

Syllabus

Subject

Subject / Group	11146 - The American Way(s). Culture and Literature in the US in the 21 st Century / 1
Degree	Master's Degree in Modern Languages and Literatures
Credits	5
Teaching period	Second semester
Language of instruction	English

Lecturers

Office hours for students

Lecturer	Starting time	Finishing time	Day	Start date	End date	Office / Building
Juan José Bermúdez de Castro	16:00	17:00	Wednesday	10/09/2018	21/12/2018	BE-13 Ramon Lull (Tutorials by prior e-mail notification)
Acaso j.bermudezcastro@uib.es	13:00	14:00	Tuesday	07/01/2019	07/06/2019	BE-13 Ramon Lull (Tutorials by prior e-mail notification)

Context

'The American Way(s) of Life: Culture and Literature in the US in the 21st Century' is a subject on the Literary and Cultural Studies Pathway for the Master's in Modern Languages and Literatures at the UIB. It intends to introduce students to the concerns, dreams, fears, vicissitudes, transformations, desires... in short, the realities comprising the idiosyncrasy of American society in the 21st century. These realities are also being looked into at universities across different American Studies departments. After an initial introductory class on the basic concepts of critical and literary theory, the subject's remaining content shall be split into nine thematic blocks. Each session on the Master's shall look at a different issue in relation to current American lifestyles (although the nine topics can be deemed as intimately interlinked) and students shall acquire the essential theoretical bases for these nine topics, to then look into two of them more in-depth throughout the course. Each topic shall be introduced by the lecturer and include two theoretical essays that all students must read before the corresponding session. In turn, each topic shall be linked to cultural production (mostly novels, comics, short stories or films) that shall be worked on and analysed in the specific session. The nine topics are: 1. The American Way(s) of Life; 2. 9/11 and Terrorism; 3. Memory, Trauma & Public Space; 4. The War on Terror;

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5. Globalisation and Ecocriticism; 6. Feminism 2.0, Queer and Transculture; 7. Viralism, Techno-Dystopias & Social Media; 8. Immigration & New Ethnic Studies; and 9. The US Government: Bush, Obama & Trump.

Requirements

Students are recommended to have basic knowledge of Anglo-Saxon history and culture, and be familiar with literary and film analysis.

Essential

It is **ESSENTIAL** for students to keep up with the rate of reading and activities that are mandatory throughout the course.

It is **IMPORTANT** for students to have an intermediate-upper intermediate reading level in English (level B2).

Since the material used on the course (essays, novels, films) shall be in English, students are expected to have a good level of English to be able to follow the sessions and use the available resources. Although some sessions may be in Spanish, most of the bibliography is in English.

Skills

Specific

* In terms of specific skills, those below shall be given particular priority:

1. - The acquisition of postgraduate-level theory and practical knowledge in the field of 21st-century US literature and culture.
2. - The acquisition of necessary methodologies to analyse literary, cultural and linguistic phenomena from interdisciplinary approaches.
3. - The ability to interpret, comment on and assess texts (essays, novels, films, comics) based on a critical, literary and cultural analysis, with students being able to form opinions based on the acquired knowledge and analysis mechanisms.
4. - Students should be able to transmit their knowledge, analysis and conclusions in a clear, direct and effective oral presentation.
5. - The ability to structure and write quality articles and reviews for possible publication in specialised academic journals.
6. - The ability to recognise new research possibilities and pathways within the discipline under analysis, with students being able to apply the knowledge acquired and their analytical skills to new or relatively unknown settings within wider or multidisciplinary contexts beyond their field of study.
7. - Students should be fully aware of the social and ethical responsibilities linked to research activity.

Generic

* This subject will work on the general skills set out on the official Master's in Modern Languages and Literatures website. For further information, please see: <http://estudis.uib.es/es/master/MLL2>.

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Basic

- * The core skills students must attain at the end of the Master's can be viewed at the following link:
http://estudis.uib.cat/master/comp_basiques

Content

Theory content

Topic 0. CRITICAL & LITERARY THEORY

Before completing the Master's in Modern Languages and Literatures at the UIB, students MUST be aware of the key thinkers of the 20th century and how they contributed to our current view of the world. There is no better way to see than others than by standing on the shoulders of giants. Therefore, students will work collaborative in this introductory session to briefly describe what the most important 20th-century literary theory and criticism movements defended, what the most important contribution was by specific thinkers and certain fundamental principles of critical theory.

Topic 1. THE AMERICAN WAY(S) OF LIFE

This first block shall explore the crisis of the traditional American family and its reconfiguration through 21st-century fiction. To do this, we shall begin by working on the differences between realism, modernism, post-modernism and hyper-realism from a theoretical and practical approach, to get inside the particular universe of the writer Jonathan Franzen and his novel *The Corrections* (2001), winner of the National Book Award in 2001. In turn, the selected audiovisual material for this session shall be the independent film *Happiness* (1998), directed by Todd Solondz, which analyses the concept of the traditional American family.

Topic 2. 9/11 & TERRORISM

The second thematic block shall look at the phenomenon of international terrorism and how the terrorist attacks of 9/11 affected ways of life in the US. To do this, we shall work on the essays 'Aproximación al terrorismo' and 'Arterrorismo' included in my collection 'Arte y Terrorismo: De la transgresión y sus mecanismos discursivos' (2014), as well as Marius Babias' essay 'Zones of Indifference' (2008). The fictional pieces to be studied in this block are Jonathan Safran Foer's novel *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2005) and Paul Greengrass's film *United 93* (2006).

Topic 3. MEMORY, TRAUMA & PUBLIC SPACE

The third thematic block on memory, trauma and public space shall begin with the reading and commentary of perhaps the two most important figures in trauma theory and its representation in collective imagination: E. Ann Kaplan and Marita Sturken. We will therefore work on the introduction to the books *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (2005) by Kaplan, and *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic and the Politics of Remembering* (1997) by Sturken. In terms of fiction, we shall look at Amy Waldman's novel *The Submission* (2011), winner of the American Book Award, Denis Villeneuve's film *Incendies* (2010), and how both approach trauma and the negotiation between collective memory and public space.

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The fourth block on the so-dubbed 'War on Terror' shall begin with a theoretical approach to Judith Butler's preface to her five essays in *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004), as well as Judie Newman's introduction to her volume *Utopia and Terror in Contemporary American Fiction* (2013). In terms of fiction, we will work on Phil Klay's short stories about the war in Iraq from *Redeployment* (2014)—winner of both of the National Book Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award in 2014. With regard to audiovisual material, the treatment of the war in Iraq in Kathryn Bigelow's Academy Award-winning film (Best Film and Best Director) *The Hurt Locker* (2008) shall be analysed.

Topic 5. GLOBALISATION & ECOCRITICISM

Block five will look at two phenomena that have elicited huge interest in the academic world in the 21st century due, in part, to their effects on the planet as whole: globalisation and new environmental studies or so-called ecocriticism. In this sense, we shall start by analysing the introduction to Ambrose & Brinkley's classic *Rise to Globalism* (1971), the first chapter ('From Ethnocide to Ideocide') from Arjun Appadurai's book *Fear of Small Numbers* (2006), and Cheryll Glotfelty's introduction to the foundational text of ecocriticism, *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1997). In terms of fiction, we will work on Yann Martel's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *Life of Pi* (2001) and Susanne Bier's Academy Award-winning film for Best Foreign Language Film *In a Better World* (2010).

Topic 6. FEMINISM 2.0, QUEER & TRANSCULTURE

Block six shall look at aspects linked to feminism and queer theory from 21st-century perspectives, especially in the field of transgender and transsexual studies. In this vein, we will shall analyse the essays in Susan Stryker's foundational text 'An Introduction to Transgender Terms and Concepts' included in *Transgender History* (2008) and Jacob Hale's 'Suggested Rules for Non-Transsexuals Writing about Transsexuals, Transsexuality, Transsexualism or Trans_' (2007). In terms of fiction, we will work on Jeffrey Eugenides's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *Middlesex* (2002) and Duncan Tucker's *Transamerica* (2005).

Topic 7. VIRALISM, TECHNO-DYSTOPIAS & SOCIAL MEDIA

Block seven looks directly at the dangers that have arisen in the technology era and on social media in how we perceive and experience reality, as well as the new double life paradigm (real and virtual) we have all hastily become participants in, without barely an unwritten rulebook, learning as we go by trial and error. In this sense, we will analyse in this section Slavoj Žižec's essay 'Passions of the Real, Passions of Semblance', included in his book *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (2002), as well as Chomsky's essay 'Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda' (2002). With regard to fiction, we will analyse Cormac McCarthy's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Road* (2006), as well as Spike Jonze's film *Her* (2013).

Topic 8. IMMIGRATION & NEW ETHNIC STUDIES

Block eight analyses the situation of powerlessness and invisibility as citizens experienced by refugees or immigrants (I refuse to use the term 'illegals' to refer to human beings) due to the new immigration policies introduced by the US government in recent years. In this section we will look at Slavoj Žižec's essay 'Double Blackmail', included in his book *The New Class Struggle: Refugees and Terror* (2016), as well as the introduction to Seumas Milne's book *The Revenge of History: The Battle for the 21st Century* (2013). In terms of fiction, we will work on Junot Diaz's Pulitzer Prize- and National Book Critics Circle Award-winning novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007), as well as Joshua Marston's film *Maria Full of Grace* (2004).

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Topic 9. US GOVERNMENT: BUSH, OBAMA & TRUMP

The last block on the subject is dedicated to the different White House administrations in the 21st century: George W. Bush (2001-2008), Barack Obama (2008-2016) and Donald Trump (2016-). In turn, the 21st century has seen a series of uprisings around the globe in opposition to the traditional 'top-down' power system, which has led to new forms of empowerment and citizens actively engaging with politics, that shall also be analysed in this block. The essays to work on in class for this last session shall be the first chapter of 'The State of Exception as a Paradigm of Government' in Giorgio Agamben's *State of Exception* (2005), and Noam Chomsky's introduction to his book *On Anarchism* (2013). With regard to fiction, Art Spiegelman's comic *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004) and George Clooney's film *The Ides of March* (2011) shall be studied.

Teaching Methodology

Every session shall begin with a theory introduction and explanation by the lecturer, after which all students and the lecturer shall undertake a critical analysis of two brief theory essays linked to the session topic (it is ESSENTIAL for students to have read the material to be discussed in class beforehand). Students who have decided to look more in-depth at this topic will then do an oral presentation on their analysis and conclusions about the selected novel linked to the topic, following by a Q&A with their colleagues to develop and promote collaborative learning. Finally, the entire group shall watch and comment on the selected audiovisual material.

In-class work activities (1.2 credits, 30 hours)

Format	Name	Group	Type	Description	Hours
Theory classes	Introduction	Large group	(G)	Theory introduction from the lecturer to introduce the topic and present the key ideas and concepts from each of the thematic blocks comprising the course	10
Seminars and workshops	Watching and commentary on audiovisual material	Medium group	(M)	Watching and commentary on the films, documentaries and audiovisual material linked to each of the nine thematic blocks.	7.5
Practical classes	Critical analysis of brief essays	Large group	(G)	Group analysis by all students of the two mandatory briefs essays for reading linked to each thematic block.	7.5
Practical classes	Two individual oral presentations	Large group	(G)	Individual critical analysis presentations on the two selected novels linked to the two areas that students have decided to look into more in-depth.	2
ECTS tutorials	Group tutorial	Small group	(P)	Group tutorial where each student presents their final project proposal for the course and will receive guidelines from the lecturer about it.	1.5
Assessment	Written exam	Large group	(G)	Written examination testing the students' understanding of the theory, literary and film content seen throughout the course, as well as their skills in applying them to other real or simulated contexts.	1.5

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Students will be provided with the subject schedule on the UIBdigital platform at the start of the semester. As a minimum, this schedule shall include the dates for the continuous assessment tests and for submission of work. In addition, the lecturer shall notify students as to whether the subject work plan shall be undertaken as per the schedule or via another method, including the Aula Digital platform.

Distance work activities (3.8 credits, 95 hours)

Format	Name	Description	Hours
Individual work and self- study	Mandatory reading of essays and two novels	Mandatory reading of the two brief theory essays linked to the nine thematic blocks by all students as well as the two selected novels related to the two topics that students have decided to look into more in-depth.	40
Individual work and self- study	Preparing the final project	Preparing the final project proposal for the course.	5
Individual work and self- study	Final course project	Each student shall submit a written project one week after the end of the course with the topic having received prior approval from the group tutorial lecturer on the topic.	45
Group study and work	Preparing the oral presentation	Preparing each of the mandatory oral presentations on the two selected novels alongside colleagues that have chosen to look more in-depth into the research area.	5

Specific hazards and protection measures

The learning activities of this subject do not entail specific health and safety hazards for students. There is, therefore, no need for special protection measures.

Student learning assessment

This subject is only available with the in-class pathway.

The continuous assessment activities (participation in analysis and commentary debates on the theory essays, doing the two mandatory oral presentations, active student participation in the debates after said presentations, commentary on the viewing of the mandatory audiovisual material and the final course project proposal tutorial) shall be undertaken during the course sessions. If students fail to attend said sessions, their mark for them shall be 0 (zero) and they cannot be recovered. The final course project must be submitted on the day of the written examination that shall take place one week after the course ends. Where students fail to obtain a mark of 5 in both (final project and written examination), they may be re-submitted or re-done in the extraordinary assessment period with the indicated revisions. The project must be get a mark of 5 to pass the subject; the average mark shall not be calculated with the marks from the continuous assessment with a mark under 5.

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In the event of plagiarism, article 33 of the Academic Regulations shall apply: 'Regardless of the disciplinary procedure that may be taken against the guilty student, clear falsification of any assessment component included in the subject course guides shall, as per the lecturer's evaluation, lead to a deduction in their mark which could include a '0 fail' mark in the annual subject assessment'. Specifically, fraud includes: a) The use of any method aimed at facilitating the answers in written examinations or tests; b) The inclusion of fragments of other works in the individual or group work and practicals presented in a way as to pass for the student's own work (plagiarism).

Fraud in assessment components

In accordance with article 33 of the Academic Regulations, 'regardless of the disciplinary procedure that may be taken against the guilty student, clear falsification of any assessment component included in the subject course guides shall, as per the lecturer's evaluation, lead to a deduction in the student's mark which could include a '0 fail' mark in the annual subject assessment'.

Two individual oral presentations

Format	Practical classes
Technique	Oral tests (non-recoverable)
Description	Individual critical analysis presentations of the two selected novels linked to the two areas that the students have decided to look into in-depth.
Assessment criteria	Two oral presentations on the critical and literary analysis of two selected novels on the topics that the students have decided to look into in-depth. The content of the presentations shall be assessed although students' oral and communication skills are equally or more important, as are their skills in expressing their ideas clearly and effectively.

Percentage of final mark: 30% of mark, minimum mark of 5

Written Exam

Format	Assessment
Technique	Long-answer tests, discursive (recoverable)
Description	Written exam to test the students' acquisition of the theory, literature and film content seen throughout the course, as well as their skills in applying them to other real or simulated contexts.
Assessment criteria	Written exam where students will show their comprehension of the course content and their ability in applying said skills to other real or simulated contexts shall be assessed.

Percentage of final mark: 30% of mark, minimum mark of 5

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Final course project

Format	Individual self-study and work
Technique	Long-answer tests, discursive (recoverable)
Description	Each student shall submit a written piece of work one week after the course ends, the topic of which shall have received prior approval from the lecturer in the group tutorial held for this purpose.
Assessment criteria	Written work where students shall demonstrate their skill in writing a research article worthy of publication in a specialised journal in the field.

Percentage of final mark: 40% of mark, minimum mark of 5

Resources, bibliography and supplementary documentation

Basic bibliography

- Agamben, Giorgio. "The State of Exception as a Paradigm of Government." In *State of Exception*. Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 2005. pp. 1-31. Print.
- Appadurai, Arjun. "From Ethnocide to Ideocide." In *Fear of Small Numbers*. Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2006. pp. 1-13. Print.
- Babias, Marius. "Zones of Indifference: The World in a State of Exception on the Relations of Populism", "Public Sphere" and "Terrorism." In *Arte y Terrorismo*, Madrid: Brumaria, 2008. pp. 225-230. Print.
- Bermúdez de Castro, Juanjo. *Rewriting Terror: The 9/11 Terrorists in American Fiction*. Madrid: Univ. de Alcalá, Instituto Benjamin Franklin, 2012. Print.
- Butler, Judith. Preface. In *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. New York: Verso, 2004. pp. xi-xxi. Print.
- Chomsky, Noam. *Media Control: The Spectacular Achievement of Propaganda*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002. Print.
- __. Introduction. In *On Anarchism*. New York: Penguin, 2013. pp. 7-16. Print.
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- Kaplan, E. Ann. "Introduction: 9/11 and Disturbing Remains." In *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Loss in Media and Literature*. New Jersey: Rutgers Univ. Press, 2005. pp. 1-23. Print.
- McHale, Brian. "From Modernist to Postmodernist Fiction: Change of Dominant." In *Postmodernist Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 1987. pp. 1-11. Print.
- Milne, Seamus. Introduction. In *The Revenge of History: The Battle for the 21st Century*. New York: Verso, 2012. pp. vii-xxii. Print.
- Newman, Judie. Introduction. In *Utopia and Terror in Contemporary American Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 2013. pp. 1-20. Print.
- Stryker, Susan. "An Introduction to Transgender Terms and Concepts." In *Transgender History*. Ed. Susan Stryker. Berkley: Seal Press, 2008. pp. 1-30. Print.
- Sturken, Marita. Introduction. In *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, The AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. Berkley: Univ. Of California Press, 1997. pp. 1-18. Print.
- Zizec, Slavoj. "Passions of the Real, Passions of Semblance." In *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*. New York: Verso, 2002. pp. 5-32. Print.

Supplementary bibliography

- Adorno, Theodor W. "An Essay on Cultural Criticism and Society" (1949). *Prisms*. Trans. Samuel and Sherry Weber. Cambridge: MIT P, 1967. Print.



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- Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses". *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971. Print. Trans. Ben Brewster. Trans. of "Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d'État." Toulouse: La Pensée, 1970.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. 1983. Rev. ed. London: Verso, 2006. Print.
- Badiou, Alain. *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*. Trans. Peter Hallward. London: Verso, 2001. Print. Trans. of L'éthique: Essai sur la conscience du Mal Paris: Hatier, 1993.
- Benjamin, Walter. "Theses on the Philosophy of History." 1939. *Illuminations*. Edit. Hannah Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken, 1969. Print. Trans. of *Gesammelte Schriften*. 1.2. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1955.
- Blanchot, Maurice. *The Writing of the Disaster*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1986. Print. Trans. of L'Écriture du désastre. Paris: Gallimard, 1980.
- Debord, Guy. *La Société du spectacle*. Paris: Buchet-Chastel, 1967. Print.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Of Hospitality*. Trans. Rachel Bowlby. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000. Print. Trans. of De l'hospitalité. Paris: Calmann-Lévi, 1997.
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- Ricoeur, Paul. *History and Truth*. Trans. Charles A. Kelbley. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1965. Print. Trans. of Histoire et Vérité. Paris: Seuil, 1955.
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- Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Farrar, 2003. Print.
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