EN3E9-30 States of Damage: Twenty-First Century US Writing and Culture

26/27

Department
English and Comparative Literary Studies
Level
Undergraduate Level 3
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

EN3E9-30 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 microagression (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.

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

---

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 A4

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Assessment component			
Assessed Essay	40%		Yes (extension)
2200-word essay - Answers to self-evaluation questions are required			
Reassessment component is the same			
Assessment component			
Group Video Essay	20%		Yes (extension)
Group video essay			

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Reassessment component			
Sole Video Essay or Essay			Yes (extension)
Students who need resit can substitute this with a solo project of a video or an essay of 2,000 words.			
Assessment component			
Critical Graphic Essay	40%		Yes (extension)
A 5 page graphic essay, similar to the video essay, but individually marked and combing traditional essay writing skills with new format. Preparation taught through reading in term 2, week 1.			
Reassessment component is the same			

Feedback on assessment

Written comments; opportunity for further oral feedback in office hours

---

Availability

Courses

This module is Core for:

- Year 4 of UENA-QQ00 Undergraduate English & Cultural Studies

This module is Optional for:

- Year 3 of UENA-Q300 Undergraduate English Literature
- Year 3 of UENA-QP36 Undergraduate English Literature and Creative Writing
- Year 4 of UENA-QP37 Undergraduate English Literature and Creative Writing with Intercalated Year
- Year 4 of UENA-Q301 Undergraduate English Literature with Intercalated Year
- Year 3 of UENA-VQ32 Undergraduate English and History
- Year 4 of UENA-VQ33 Undergraduate English and History (with Intercalated year)
- Year 4 of UENA-QW35 Undergraduate English and Theatre Studies with Intercalated Year
- Year 4 of UFIA-QW25 Undergraduate Film and Literature

This module is Core option list A for:

- Year 3 of UPHA-VQ52 Undergraduate Philosophy, Literature and Classics

This module is Core option list C for:

- Year 4 of UCXA-QQ38 Undergraduate Classics and English (with Intercalated Year)

This module is Option list A for:

- Year 3 of UCXA-QQ37 Undergraduate Classics and English
- Year 3 of UFIA-QW25 Undergraduate Film and Literature

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 3 of UTHA-QW34 Undergraduate English and Theatre Studies

This module is Option list C for:

- Year 3 of UPHA-VQ72 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature
- Year 4 of UPHA-VQ73 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature with Intercalated Year