

EN2E9-30 States of Damage: Twenty-First Century US Writing and Culture

20/21

Department

English and Comparative Literary Studies

Level

Undergraduate Level 2

Module leader

Stephen Shapiro

Credit value

30

Module duration

20 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

EN2E9-30 States of Damage: Twenty-First Century US Writing and Culture

[Module web page](#)

Module aims

The module aims to provide a survey of recent American writing and culture, a period roughly demarcated by the spectacular terror of September 11, 2001. It surveys different modes of American writing (fiction, poetry, social analysis, graphic narrative, video and digital/online media) and focuses on a variety of themes: the individual in a mediatized and information-saturated global market; the uncanny non-death of neoliberalism; state terror and mass incarceration; the return to overt forms of military imperialism; the family as focal point for registering global change, and as site for social reproduction of class struggle; and the (sociopolitical, aesthetic) problem of envisioning future alternatives to the status quo.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing* (Norton, 2006; rev. ed. 2014)

Term 1, week 1: Joint session 1: Introduction: C21 US writing and culture

Term 2, week 1: Joint session 2: Ana Duvernay (dir.), 13th

Shapiro term

Week 2.

Mark Fisher, selections from *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Zero Books, 2009)

Ivor Southwood, selections from *Non-Stop Inertia* (Zero Books, 2011)

Dale Beran, "4chan: The Skeleton Key to the Rise of Trump"

"Fuck You, Buddy" from *The Trap* (2007), dir. Adam Curtis

Week 3.

Gerard Duménil and Dominique Lévy, from *The Crisis of Neoliberalism* (Harvard UP, 2011): 7-32, 45-54.

Michael Denning, selections from *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century*, 3-50.

Week 4.

Colson Whitehead, *The Underground Railroad* (Fleet, 2017)

#blacklivesmatter videos

Please listen to Charlie Parker's "Relaxin' at Camarillo" and read the short article "Hair Relaxer Facts – What is A Hair Relaxer?" (Teen Vogue)

Week 5.

Claudia Rankine, *Citizen, An American Lyric* (Graywolf, 2014), parts I-V, pages 5-79.

Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (Text Publishing, 2015)

Sofia Samatar, "Skin Feeling"

If possible, wikipedia entry on microaggression (on forum)

Week 7.

Charles Duhigg, "How Companies Learn Your Secrets";

Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on Societies of Control";

Frank Pasquale, *Black Box Society: The Secret Algorithms that Control Society & Money* (selections);

Antoinette Rouvroy, "The end(s) of critique: data-behaviourism vs. due-process"

Week 8.

Occupy Wall Street Videos (in-class viewing)

Week 9.

Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams, *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work* (Verso 2016)

Week 10.

George Saunders, *Lincoln in the Bardo* (Bloomsbury 2017)

Lawrence term

Week 2.

Peter Frase, *Four Futures* (Verso 2016)

Week 3.

Kim Stanley Robinson, *New York 2140* (Orbit 2017)

Paul Mason, Part I, Part II: "Prophets of Postcapitalism," and Part III: "Project Zero,"
Postcapitalism: A Guide to Our Future (Penguin 2016)

Week 4.

Paulo Bacigalupi, The Water Knife (Orbit 2016)

Sasha Lilley, "Great Chaos Under Heaven"

Week 5.

Omar El Akkad, American War (Knopf 2017)

Wolfgang Streeck, "How Will Capitalism End?"

Week 7.

Valeria Luiselli, Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in Forty Questions (Fourth Estate 2017)

from Reece Jones, Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move (Verso 2016)

Week 8.

Yuri Herrera, Signs Preceding the End of the World (And Other Stories 2015)

from Thomas Nail, The Figure of the Migrant (Stanford UP 2015) and Theory of the Border (OUP 2016)

Week 9.

Chris Kraus, Summer of Hate (Semiotext(e)/Native Agents 2012)

Week 10.

Alex Rivera, dir., Sleep Dealer (Futuro Films 2008)

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Acquire knowledge of key theoretical and literary concepts and of cultural and critical contexts within which to situate the set texts;
- Develop analytical and critical skills through close reading/viewing of the set texts;
- Adjust to scholarly standards and protocols of academic presentation;
- Explore methodologies for reading texts within the context of contemporary American cultures;
- Demonstrate a broad knowledge of selected texts and concepts relating to contemporary American cultural production;
- Indicate awareness of various critical, analytical and creative approaches to the production of knowledge about course content;
- Exhibit an effective command of written English together with a wide-ranging and accurate vocabulary;
- Show command of the protocols of textual analysis and critical argument;
- Conduct independent research through self-generated questions.

Indicative reading list

All primary texts are available for easy purchase with selected texts to be provided in electronic copy. Copies of required theoretical reading will be provided as a module reading pack.

Bibliography includes aforementioned primary texts and these indicative readings:

Please see syllabus for illustrative bibliography.

Subject specific skills

- Acquire knowledge of key theoretical and literary concepts and of cultural and critical contexts within which to situate the set texts
- Explore methodologies for reading texts within the context of contemporary American culture
- Indicate awareness of various critical, analytical and creative approaches to the production of knowledge about course content

Transferable skills

- Develop analytical and critical skills through close reading/viewing of the set texts
 - Adjust to honours-level scholarly standards and protocols of academic presentation
 - Exhibit an effective command of written English together with a wide-ranging and accurate vocabulary
 - Show command of the protocols of textual analysis and critical argument
 - Conduct independent research through self-generated questions
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Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	18 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Seminars	18 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Private study	264 hours (88%)
Total	300 hours

Private study description

Reading & research

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group A1

	Weighting	Study time
Assessed Essay 1	40%	

	Weighting	Study time
3,000-word essay		
Citation and bibliographic exercise	20%	
Assessed Essay 2	40%	
3,000-word essay		

Feedback on assessment

Written comments; opportunity for further oral feedback in office hours

Availability

Courses

This module is Optional for:

- Year 2 of UENA-Q300 Undergraduate English Literature
- Year 2 of UENA-QP36 Undergraduate English Literature and Creative Writing
- Year 2 of UENA-VQ32 Undergraduate English and History
- Year 2 of UTHA-QW34 Undergraduate English and Theatre Studies
- Year 2 of UFIA-QW25 Undergraduate Film and Literature

This module is Option list C for:

- Year 2 of UCXA-QQ37 Undergraduate Classics and English

This module is Option list D for:

- Year 2 of UPHA-VQ72 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature