

EN2D9-30 American Fiction since 1918: Genre and History

23/24

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

American fiction since the early twentieth century has encompassed a diverse range of styles and genres, and has maintained a dynamic, often fractious relationship to the turmoil of American politics and society. This module offers one particular route through this vibrant and divergent literary field.

[Module web page](#)

Module aims

Taking a long view -- from the end of the First World War until the present -- this module reads key works of American fiction against the wider context of American history and culture. We'll look in depth at some important writers and consider the evolving condition of fiction in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, between 'literary' fiction and 'genre' fiction and between politics and aesthetics. Open to a wide variety of narrative forms -- novels, short stories, plays, films -- these readings will be placed alongside and within the social contours of 'The American Century', moving from the intimacies of personal identity and domestic life to the expanses of global empire and capitalism. Interdisciplinary throughout, we will situate each week within a broader frame of

social and political thought, art, music, cinema, and popular culture.

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.

Indicative syllabus

Term 1:

Week 1 – Introduction

Week 2 – Cather, *My Antonia*

Week 3 – Readings on modernism

Week 4 – Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

Week 5 – Larsen, *Passing*

Week 6 – Reading week

Week 7 – McKay, *Home to Harlem*

Week 8 – Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*

Week 9 – Chester Himes, *TBC*

Week 10 – Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House*

Term 2:

Week 1 – Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*

Week 2 – Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*

Week 3 – Silko, *Ceremony*

Week 4 – Cisneros, *House on Mango Street*

Week 5 – Gibson, *Neuromancer*

Week 6 – Reading week

Week 7 – Kushner, *Angels in America*

Week 8 – McCarthy, *The Road*

Week 9 – Ward, *Salvage the Bones*

Week 10 – Student choice

Learning outcomes

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

- Acquired knowledge of selected texts and genres in modern American fiction
- 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 American 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 at 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.
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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 A3

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

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
- Year 2 of UPHA-VQ52 Undergraduate Philosophy, Literature and Classics

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