

Sophister Module Description Template 2026-27

Full Name: A Tour of the American Short Story

Short Name: American Story

Lecturer Name and Email Address: Prof Philip Coleman, philip.coleman@tcd.ie

ECTS Weighting: 5 ECTS

Semester Taught: HT

Year: Junior Sophister

Description:

This module will consider the place of the short story in the development of US American literature from the 1800s to the middle decades of the twentieth century. At once a survey of the emergence of the American short story as a major form in the literature of the nation, the module will also examine representations of place and region in the work of a wide range of authors, beginning with Washington Irving in the 1800s and ending with Flannery O'Connor in the 1950s. In addition to exploring the ways in which place has been delineated in the short fictions of various writers – towns, cities, urban and rural landscapes, homes and homesteads – the module will also consider forms of displacement in relation to concerns about gender, sexuality, race, and class.

Module Content:

1. Introduction
2. Washington Irving (1783-1859)
3. Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-64)
4. Edgar Allan Poe (1809-49)
5. Herman Melville (1819-91)
6. Sarah Orne Jewett (1849-1909)
7. **Reading Week**
8. Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935)
9. Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961)
10. James Baldwin (1924-87)
11. Eudora Welty (1909-2001)
12. Flannery O'Connor (1925-64)

Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of this module, a student should be able to:

- Demonstrate an awareness of the importance the short story in the development of US American literature from the early decades of the nineteenth century to the middle decades of the twentieth century;
- Employ a highly-developed range of interpretive strategies using appropriate critical vocabulary in discussing a number of short stories by a range of writers;
- Examine and explain some of the major critical and cultural contexts related to the development of particular authors of short stories;

- Use high-level transferrable skills of analytical and writing techniques in relation to chosen topics studied in the module.

Learning Aims:

This module aims to provide students with the skills to:

- Critically evaluate a number of short stories, in order to obtain a clear sense of the form's importance in the broader development of US American literature;
- Demonstrate an understanding of a number of formal and thematic concerns common to many US American authors of short stories;
- Show familiarity with key critical approaches in both the study of the short story in general and in relation to the particular American writers discussed on the module.

Assessment Details:

- Number of Components: 1
- Name/Type of Component(s): Essay
- Word Count of Component(s): 3,000 words
- Percentage Value of Component(s): 100%

Preliminary Reading List:

All primary texts for the module are included in the following anthology:

Joyce Carol Oates, ed. *The Oxford Book of American Short Stories* (2nd ed. 2013)

In addition to Oates's anthology, the following provide useful background:

- Martin Scofield, *The Cambridge Introduction to the American Short Story* (2006)
- Douglas Tallack, *The Nineteenth-Century American Short Story: Language, Form and Ideology* (1993)

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.**