

Fresher/Sophister Module Description Template 2025-26

Full Name: Imagining the Contemporary: No Future?

Short Name: Imagining the Contemporary

Lecturer Name(s) and Email Address(es): Julie Bates; batesju@tcd.ie

ECTS Weighting: 5 ECTS

Semester Taught MT/HT: HT

Year JF/SF/JS/SS: SF

Module Content:

As critics including Eric Hayot have pointed out, it can be difficult to analyse and write about contemporary culture because we lack the critical distance to gain perspective on works that depict our own historical moment. This module aims to provide some of that critical distance, or 'leverage' as Hayot describes it. Each week the module focuses on a different socio-political topic, examining how it has been explored in a pair of texts. The module covers a wide range of creative works, critical concepts, and cultural theories from the 20th and 21st centuries. The creative 'texts' include novels, films, essays, autofiction, memoir, a play, TV episode, and photo-text book.

Two important points to note:

The emphasis of the module is on comparative analysis, so we encourage you to read or watch as many of the set texts as possible in advance of the module. In the case of some texts, you will be asked to read excerpts rather than the entire text.

Some texts include offensive language, including racial, gender-based, able-ist, sexual and other slurs, and portray troubling events and narratives. We want to flag this in advance, and to emphasise that the School of English is committed to the critical analysis of these texts and of their contexts.

Learning Outcomes:

- Explore the concept of 'the contemporary'
- Reflect on a range of socio-political concerns, including issues related to humanism, economics, the environment, technology, gender, class, race, and migration
- Assess the ways in which socio-political concerns have been represented and explored by a range of writers in a range of genres and media, and in different periods

Learning Aims:

- Develop the skills to make a comparative analysis of a range of creative and critical works produced in the 20th and 21st centuries
- Develop a critical vocabulary for discussing the socio-political concerns and themes surveyed by the module

Assessment Details:

- Number of Components: 1
- Name/Type of Component(s): Exam
- Word Count of Component(s): 2 Questions
- Percentage Value of Component(s): 100%

Preliminary Reading List:

- Svetlana Alexievich, *Chernobyl Prayer* (1997)
- John Berger and Jean Mohr, *A Seventh Man* (1975)
- Jim Crace, *Harvest* (2013)
- Shelagh Delaney, *A Taste of Honey* (1958); film dir. Tony Richardson (1961)
- Jacques Derrida et al., 'No Apocalypse, Not Now (Full Speed Ahead, Seven Missiles, Seven Missives)' (1984)
- Bernardine Evaristo, *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019)
- Caleb Femi, *Poor* (2020)
- Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (2009)
- Mohsin Hamid, *Exit West* (2017)
- Juliet Jacques, *Trans* (2015)
- *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, dir. Stanley Kubrick (1964)
- Tom McCarthy, *Satin Island* (2015)
- Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts* (2015)

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.**