

Sophister Module Description Template 2023-24

Full Name: ENU44045 From Neoliberalism to Donald Trump: Contemporary US Fiction & Film

Short Name: Contemporary US Fiction & Film

Lecturer Name and Email Address: Dr. Kevin Power powerk9@tcd.ie

ECTS Weighting: 10

Semester Taught MT/HT: HT

Year JS/SS: SS

Module Content: Over the last two decades, American fiction and film has reflected, embodied, analysed and interrogated a series of huge cultural, economic, and political shifts in American life. Beginning with Jonathan Franzen's 2001 novel *The Corrections*, this course will examine those shifts through a critical engagement with a range of novels and films released over the last two decades, bringing us from the dominance of neoliberal economic and political policies through America's cultural, social, and political transformations under the Bush and Obama presidencies, through the financial crisis of 2008, via America's fresh engagement, over the last few years, with its own embattled histories (slavery, civil rights, feminism), and right up to the present day, when the presidency of Donald Trump has reflected – or perhaps caused – yet another huge shift in America's cultural and political self-understanding. This course will offer students the tools to critically engage with these highly relevant texts, and will introduce them to some of the crucial terms and ideas that have done so much to shape our historical moment.

Learning Outcomes:

- The ability to engage critically with a range of contemporary texts and contexts from a range of theoretical perspectives, drawing particularly on Mark Fisher's *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (2009), David Harvey's *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2005), and Shoshanna Zuboff's *Surveillance Capitalism* (2019); the ability to relate contemporary artefacts of cultural production to their contexts and to engage in an open-ended process of "understanding the present"; the ability to place contemporary U.S. Fiction and Film in the larger context(s) of American Studies.

Learning Aims:

- To develop critical perspectives on contemporary texts; to understand contemporary texts in contexts both contemporary and historical; to develop critical perspectives on aspects of contemporary US-American cultural production

Assessment Details:

- Number of Components: 2
- Name/Type of Component(s): In-Class Presentation & Essay
- Word Count of Component(s): Presentation c.1000, Essay c.4000
- Percentage Value of Component(s): 20% Presentation, 80% essay

Preliminary Reading List:

- Jonathan Franzen, *The Corrections* (2001)
- Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (2006)
- Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games* (2008)
- Gillian Flynn, *Gone Girl* (2012)
- Dave Eggers, *The Circle* (2013)
- Ryan Coogler (dir.), *Black Panther* (2018)
- Ottessa Moshfegh, *My Year of Rest and Relaxation* (2018)
- Ling Ma, *Severance* (2018)
- Jordan Peele (dir.), *Us* (2019)
- Mary Gaitskill, *This is Pleasure* (2019)

Please note:

- **Curricular information is subject to change.**
- **Information is displayed only for guidance purposes, relates to the current academic year only and is subject to change.**