

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

22/23

Department

English and Comparative Literary Studies

Level

Undergraduate Level 2

Module leader

Stephen Shapiro

Credit value

30

Module duration

18 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 now roughly demarcated by the economic crash of 2008/11. 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: Introduction: C21 US writing and culture

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.

Ling Ma, *Severance* (2019); readings from Matthew Soules, *Icebergs, Zombies, and the Ultra Thin: Architecture and Capitalism in the Twenty-First Century* (2021)

Week 5.

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

Sofia Samatar, "Skin Feeling"

#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)

wikipedia entry on microaggression (on forum)

Week 7.

Kiley Reid, *Such a Fun Age* (2021)

Week 8.

Rumaan Alam, *Leave the World Behind* (2020)

Week 9.

Emil Ferris, *My Favorite Thing is Monsters* (2017)

Week 10.

Fabian Scheidler, *The End of the Megamachine: A Brief History of a Failing Civilization* (2021)

Term 2

Week 1.

Lynda Barry, *Making Comics* (2019)

Week 2.

Mass Prison Industrial Complex videos

Week 3.

Colson Whitehead, *The Nickel Boys* (2020)

Week 4.

Rachel Kushner, *The Mars Room* (2019)

Week 5.

Charles Duhigg, "How Companies Learn Your Secrets"; Kai-Fu Lee and Chen Qiufan, *AI 2041: Ten Visions for Our Future*

Week 7.

Lisa Feldman Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain* (2018)

Week 8

Ellen Lupton et al., *Extra Bold: A Feminist, Inclusive, Anti-racist, Nonbinary Field Guide for Graphic Designers* (2021).

Week 9.

Emily St. John Mandel, *The Glass Hotel* (2021)

Week 10.

group project discussion

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 A2

	Weighting	Study time
Assessed Essay 1 3,000-word essay	40%	
Citation and bibliographic exercise	20%	
Critical Graphic Essay	40%	
a 5 page graphic essay, individually marked and combining traditional essay writing skills with new format. Preparation taught through reading in term 2, week 1.		

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 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