform of English majors since the end of the last century. "Cultivation of compound English talents" and "speculative English teaching" are meaningful attempts. However, practical experience shows that the former essentially emphasizes the instrumental nature of English, which makes the status of English as a professional increasingly marginalized and subordinated, and the subject itself is ignored; although the latter helps to solve the problem of students' lack of critical thinking, but it fails to provide an effective solution for the homogenization of professional English and college English. Value education provides an opportunity for this. As many scholars have pointed out, the development of English majors depends on returning to English language and literature, that is, returning to the dominant position of English as the humanities. The "National Standards for Teaching Quality of Foreign Languages and Literatures" promulgated in 2018 clearly positions foreign language subjects as an important part of the humanities and social sciences, which fully affirms this understanding. The ontology of English major is humanities, and its core content is English language, literature and culture. English education is essentially humanistic education. The main reason for the decline of English majors in the past 30 years is that,

in order to meet the needs of the market economy, the education sector overemphasizes its instrumentality and practicality, while ignoring its humanities and general knowledge. One of the core requirements of value education is to improve students' ideological and moral cultivation while imparting knowledge and cultivating abilities, and to achieve personality shaping, value guidance and spiritual education -- these essentially belong to the category of humanistic quality and moral quality cultivation. It is the characteristic and advantage of humanities. Therefore, humanities courses are of great use in value education. English majors can take advantage of value education to revive the professional ontology and regain the vitality of development.

### **3. Implementation of Value Education in “Selective Readings of British and American Literature”**

The course “Selective Readings of British and American Literature” traces the development of English and American literature, and uses the perspective of current literary theories and criticism to examine the most representative works of each period. It provides students with a specific view of literary history and writers' works. The course is designed to help students understand the genealogy of writers and the connotation of their works in British and American literature. The course uses lectures by the instructor, presentations of individual research designs, group discussions, essay writing, and academic forums to stimulate students' interests in learning literature. It can stimulate students' interests in learning and to cultivate their academic perspectives and critical abilities in English and American literature.

Based on cultivation of talents, this course implements the core concept of value education, organically integrates professional education and value education in the course design and teaching process. From the perspective of national ideology, the "Chineseness" is highlighted in this course, the "Chinese elements" are fully explored, and the guidance of values is emphasized. In the specific teaching and seminars, "Britain and America written by Chinese writers", "Chinese writing by British and American writers", "The embodiment of Chinese philosophical thought in British and American literature" and "Chinese classic writers and British and American classic writers" are included in different periods. Teachers should inspire and guide students not to blindly follow Western ideological theories and literary expressions, but to consciously empathize using Chinese cultural thoughts and ethical values to examine issues of common concern to human beings involved in different cultures. This course also aims at examining the cultural exchanges between China and the United States from the perspective of cultural exchanges, and objectively judges the generative logic and expression paradigm of foreign cultural writing in the works; enhancing students' cultural awareness and cultural confidence in the Chinese tradition, and cultivates their responsibility and feelings for "telling Chinese stories well". There are some specific methods to be used in teaching process.

#### **(1) Establish Correct Ideological Orientation and Grasp China's Position**

To conduct value education well means not only imparting knowledge of British and American literature and improving students' comprehensive ability to use English, but also actively guiding students in the teaching process how to face and evaluate various Western cultural connotation and value expression, how to filter the negative, vulgar and ideological dross in British and American literature through comparison between China and foreign countries. While expounding the works of British and American literary writers, it focuses on the works of classic writers, helps students establish correct values, and makes them consciously analyze and judge the cultural differences and ideological differences between China and the West from the perspective of Chinese scholars, and objectively judge and evaluate British and American literary works and its cultural representation. For example, when teaching American Renaissance literature, teachers should evaluate American capitalist

civilization from the height of current ideology. When analyzing writers' works, teachers should dialectically evaluate the ideological emancipation movement and national cultural construction that appeared in the United States in the mid-19th century. The ideology and imperial mentality in the book will deeply reveal the core values of American society and the complex and diverse cultural thought patterns in that period.

### **(2) Correctly understand and apply Western literary theory and its critical concepts**

Focusing on literary themes such as family concept, ethnicity, gender, Western writing, urban consumption, language power, cultural hegemony, transnational writing, and media landscape in British and American literature, this course should organically integrate theoretical connotations, and focus on "identity", "otherness", and "diversity". The core concepts such as "gender", "dialogue", "space and cyberspace", "consumerism", "material culture", "ecocriticism" and "imagined community" are sorted out and interpreted, and the rich moral elements and different value orientations contained in them can be fully explored. While guiding students to effectively use theoretical concepts to build a framework of text analysis and understanding, teachers should also focus on cultivating their awareness of subjectivity, aesthetic taste, speculative ability, family ethics, science and technology ethics, life perception, social responsibility, and family and country feelings.

### **(3) Promote academic integrity**

Based on the concept of "building moral character", this course effectively integrates the educational connotation of "serious thesis and academic integrity", and provides students with academic inspiration and standardized practice of English and American literature research through class discussions and post-class assignments. The course is mainly focused on literature reading, academic reporting, and essay writing, using positive and negative cases to guide students to use literature in a standardized manner, cite literature correctly and express original opinions, and basically present the process management of academic research in British and American literature.

### **(4) Tell Chinese stories well**

This course is dedicated to helping students familiarize themselves with the specific ways of discourse in the West, analyze their ideological positions and cultural and political biases, and training students to conduct academic and cultural exchange activities in English, improving their English international communication level, and enhancing their participation in spreading Chinese excellent culture. For example, combing British and American literature and Chinese-related writers' works through a series of comparative study of Chinese and foreign writers' works, students can not only have a deep understanding of British and American literary thoughts and its unique social, historical, political, cultural and other characteristics, but also have a wealth of knowledge. Students can have knowledge of foreign languages containing "Chinese elements", consciously stand on the Chinese standpoint and continuously improve their ability to tell Chinese stories in foreign languages.

### **(5) Cultivate a noble mind and a loving heart**

Literary works "teach, encourage and exhort people on the moral level through a series of moral examples and role models. (Nie Zhenzhao 88). In teaching foreign literature, we can select these moral examples and guide students to analyze the complex process of the ethical choice of the role models and explore the ethical choice of the role models. Students can select these moral role models and analyze the complex process of their ethical

choices, explore how they use their rational will to control their natural will and free will, insist on using morality to regulate their behavior, and explore how they use their moral will to control their destiny. Take the teaching of the excerpt from Chapter 8 of *Jane Eyre* as an example. For example, the excerpt tells how Mr. Rochester, in order to test Jane's feelings for him, hints that he is about to be engaged to Miss Ingram. In the classroom, teachers should guide students to analyze Jane's emotional response to Rochester's probing and her ethical choices, and examine the dynamics of her thinking and emotions in a concrete ethical context. The course examines the dynamics of her thinking and emotions in specific ethical contexts, explores the complex process of her ethical choices, and develops students' critical thinking skills by analyzing Jane's ethical choices and the significance of her example. Love arises from the natural emotions of human beings, and its development is not governed by moral norms. The ethical choice takes the form of natural will or free will. However, when Rochester reveals that he is engaged to be married, Jane does not let her natural emotions flood her and lose herself in love; although sad and painful, she resolutely decides to leave him. Then, when Rochester asks Jane to stay with him, Jane says angrily, "Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong! - I have as much soul as you - and full as much heart! And if God had gifted me with some beauty and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you. I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh: it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal - as we are!" (Brontë 353) In Jane's view, wealth, class, and appearance are not barriers to love. The main reason for Jane's anger is that she thinks Rochester wants her to stay as a mistress, which offends Jane's moral boundaries, and it is only after Rochester explains that he is not engaged to be married that Jane accepts his proposal of marriage. Each of Jane's choices in marriage is an ethical choice between love and morality, and the process of her ethical choice reflects Jane's growth and moral perfection as an independent woman. Therefore this course can help students develop a noble mind and a loving heart.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The discipline of foreign language and literature involves many languages and have different directions. It forms a complex ideological community and value concept system. It needs to be tested and inspected under the mirror of world cultural diversity and mutual learning of civilization. Students should organically integrate Chinese elements and enhance cultural exchanges and cultural self-confidence. This is not only the mission and responsibility of foreign language education in the new era to implement the fundamental task of "cultivating morality and cultivating people", but also an important link in the ideological and political construction of foreign language majors. Our exploration on the value education of " Selective Readings of British and American Literature" is the result of this thinking, and we hope to provide some reference for other foreign language colleges across the country to improve the value education of their courses.

#### **References**

- [1]. Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Translated by Fu Yue, Baihuazhou Literature and Art Publishing House, 2013.
- [2]. Nie Zhenzhao. *An Introduction to Ethical Literary Criticism*. Peking UP, 2014.
- [3]. The full text of the ideological and political construction guidance outline for colleges and universities[Z/OL].(2020-06-06 ) [ 2020-08-02]. [http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2020-06/06/content\\_5517606.htm](http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2020-06/06/content_5517606.htm).
- [4]. The Ministry of Education's Opinions on Comprehensively Deepening Curriculum Reform and

- Implementing the Fundamental Task of Cultivating Talents [Z/OL]. (2014-03-30) [2020-08-01]. [http://old.moe.gov.cn/public\\_files/business/html\\_files/moe/s7054/201404/167226.html](http://old.moe.gov.cn/public_files/business/html_files/moe/s7054/201404/167226.html).
- [5]. Ministry of Education Teaching of Foreign Languages and Literatures in Higher Education Institutions Steering Committee, Teaching Guidance Sub-Committee for English Majors. Teaching Guide for Undergraduate Foreign Language and Literature Majors in Ordinary Colleges and Universities (Part 1)--English Teaching Guide[M]. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2020.
- [6]. Xi Jinping .Putting ideological and political work through the whole process of education and teaching to create a new situation in the development of higher education in China [N]. People's Daily, 2016-12-09(1) .
- [7]. Yang Jincai. Reflections on the ideological and political construction of foreign language education courses in the new era [J]. Foreign Language Teaching, 2020( 6) : 11-14.
- [8]. Zhang, R . -J ., Tang, Y . -Q . Deepening the Concept of Establishing Moral Integrity and Cultivating Talents along with the Transformation from Ideological and Political Curriculum to the Curriculum of Integrated Ideology and Politics [N] . Guizhou Daily, 2020 -10 - 06 .
- [9]. Zeng Yanyu. Interpretation of "Undergraduate Teaching Guide for English Majors" [J]. Foreign Languages, 2019(6): 2.