

## ENU22003: US American Identities: Harlem Renaissance to the Present

### Michaelmas Term 2025

Module Coordinator: Prof Philip Coleman  
Lecturers: Prof Philip Coleman; Prof Bernice Murphy; Dr Kevin Power  
ECTS: 5  
Assessment: One mid-term assignment (40%) and one end-of-term examination (60%). Further details to follow.

- *Please note that lectures for this module will begin in week 2. Lectures will be provided on Blackboard in week 7.*
- *Lectures will be held on [TBD]*
- *Texts to be discussed in some lectures will be made available on Blackboard. Recommended editions for other texts are given in the reading list below.*

**Module Description:** This module examines the ways that different kinds of identity have been defined and interrogated in the history of US American literature and culture. Considering a wide range of examples from the 1850s to the 2020s, with texts drawn from all of the major genres of literary production – short and long fiction, critical and creative non-fiction, poetry and drama (including film) – lectures will explore the ways that writers have interrogated the idea of what it has meant to be ‘American’ from the nineteenth century to the present moment. A particular emphasis will be placed throughout on the ways that ideas about race, nationality, class, and sexuality/gender have informed different articulations of US American identities.

### Lecture Schedule:

- Week 1:** No lectures
- Week 2:** Introducing US American Identities. Read extracts from texts by Mary Rowlandson, Frederick Douglass, and Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz on Blackboard (BM)
- Week 3:** Langston Hughes, selected poems (Blackboard) (PC)
- Week 4:** F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (KP)
- Week 5:** Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (PC)
- Week 6:** Arthur Miller, *The Crucible* (KP)
- Week 7:** **This week’s lecture will be recorded and uploaded to Blackboard**

Shirley Jackson, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* by Shirley Jackson (BM)

**Week 8:** Allen Ginsberg, selected poems (Blackboard) (PC)

**Week 9:** Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (PC)

**Week 10:** Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (KP)

**Week 11:** Viet Than Nguyen, *The Refugees* (PC)

**Week 12:** Robert Eggers, dir. *The Witch: A New-England Folk Tale* (BM)

### **Learning Outcomes:**

On successful completion of this module, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate detailed understanding of the origins, development and range of modern US American literature;
- Show awareness of the social and historical contexts and movements of literary production in the United States;
- Engage critically with a range of genres pertinent to the study of US American literature;
- Demonstrate close knowledge of key influential and characteristic US American texts;
- Reflect critically on how race, gender, sexual orientation, and class, have shaped literary production in the literary history of the United States

### **Recommendations for Primary and Secondary Reading:**

#### *Primary*

Some primary texts will be made available on Blackboard, as indicated above. You should try to obtain reliable editions of the following texts yourself:

Fitzgerald, F. Scott, *The Great Gatsby*  
Hurston, Zora Neale, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*  
McCarthy, Cormac, *The Road*  
Miller, Arthur, *The Crucible*  
Nguyen, Viet Thanh, *The Refugees*  
Silko, Leslie Marmon, *Ceremony*

#### *Secondary*

Baudrillard, Jean, *America*, London: Verso, 1988.

- Bueka, Robert. *SuburbiaNation: Reading Suburban Landscape in Twentieth Century Fiction and Film*. Palgrave Macmillan 2004.
- Brands, H.W. *The Devil We Knew: Americans and the Cold War*. Oxford, Oxford U.P, 1993.
- Brookeman, Christopher, *American Culture and Society Since the 1930s*. London: Macmillan, 1984.
- Bergland, Réne, *The National Uncanny: Indian Ghosts and American Subjects* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 2000.
- Bercovitch, Sacvan, *The Rites of Assent: Transformations in the Symbolic Construction of America*, New York; London, Routledge, 1993.
- Bradbury, Malcolm, and Ruland, Richard, *From Puritanism to Postmodernism: A History of American Literature*. New York: Viking, 1991.
- Brogan, Hugh, *The Penguin History of the United States of America*, Second Edition. New York, London: Penguin, 2001.
- Bolin, Alice, *Dead Girls: Essays on Surviving an American Obsession*, New York: William Morrow, 2018.
- Chafe, William, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War Two*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Edmundson, Mark, *Nightmare on Main Street: Angels, Sadomasochism, and the Culture of Gothic* (Harvard University Press, 1997).
- Fender, Stephen, *Plotting the Golden West: American Literature and the Rhetoric of the California Trail* (Cambridge University Press, 1991)
- Fisher, Philip, *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel* (Oxford University Press, 1987) (ebook available in full through the library catalogue: [https://elib.tcd.ie/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=143649&ebv=EB&ppid=pp\\_Cover](https://elib.tcd.ie/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=143649&ebv=EB&ppid=pp_Cover))
- Gelpi, Albert, *A Coherent Splendor: The American Poetic Renaissance, 1910-1950*, 1987.
- Gilbert, Susan M., and Gubar, Sandra, *Still Mad: American Women Writers and the Feminist Imagination*, W.W. Norton, 2021.
- Goddu, Theresa. *Gothic America: Narrative, History and Nation*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

- Fielder, Leslie A., *Love and Death in the American Novel*, London: Paladin, 1970.
- Marcus, Greil and Werner Sollors, *A New Literary History of America*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 2009.
- Matterson, Stephen, *American Literature: The Essential Glossary*, 2003.
- May, Elaine Tyler, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, Basic Books, 2008.
- Murphy, Bernice M., *The California Gothic in Fiction and Film*, Edinburgh University Press, 2002.
- Nash, Roderick, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, Yale University Press, 1967.
- Packer, George, *The Great Unwinding: An Inner History of the New America*, 2013.
- Patterson, James. *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Poole, W. Scott, *Monsters in America: Our Historical Obsession with the Hideous and the Haunting*, Baylor UP, 2011.
- Taylor, Alan, *American Colonies: The Penguin History of the United States*, New York; Penguin, 2001
- Tompkins, Jane, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860*, Oxford, OUP, 1986.
- Slotkin, Richard. *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860*. Normal: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973.
- Sullivan, Jas. M, and Ashraf M. Esmail, eds *African American Identity: Racial and Cultural Dimensions of the Black Experience* (2014).
- Showlater, Elaine, *A Jury of Her Peers: American Women Writers from Anne Bradstreet to Annie Proulx*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009.
- Williams, William Carlos, *In the American Grain*, New York: Penguin, 1935: 1956.
- Williams, Linda, *Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black and White from Uncle Tom to O.J. Simpson* (Princeton University Press, 2002) (ebook available in full through the library catalogue: <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb08218.0001.001>)
- Zinn, Howard, *A People's History of the United States*, New York: Harper Collins, 2009.