

Fresher/Sophister Module Description Template 2025-26

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

Short Name: Contemporary 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: 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; and when another presidential election looms. 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:

- On successful completion of this module, a student should be able to:
- 1. Identify and describe key intellectual and aesthetic trends in contemporary US fiction and film
- 2. Employ a range of critical and interpretative strategies using relevant theoretical frameworks
- 3. Generate research questions intended to broaden our understanding of an emerging cultural/historical moment
- 4. Evaluate the work of contemporary US writers and filmmakers in sophisticated written and oral presentation

Learning Aims:

- This module aims to offer students at Sophister level a set of critical tools for thinking and writing about recent and emerging trends in US culture and politics. By paying close attention to a range of recently-released texts, the module provides a provisional, but wide-ranging, overview of a cultural/political/historical context that will continue to be relevant as the 21st century progresses.

Assessment Details:

- Number of Components: 2
- Name/Type of Component(s): In-class Presentation, essay
- Word Count of Component(s): c.1000 words (presentation), 4-5000 words (essay)
- Percentage Value of Component(s): 20% presentation, 80% essay

Preliminary Reading List:

Jonathan Franzen, *The Corrections* (Fourth Estate)
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)
Ottessa Moshfegh, *My Year of Rest and Relaxation* (Vintage)
Mary Gaitskill, *This is Pleasure*

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.