

## American Dreams & Nightmares: Post-War American History & Literature

| 7.1 Module Overview                                  |   |                                       |  |                 |                                    |  |           |             |           |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|--|-----------------|------------------------------------|--|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| <b>Module Number</b>                                 |   | <b>Module Title</b>                   | American Dreams & Nightmares: Post-War American History & Literature |                 |                                    |  |           |             |           |
| <b>Stage of Principal Programme</b>                  |   |                                       | <b>3</b>   | <b>Semester</b> | <b>2</b>                           | <b>Duration.</b><br><i>(Weeks F/T)</i>     | <b>12</b> | <b>ECTS</b> | <b>10</b> |
| <b>Mandatory / Elective (M/E)</b>                    | E | <b>Hours of Learner Effort / Week</b> | 3  |                 |                                    |  |           |             |           |
| Analysis of required hours of learning effort        |   |                                       |  |                 |                                    |  |           |             |           |
| <b>Teaching and Learning Modalities</b>              |   |                                       |  |                 | <b>✓if relevant to this module</b> | <b>Approx. proportion of total (hours)</b> |           |             |           |
| <b>Contact Hours</b>                                 |   |                                       |  |                 |                                    |  |           |             |           |
| In person face-to-face                               |   |                                       |  |                 | ✓                                  | 36   |           |             |           |
| Synchronous  |   |                                       |  |                 |                                    |  |           |             |           |
| <b>Indirect/Non-Contact Hours</b>                    |   |                                       |  |                 |                                    |  |           |             |           |
| Asynchronous   |   |                                       |  |                 |                                    |  |           |             |           |
| Work Based   |   |                                       |  |                 |                                    |  |           |             |           |
| Other:   |   |                                       |  |                 |                                    |  |           |             |           |
| • Independent self- direct reading                   |   |                                       |  |                 | ✓                                  | 94   |           |             |           |
| • Research, preparation and completion of assessment |   |                                       |  |                 | ✓                                  | 60   |           |             |           |
| • Essay Preparation                                  |   |                                       |  |                 | ✓                                  | 60   |           |             |           |
| <b>Total</b>   |   |                                       |  |                 |                                    | 250  |           |             |           |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Pre-Requisite Module, if any. Module # and Title</b>   | N/A   |
| <b>Co-Requisite Module, if any. Module # and Title</b>  | N/A   |
| <b>Maximum number of learners per instance of the module</b>  | 45  |
| <b>Specification of the qualifications (academic, pedagogical and professional/occupational) and experience required of staff working in this module.</b> |   |
| <b>Role e.g., Tutor, Mentor, Lecturer, Research Supervisor, etc.</b>  | <b>Qualifications &amp; experience required</b>                               |
| Lecturer  | A minimum level 9 qualification in English Literature or closely cognate area |
|   | <b>Staff - Learner Ratio X:Y</b>  |
|   | 1:45  |

| Assessment Techniques – percentage contribution |      |                                   |  |                               |
|---|------|-----------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| <b>Continuous Assessment</b>                    | 100% | <b>Proctored Exam – in person</b> |  | <b>Practical Skills Based</b> |
| <b>Project</b>                                  |      | <b>Proctored Exam – online</b>    |  | <b>Work Based</b>             |
| <b>Capstone (Y/N)?</b>                          | N    | <b>If Yes, describe</b>           |  |                               |

| 7.2 Minimum Intended Module Learning Outcomes (MIMLOs)                  |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| <b>MIMLO</b><br>On completion of this module a learner will be able to: | <b>Related MIPLO #</b> |

|   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| 1. Employ an interdisciplinary approach, which integrates the disciplinary methods of English and History, to analyse post-war American culture, politics and literature. | <b>1, 2, 3, 4</b> |
| 2. Analyse prescribed texts in relation to key historical contexts within post-war American culture and society.  | <b>2, 3, 4</b>    |
| 3. Identify and critically evaluate seminal and transformative developments in poetry, prose and film in America in the post-war of this period.                          | <b>1, 2, 4</b>    |
| 4. Produce an independent piece of written research.  | <b>5, 6</b>       |
| 5. Fully engage with core themes of the course through classroom discussion and debate, and communicate ideas through written, verbal and digital means.                  | <b>3, 7, 8</b>    |

### 7.3 Indicative Module Content, Organisation and Structure

This module integrates the methodologies and disciplinary competencies of both English and History in the study of the literature, politics and culture of post-war America. It will encourage learners to read literature in (and as a product of) its historical contexts, while also interrogating the influence of discourse (both artistic and historiographical) in fomenting and comprehending political and social change. The module will place particular focus on the multivalent concept of the American dream, examining its socio-historical role as a both potent political ideal and as a deceptive cultural discourse obscuring and permitting individual and societal oppression.

Lectures and seminars will be organised in key thematic blocks centred around key historical changes and events, and the literature that engages them. The module structure below is representative:

- Post-war America 1940s & 50s: economic growth, suburbanisation, Cold War hysteria, McCarthyism, and the Beat Generation. **Text – Allen Ginsberg *Howl* (1956)**
- War and Dissent: Vietnam, 1960s Counter-Culture and the collapse of the ‘vital centre’. **Text - Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969)**
- The New Right v social liberalism: Reaganism, the Moral Majority, Christian conservatism v the struggle for equal rights, sexual liberation and gender equality. **Text – Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985)**
- American Neoliberalism at the turn of the millennium: Finance Capitalism, the rise of Wall Street and the Global Financial Crisis **Text – Martine Scorsese, *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013)**
- The American Dream in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: political and societal polarisation, racism and democracy **Text – Angie Thomas, *The Hate U Give* (2018)**

### 7.4 Work-based learning and practice-placement (if applicable)

N/A

### 7.5 Specific module resources required (if applicable)

N/A

### 7.6 Application of programme teaching, learning and assessment strategies to this module

Lectures will present information to learners in a variety of ways: from lecturer-led presentation of relevant historical, cultural, and critical context, to more discursive teaching formats offering greater opportunity to engage in detailed critical analysis of primary texts and historical contexts. In lectures, learners will be strongly encouraged to discuss and interrogate a range of interpretative positions related to the literature, culture and political controversies and contexts under discussion. Lecture content will primarily be displayed using Microsoft PowerPoint, but other presentation software will be deployed as needed: such as Mentimeter or Prezi.

Learners will access class notes, PowerPoints, and relevant articles and documents on Moodle, which will act as the digital interface for the course. A range of weblinks will also be accessible through Moodle, including documentaries, archival recording, and links to other primary sources of relevance to the course. This will facilitate asynchronous learning and encourage learners to develop their sense of cultural context for the texts being considered.

**The assessment for the module is 100% Continuous Assessment.**

**Assessment 1: (80%) Five Fortnightly Assignments (500-700 words)**

Learners will be asked to compose five 500-700 word analyses of assigned module texts in terms of their relationship to their historical contexts. They will be asked to consider how the text is informed by its particular era and how it represents the developing social, political or economic forces of its historical moment. The lectures will be structured in a manner that coherently facilitates learners in the completion this assessment. Lectures will occur in two-week blocks, with each block focused on a specific, theme, text and historical period. The first lecture will outline relevant historical background while the second will take place as a seminar with learners working individually and in groups to analyse relevant sections of the text in light of the lecture theme. This will be an opportunity for formative assessment as the lecturer will structure the class to generate learner discussion and debate, which they will then provide feedback on.

**Assessment 2: 20% - Database Assessment on the American dream (1,000 words)**

Learners will be asked to select a primary text, not studied on the module, that engages with the concept of the America dream. They must then offer analysis of how that text represents the American dream and how that representation speaks to the text's historical context.

| 7.7 Summative Assessment Strategy for this module |  |           |
|---|--|-----------|
| MIMLOs  | Technique(s)   | Weighting |
| 1-5   | <b>Assessment 1: Five Fortnightly Assignments (500-700 words)</b> Learners will be asked to compose five 500-700 word analyses of assigned module texts in terms of their relationship to their historical context | 80%       |
| 1-5   | <b>Assessment 2: - Database Assessment on the American dream (1,000 words)</b> – learners will be asked to select a primary text, not studied on the module, that engages with the concept of the America dream    | 20%       |

| 7.8 Sample Assessment Materials  |
|--|
| <p><b>Assessment 1 (80%) Five Fortnightly Assignments (500-700 words)</b></p> <p>Write five 500-700 word assignments with each focusing on how one assigned module text is informed by its particular era, and how it represents the developing social, political or economic forces of its historical moment. As you will note from the lecture schedule, the lectures on this module are structured in two-week blocks, with each block focused on a specific theme, text and historical period. The first lecture will outline relevant historical background while the second will take place as a seminar in which you will be asked, individually and in groups, to analyse relevant sections of the assigned text in light of its historical context and the lecture theme. This in-class discussion should form the basis of your 500-700 word assignment on each text.</p> <p><b>Assessment 2 (20%): - Database Assessment on the American dream (1,000 words)</b></p> <p>Analyse how one non-course text (produced in the Post War Era to the present) represents and analyses the concept of the 'American Dream' as it pertains to a particular historical context in post-war America. Upload your commentary (1,000 – 1,500 words) onto the class database adding images and links if appropriate.</p> <p><b><i>The 'American Dream' is a profoundly powerful, yet remarkably complex and protean concept within modern American culture. As part of your analysis, you should: a) summarise how your text represents the American dream b) consider to what extent your chosen text endorses and/or subverts the American Dream and c) be clear about how your texts understands and/or interrogates its historical moments</i></b></p> |

You are free to choose from a wide range of media and genre from material culture, including: speeches, newspaper articles, poetry, drama, fiction, film, TV programmes, cartoons, music (and music videos), political speeches, economic treatises, paintings, sculptures, and social/digital media texts.

#### **Database Upload Marking Rubric**

**Appropriateness of material and accuracy of understanding (40%)**

**Depth of research and sophistication of analysis (40%)**

**Efficacy and dynamism of presentation in database entry and clarity of expression (20%)**

Marking of assessments will be in line with the Marking Assessment Guidelines as outlined in Section 3.3 of the College's [Regulations in Relation to Assessment and Standards](#) unless otherwise indicated.

### **7.9 Indicative reading lists and other information resources**

#### **Indicative Core Reading:**

Key Literary Texts: Allen Ginsberg, *Howl* (1956), Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), Martin Scorsese (dir), *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013), Angie Thomas, *The Hate U Give* (2017).  
Chafe, William H., *The Unfinished Journey: American Since World War II*, 8th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015)

#### **Indicative Secondary:**

The list below will be supplemented with articles relevant to individual texts/themes.

Ackerman, Bruce, *We the People (Volume 3): The Civil Rights Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018)

Agnew, Jean-Christophe and Roy Rosenzweig, *A Companion to Post-1945 America* (Boston: Blackwell Publishing, 2006)

Collins, Gail, *America's Women: Four Hundred Years of Dolls, Drudges, Helpmates and Heroines* (New York: William Morrow, 2003)

Cullen, Jim, *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea That Shaped a Nation*. (Oxford University Press, 2003.)

Giles, Paul, *The Global Remapping of American Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011)

Isserman, Maurice and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015)

Petro, Anthony M., *After the Wrath of God: AIDS, Sexuality, and American Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015)

Phillips-Fein, Kim, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009)

Rank, Mark Robert, et.al, *Chasing the American Dream: Understanding What Shapes Our Fortunes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014),

Rutland, Richard and Malcolm Bradbury, *From Puritanism to Postmodernism: A History of American Literature* (London: Penguin Books, 1991)

Tallack, Douglas, *Twentieth-Century America: The Intellectual and Cultural Context* (London: Longman, 1991)

Yannella, Philip, *American Literature in Context after 1929* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011)

Wright, Kai, *The African American Experience: Black History and Culture Through Speeches, Letters, Editorials, Poems, Songs and Stories* (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, Inc., 2009)