

ENU11011 US American Identities

Michaelmas Term 2025

Module Coordinator:	Prof Philip Coleman
Lecturers:	Prof Philip Coleman; Dr Janice Deitner; Dr Dara Downey; Prof Bernice Murphy; Dr Kevin Power.
ECTS:	10
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.*
- *Lecture venues and dates [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 modern and contemporary US writing in a variety of genres, interrogating the changing ideas of national literature and exploring the emergence of a variety of voices laying claim to being American. Texts will be drawn from the main genres of prose fiction, drama and poetry.

Lecture Schedule:

Week 1:	No lectures
Week 2:	1. Introducing US American Identities. Read extracts from texts by Mary Rowlandson, Frederick Douglass, and Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz on Blackboard (BM) 2. Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman, selected texts (Blackboard) (PC)
Week 3:	1. Langston Hughes, selected poems (Blackboard) (PC) 2. Emily Dickinson and Robert Frost, selected poems (Blackboard) (PC)
Week 4:	1. F. Scott Fitzgerald, <i>The Great Gatsby</i> (KP) 2. Nathanael West, <i>The Day of the Locust</i> (BM)
Week 5:	1. Zora Neale Hurston, <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> (DD) 2. Willa Cather, <i>My Ántonia</i> (DD)

- Week 6:**
1. Arthur Miller, *The Crucible* (KP)
 2. Saul Bellow, *Seize the Day* (KP)
- Week 7:** **This week's lectures will be recorded and uploaded to Blackboard**
1. Shirley Jackson, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (BM)
 2. Joan Didion, 'Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream' and 'The White Album' (Blackboard) (BM)
- Week 8:**
1. Allen Ginsberg, selected poems (Blackboard) (PC)
 2. Adrienne Rich, selected poems (Blackboard) (PC)
- Week 9:**
1. Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (PC)
 2. Octavia Butler, *Dawn* (JD)
- Week 10:**
1. Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (KP)
 2. Gillian Flynn, *Gone Girl* (BM)
- Week 11:**
1. Viet Than Nguyen, *The Refugees* (PC)
 2. Ottessa Moshfegh, *My Year of Rest and Relaxation* (KP)
- Week 12:**
1. Robert Eggers, dir. *The Witch: A New-England Folk Tale* (BM)
 2. Conclusion and exam preparation (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:

Butler, Octavia, *Dawn*
Cather, Willa, *My Ántonia*
Fitzgerald, F. Scott, *The Great Gatsby*
Hurston, Zora Neale, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
McCarthy, Cormac, *The Road*
Miller, Arthur, *The Crucible*
Moshfegh, Ottessa, *My Year of Rest and Relaxation*
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)
- 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.