

# American College Dublin

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## LIB209 AMERICAN CULTURE ABROAD

<b>Credits:</b>	3 US credits / 6 ECTS credits
<b>Credit level:</b>	Stage one
<b>Prerequisites:</b>	None
<b>Mandatory:</b>	Yes
<b>Contact hours:</b>	40
<b>Academic Year:</b>	2016/17
<b>Semester:</b>	2
<b>Lecturer:</b>	Dr. Peter Rooney

### INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this module learners should be able to:

1. become familiar with theoretical and critical debates concerning the definition of culture, of “high-brow” versus “low-brow” culture, or mass and popular culture;
2. discuss the emergence of mass culture in the United States over the last 150 years or so in the context of American immigration and multiethnic background;
3. evaluate critically the notion of the so-called “American dream” and its appeal both in America and on other continents;
4. appreciate the importance of popular culture as an expression of social consciousness, collective identity and conflict;
5. understand the importance of modern American visual culture, including cinema, television, advertising, and theme parks in reflecting and shaping cultural values and lifestyles;
6. argue about possible reasons for the attractiveness and appeal of American popular culture outside America.

Learning outcomes 1-2 will be assessed by a research paper, 5 by class presentation, and 2-3, 6 by the final examination.

### MODULE OBJECTIVES

The aim of the module is to examine the continuing influence and popular appeal of American twentieth-century culture—music, cinema, fashion, television, sport and food—on European culture and values. Learners will study the historical origins of specifically American popular culture in the context of early American immigration and multiculturalism.

## MODULE CURRICULUM

Learners will realise the module objectives by completing a number of curriculum tasks and activities. These are planned to include the following topics:

- From burlesque and vaudeville to modern mass media and American popular culture;
- Representations of American values and traditions in Hollywood silent cinema;
- Advertisements and American visual culture;
- The blues, racial prejudice, and the “art of suffering”;
- African-American folk music and the birth of modern jazz;
- The myth of the Wild West and the Hollywood Western;
- Capitalism and birth of consumer culture;
- American pioneer experience and the birth of “road” novels and films;
- The wonderful world of Walt Disney;
- Ethnicity, consumerism, and the American youth culture;
- The comedy of American life: why *The Simpsons* make people laugh;
- Postmodernism and the globalization of American culture.

## REQUIRED TEXT

Jim Cullen, ed., *Popular Culture in American History*, Blackwell Publishing, 2001;

M. Thomas Inge, ed., *Handbook of American Popular Culture*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002.

## SUPPLEMENTARY READING LIST

Camille Paglia, *Sex, Art, and American Culture: Essays*, New York: Vintage Books, 1992;

Glenn C. Altschuler, *All Shook Up: How Rock ‘n’ Roll Changed America*, Oxford University Press, 2003;

T. C. Boyle, *The Tortilla Curtain*, New York: Penguin Books, 1995;

Tim O’Brien, *The Things They Carried*, New York: Broadway Books, 1990;

John Okada, *No-No Boy*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976;

Tony Shaw, *Hollywood’s Cold War*, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007;

David Chidester, *Authentic Fakes: Religion and American Popular Culture*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005;

Eric Mazur, Kate McCarthy, *God in the Details: American Religion in Popular Culture*, New York-London: Routledge, 2001;

Nelson George, *Hip Hop America*, Penguin Group, 2005;

Henry A. Giroux, *The Mouse That Roared: Disney and the End of Innocence*, New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001;

William Irwin, Mark. T. Conrad, Aeon J. Skoble, eds., *The Simpsons and Philosophy: The D’oh of Homer*, New York: Open Court Publishing Company, 2001;

Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940*, San Diego: University of California, 1986;

Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*, University of Chicago Press, 1982.

### **INTERNET WEBSITES**

<http://www.wsu.edu/~amerstu/pop/tvrguide.html>  
<http://www.nps.gov/history/>  
<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~YP/yppop.html>  
<http://www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/History.shtml>  
<http://www.afi.com/>  
<http://www.columbia.edu/~lmg21/bookmark.htm>  
[http://library.jwu.edu/research/websites/food\\_america.htm](http://library.jwu.edu/research/websites/food_america.htm)  
<http://www.wsu.edu/~amerstu/pop/ads.html>  
<http://www.americanpopularculture.com/home.htm>  
<http://www.h-net.org/~pcaaca/>

### **MODULE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

The physical structures of the module learning environment include lecturing classrooms supplied with integrated chairs and desks and a whiteboard, a Powerpoint system, overhead projector, television and DVD/video player. The learners also have access to an up-to-date computer laboratory (all computers are connected to the College's network; they are equipped with the Microsoft XP Office suite of software, Microsoft Frontpage and are networked for printing and internet access).

The module learning environment also includes the College's library (the Rooney Library). In cooperation with the teaching staff and in association with Lynn University, Boca Raton, Florida, the Library is able to supply reading and research materials on all aspects of the proposed Liberal Arts degree (as well as a range of materials on history, sociology, literature, languages, art, international relations and environmental studies). There are networked computers (five) and printers, with Internet access and power points for portable computers. The library management system, Voyager, provides an online catalogue. Learners are able to search the catalogue, extend their loans, and place holds on titles from home. An inter-library loan service is available for staff and learners.

### **MODULE TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY**

The module intended learning outcomes are achieved through a range of teaching and learning strategies. These include three hours per week of class time which combines elements of a seminar and tutorial. Learners are expected to take detailed notes in class and to do practical exercises and other classroom activities prescribed by the lecturer. Learners are also expected to dedicate at least two hours per week to self-directed study which includes reading, elementary research, home assignments, group assignment preparation, individual projects, and revision of material for tests and final examinations. Self-study can be conducted in the College Library or at

home. Learners can also contact their lecturer during office hours for further academic support. All these types of teaching provide a versatile opportunity to support and develop learner engagement with the programme.

## **MODULE ASSESSMENT STRATEGY**

The extent to which learners have achieved the module intended learning outcomes is established by different kinds of assessment strategies. These include various forms of continuous assessment and the final exam. The forms of assessment used in the module, together with their weighting, include the following:

- research paper (c. 2000 words), in which learners will present results of their original research on a selected topic relating to American culture (30%);
- class presentation (10 minutes) on a selected topic relating to American culture (10%);
- final examination (60%).

As class attendance is necessary for the achievement of intended learning outcomes, only learners who have attended at least 75% of the classes can sit the final examination.

The grading scale used by the American College Dublin is the following: A (80-100%), B+ (70-79%), B (60-69%), B- (55-59%), C+ (50-54%), C (40-49%), D (35-39%), F (below 35%). Class presentations are assessed using a class presentation rubric (see Section 5.4.6) to ensure transparency, fairness, and consistency of assessment process.

Learners will be instructed in academic techniques of source referencing to avoid plagiarism, that is, unacknowledged appropriation of someone else's ideas, words, and research results. Plagiarism is regarded by the College as a serious offence punishable by downgrading, failure in the course work, and possible dismissal from the College. The College's detailed Plagiarism Statement is included in the Quality Assurance Manual, sections 3.8.1-3.