

# EN2D9-30 Twentieth-Century US Literature

**22/23**

**Department**

English and Comparative Literary Studies

**Level**

Undergraduate Level 2

**Module leader**

Mark Storey

**Credit value**

30

**Module duration**

20 weeks

**Assessment**

100% coursework

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

---

## Description

### Introductory description

"Twentieth-century U.S. literature" encompasses an extraordinarily diverse range of texts, and there are many ways in which its history could be traced and constructed. This module offers one particular route through this vibrant and divergent literary field.

[Module web page](#)

### Module aims

Across the eighteen weeks of the module we will examine a range of American writing produced between the end of the First World War and the dawn of the 21st century. We'll look at some major American writers, but also consider the evolving path of American literary history in the twentieth century, its relationship to the social upheavals of the times as well as to the aesthetic and generic development of American art and writing. We'll look at novels, short stories, poetry and plays, and consider the changing fate of these forms in the age of modernism and postmodernism. Some of the fundamental issues of twentieth-century American life (wars in Europe and Vietnam, the civil rights movement, second wave feminism, the triumph of late capitalism, urbanism and its discontents, religion and secularism, etc.) will be explored alongside a

wide variety of literary forms and styles: from the modernist novella and the postwar realist novel, through the experimentalism of Native American writing and New Journalism, to genre fiction, theatre, painting, and film.

## 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.

Week 1: Intro readings

Week 2: Willa Cather, *My Antonia* (1918)

Week 3: Modernism/Modernity

Start reading John Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer* (1925)

Modern painting; Georg Simmel "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903) and Siegfried Kracauer "Mass Ornament" (1927); Paul Strand + Charles Sheeler, *Manhatta* (1921) and *Modern Times* (Dir. Charlie Chaplin, 1936)

Week 4: John Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer* (1925) continued.

Week 5: Archival Field Trip to library

Week 6: Reading Week

Week 7: Nella Larsen, *Passing* (1929)

Week 8: William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying* (1930)

Week 9: Raymond Chandler, *Farewell, My Lovely* (1940)

Week 10: Shirley Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959)

Term 2

Week 1: The Avant Gardes

Allen Ginsburg, *Howl*; Norman Mailer "The White Negro" *Dissent Magazine* (1957)

Abstract Expressionism (especially Jackson Pollock, Robert Motherwell, Helen Frankenthal, Willem de Koonig, Mark Rothko, and Lee Krasner); Amiri Baraka, *Black Arts Movement*

Week 2: Lorraine Hansberry, *Raisin in the Sun* (1959)

Week 3: Thomas Pynchon, *Crying of Lot 49* (1965)

Week 4: Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*

Week 5: New York in the 1970s

Tim Lawrence, *Love Saves the Day*; Disco Diana Ross "Love Hangover" Larry Levan "Stand on the World"; Gordon Matta Clark, *Basquiat*, Keith Haring, Warhol; Samuel Delany; *Summer of Sam* (Dir. Spike Lee, 1999)

Week 6: Reading week

Week 7: Sandra Cisernos, *House on Mango Street* (1984)

Week 8: Bret Easton Ellis, *American Psycho* (1991)

Week 9: Cynthia Kadohata, *In the Heart of the Valley of Love* (1992)

Week 10: TBD in class

## Learning outcomes

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

- Acquired knowledge of selected texts and genres in twentieth-century U.S. literature
- Developed analytical and critical skills through close reading of the set texts
- Acquired knowledge of relevant cultural and critical contexts within which to situate the set texts
- Developed strategies for reading texts within the context of twentieth-century U.S. culture
- Gained an understanding of key critical and literary concepts in their American context, including but not limited to: race, class and gender, cultural geography, individualism and democracy, late capitalism and postmodernism, war and violence, transnationalism, and empire
- Developed research skills

## Indicative reading list

■Bradbury, Malcolm and Howard Temperley. eds. *Introduction to American Studies*. 3rd edition.

London: Longman, 1998.

■Campbell, Neil and Alasdair Kean. *American Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge, 1997.

■Franklin, John Hope and Evelyn Higginbotham. *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African*

*Americans*. 9th edition. McGraw-Hill, 2011.

■Giles, Paul. *The Global Remapping of American Literature*. Princeton University Press, 2011.

■Godden, Richard. *Fictions of Capital: The American Novel from James to Mailer*. Cambridge

University Press, 1990.

■Graham, Maryemma and Jerry Ward (eds)., *Cambridge History of African American Literature*.

Cambridge, 2011.

■Gray, Richard. *A History of American Literature*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2004.

■Grice, Helena, et al. *Beginning Ethnic American Literatures*.

Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001. ■Levander, Caroline F.

*Where is American Literature?* Wiley, 2013 ■Maier, Pauline et al.

*Inventing America: A History of the United States*, Vol.2. Norton, 2006.

■McDonald, Gail. *American Literature and Culture 1900–1960*. Oxford:

Blackwell, 2007. ■Mitchell, Jeremy and Richard Maidment, eds., *The United States in the Twentieth Century: Culture*. Hodder & Stoughton,

1994. ■Moreley, Catherine. *Modern American Literature*. Edinburgh

University Press, 2012. ■Stoneley, Peter and Cindy Weinstein, ed., *A Concise Companion to American Fiction 1900–1950*. Blackwell, 2008.

■Ruland, Richard & Malcolm Bradbury. *From Puritanism to Postmodernism: A History of American Literature*. London: Penguin Books, 1991. ■Tallack,

Douglas. *Twentieth-Century America: The Intellectual and Cultural*

*Context*. London: Longman, 1991. ■Yannella, Philip. *American Literature*

in Context after 1929. Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

## Research element

Critical anthology requires widespread archival research (this is supported by a dedicated session in week 5 with the library staff)

## International

The module concerns US culture

## Subject specific skills

- Understand and deploy theoretical and methodological positions with regards to 20th-century US literature
- Place the study of 20th-century US literature within wider contexts of recent scholarship and understand professional and disciplinary boundaries

## Transferable skills

- Engage with archival work and subject-specific scholarly bibliographic skills
  - Demonstrate advanced critical thinking skills to enable the development and sustaining of an independently-determined argument.
  - Understand and challenge the intellectual validity and institutional necessity of 'canons' and 'survey courses'
  - Confidently present an argument using a combination of different media and primary sources.
- 

## Study

### Study time

Type	Required
Seminars	18 sessions of 1 hour 30 minutes (9%)
Private study	273 hours (91%)
Total	300 hours

### Private study description

Reading and research

### Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

---

## Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

### Assessment group A2

	Weighting	Study time
Assessed Essay 3000-word essay from list of given questions/topics	60%	
Critical Anthology Critical anthology (1000-word introduction and 15-20 pages of related multimedia material)	40%	

### Feedback on assessment

Written feedback uploaded to tabula

One-on-one consultations 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