

HI2A8-15 The Formation of American Culture, 1929 to the Present

23/24

Department

History

Level

Undergraduate Level 2

Module leader

J.E. Smyth

Credit value

15

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

This module explores the history of the United States (1929 to the present) through the rise of the culture industries; the production, censorship and consumption of literature, theatre, music, film, radio, art, television, sport, fashion, advertising, gaming and social media; and the ways in which individuals have sought to resist or reformulate dominant national discourses through cultural production and critique.

[Module web page](#)

Module aims

Topics include women in Hollywood, the revolution in American fashion in the 1930s, Mexican American youth culture and the Zoot Suit Riots, the Hollywood blacklist, masculinity and corporate culture in the postwar era, African Americans on network television, Discophobia, the history of the Hollywood blockbuster, franchise culture, social networks and the impact of #MeToo.

Students will learn not only about the history and theory of culture, national identity, modernism and post-modernism in America, but also about the ways in which cultural history is developed, controlled, contested and reconstructed via race, ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality.

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.

1. Lost Generations
2. The Gangster as Tragic Hero
3. The Women Who Ran Hollywood
4. The Fear of the Dark
5. Seeing Red in the Blacklist
6. Wenches with Wrenches and Men in Grey Flannel Suits
7. The Revolution Will Not Be Televised
8. Backlash
9. Franchise: Culture's End Game/Game Over

Learning outcomes

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

- Demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the formation of American culture in the early twentieth century and its development through the twenty-first century.
- Communicate ideas and findings, adapting to a range of situations, audiences and degrees of complexity.
- Generate ideas through the analysis of a broad range of primary source material.
- Analyse and evaluate the contributions made by existing scholarship related to the history and theory of culture.
- Act with limited supervision and direction within defined guidelines, accepting responsibility for achieving deadlines.

Indicative reading list

- Christine Acham, *Revolution Televised* (2004)
- Rebecca Arnold, *The American Look* (2009)
- Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight* (2004)
- Mary Beltran, ed., *Mixed Race Hollywood* (2008)
- Alexandre Bohas, *The Political Economy of Disney* (2016)
- Douglas Brode, Leah Deyneka, ed., *Myth, Media, and Culture in Star Wars: an Anthology* (2012)
- Emily Carman, *Independent Stardom* (2015)
- Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1937)
- Raymond Chandler, *The Big Sleep* (1939)
- Jeff Chang, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-hop Generation* (2007)
- Shilpa Davé, Leilani Nishime, and Tasha Oren, ed., *Global Asian American Popular Cultures* (2016)
- Mike Davis, *City of Quartz* (1998)
- Vine Deloria, *Custer Died For Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (1970)

- Joan Didion, *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* (1968)
- Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are* (1995)
- Susan Faludi, *Backlash* (1990)
- Edna Ferber, *Giant* (1952)
- Aaron Fox, *Real Country* (2004)
- Ben Fritz, *The Big Picture* (2017)
- William Graebner, *The Age of Doubt* (1991)
- Dashiell Hammett, *Red Harvest* (1929)
- Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape* (1977)
- Elizabeth Hawes, *Fashion Is Spinach* (1938)
- Lillian Hellman, *Scoundrel Time* (1976)
- Ernest Hemingway, *Farewell to Arms* (1929)
- Billie Holiday, *Lady Sings the Blues* (1956)
- Klaus Honnef, *Andy Warhol: Commerce Into Art* (2005)
- bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (1982)
- Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1990)
- David Kaufman, *Jewhooing the Sixties* (2012)
- M. Alson Kibler, *Rank Ladies: Gender and Cultural Hierarchy in American Vaudeville* (2009)
- Clayton Koppes and Gregory Black, *Hollywood Goes to War* (1990)
- Naomi Klein, *No Logo* (2000)
- Tony Kushner, *Angels in America* (2007)
- Robert and Helen Lynd, *Middletown* (1929)
- Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance* (1994)
- Eric Lott, *Love and Theft, Blackface Milstreisy and the American Working Class* (rev. 2013)
- Dwight MacDonald, *Against the American Grain* (1962)
- Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream* (1986)
- Cormac McCarthy, *No Country For Old Men* (2005)
- Johnny Morgan, *Disco* (2011)
- Alan Nadel, *Containment Culture* (1995)
- Victor Navasky, *Naming Names* (1980)
- Vance Packard, *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957)
- Fred Pasley, *Al Capone: Biography of a Self-Made Man* (1930)
- Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (1986)
- Kathy Peiss, *Zoot Suit* (2011)
- Catherine Ramirez, *The Woman in the Zoot Suit* (2009)
- Jordan Raphael and Tom Spurgeon, *Stan Lee and the Rise of the American Comic Book* (2003)
- Michael Rogin, *Ronald Reagan, The Movie, and Other Episodes in Political Demonology* (1988)
- George Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American* (1993)
- Nancy Lynn Schwartz, *The Hollywood Writers' Wars* (1982)
- Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time* (1996)
- Gilbert Seldes, *The Seven Lively Arts* (1928)
- Beretta E. Smith-Shomade, *Shaded Lives: African-American Women and Television* (2002)
- Beretta E. Smith-Shomade, ed., *Watching While Black* (2012)

- J.E. Smyth, *Nobody's Girl Friday* (2018)
- Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (2002)
- Gloria Steinem, *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions* (1985)
- Lynn Spigel and Michael Curtin, ed., *The Revolution Wasn't Televised: Sixties Television and Social Conflict* (1996)
- Melanie Swalwell, Helen Stuckey and Angela Ndalians, ed., *Fans and Videogames : Histories, Fandom, Archives* (2017)
- Studs Terkel, *Hard Times* (rev. 2005)
- Susan Ware, *Holding Their Own* (1982)
- Sloan Wilson, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (1955)
- William Whyte, *The Organization Man* (1956)
- Crystal Brent Zook, *Color By Fox: The Revolution in Black Television* (1999)

[View reading list on Talis Aspire](#)

Subject specific skills

See learning outcomes.

Transferable skills

See learning outcomes.

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Seminars	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Tutorials	2 sessions of 1 hour (1%)
Private study	130 hours (87%)
Total	150 hours

Private study description

History modules require students to undertake extensive independent research and reading to prepare for seminars and assessments. As a rough guide, students will be expected to read and prepare to comment on three substantial texts (articles or book chapters) for each seminar taking approximately 3 hours. Each assessment requires independent research, reading around 6-10 texts and writing and presenting the outcomes of this preparation in an essay, review, presentation or other related task.

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 A3

	Weighting	Study time
Seminar contribution	10%	
Individual presentation	20%	
3000-word essay	50%	
1000-word source reflection	20%	

Feedback on assessment

Written feedback provided via Tabula; optional oral feedback in office hours.

Availability

Courses

This module is Optional for:

- Year 2 of UENA-VQ32 Undergraduate English and History
- UHIA-V100 Undergraduate History
 - Year 2 of V100 History
 - Year 2 of V100 History
- Year 2 of UHIA-V102 Undergraduate History (Renaissance and Modern History Stream)
- Year 2 of UHIA-V1V5 Undergraduate History and Philosophy
- UHIA-VM11 Undergraduate History and Politics
 - Year 2 of VM11 History and Politics
 - Year 2 of VM11 History and Politics
 - Year 2 of VM11 History and Politics
- Year 2 of UHIA-VM13 Undergraduate History and Politics (with a term in Venice)
- Year 2 of UHIA-VL13 Undergraduate History and Sociology
- Year 2 of UHIA-VL15 Undergraduate History and Sociology (with a term in Venice)

This module is Core option list C for:

- Year 2 of UHIA-V102 Undergraduate History (Renaissance and Modern History Stream)

This module is Option list A for:

- Year 2 of UHIA-V1V7 Undergraduate History and Philosophy (with a term in Venice)
- Year 2 of UHIA-VM13 Undergraduate History and Politics (with a term in Venice)
- Year 2 of UHIA-VL15 Undergraduate History and Sociology (with a term in Venice)

This module is Option list B for:

- UHIA-V100 Undergraduate History
 - Year 2 of V100 History
 - Year 2 of V100 History
- Year 2 of UHIA-V102 Undergraduate History (Renaissance and Modern History Stream)

This module is Option list C for:

- Year 2 of UHIA-VL13 Undergraduate History and Sociology