

Sophister Module Description Template 2026-27

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

Short Name: US Fiction & Film

Lecturer Name(s) and Email Address(es): Dr. Kevin Power (powerk9@tcd.ie)

ECTS Weighting: 10

Semester Taught MT/HT: HT

Year JF/SF/JS/SS: SS

Module Content:

Beginning in the late 1970s, the dominant ideology in the West, and particularly in the United States, was a pro-free-market philosophy that came to be known as Neoliberalism. Taking advantage of an increasingly networked world, neoliberal US administrations from Ronald Reagan to Barack Obama rolled back many of the social, political, and economic structures that had been built in the aftermath of the Second World War, in the name of a globalized free-market run largely on computer networks. This course begins in 2001, at the peak of what the critic Adam Kelly has called “normative neoliberalism,” and reads texts from Jonathan Franzen’s 2001 novel *The Corrections* to Alex Garland’s 2024 film *Civil War* and Adelle Waldman’s 2024 novel *Help Wanted*, to chart the success of various neoliberalisms in eroding the postwar order and paving the way for an anti-neoliberal, and increasingly populist-authoritarian, United States.

Learning Outcomes:

- **Students should gain a broad understanding of US history from c.1980 to the present**
- **Students should gain a more granular, multi-perspective understanding of US history and literature from 2001-present**

Learning Aims:

- Students will be able to think in informed & complex ways about 21st c. American literature & film and the conditions of its production

Assessment Details:

- Number of Components: 2

- Name/Type of Component(s): Presentation & essay
- Word Count of Component(s): Presentation: 1000 words, Essay: 5000 words
- Percentage Value of Component(s): presentation 20%, essay 80%

Preliminary Reading List:

- Jonathan Franzen, *The Corrections* (Fourth Estate)
- Alex Garland, dir., *Civil War* (A24)
- Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (Picador)
- Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games* (Scholastic)
- Dave Eggers, *The Circle* (Penguin)
- Gillian Flynn, *Gone Girl* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson)
- Ling Ma, *Severance* (Granta)
- Otessa Moshfegh, *My Year of Rest and Relaxation* (Vintage)
- Adelle Waldman, *Help Wanted* (Serpent's Tail)

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.