

COURSE SPECIFICATION DOCUMENT

Academic School/Department:	Communications, Arts and Social Sciences
Programme:	American Studies International History Political Science
FHEQ Level:	6
Course Title:	American Culture Wars
Course Code:	AMS 6215
Course Leader:	Professor Alex Seago
Student Engagement Hours:	120
Lectures:	22.5
Seminar / Tutorials:	22.5
Independent / Guided Learning :	75
Semester:	FALL and/or SPRING and/or SUMMER
Credits:	12 UK CATS credits 6 ECTS credits 3 US credits

Course Description:

This senior level American Studies course focuses on the key, and often highly politically charged cultural issues which characterize contemporary politics and society in the United States. The contrasting regional cultural histories of the United States are addressed, along with their legacies for contemporary racial and ethnic politics. The course turns to the cultural transformation of the 1960s and the impact of this in terms of race, gender and religion. Finally, we then deal with contemporary economic and demographic changes in the United States, looking at issues of social class and related contemporary cultural politics.

Prerequisites: COM 5205, HST 5210, PLT 5400

Aims and Objectives:

- To examine and assess key debates relating to contemporary cultural conflict in the United States.
- To consolidate and synthesize an accumulated body of knowledge acquired in American Studies-related courses over the course of the major.
- To demonstrate the ability to apply this knowledge critically to a variety of contemporary cultural situations and interpretations
- To demonstrate the ability to formulate appropriate questions and provide answers to them using valid and relevant evidence and argument.

Programme Outcomes:

At the end of this course, the students will have achieved the following programme outcomes.

6A(i); 6A(ii); 6B(i); 6B(ii); 6B(iv); 6C(ii); 6C(iii); 6D(iv)

A detailed list of the programme outcomes is found in the Programme Specification. This is maintained by Registry and located at:

<https://www.richmond.ac.uk/programme-and-course-specifications/>

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, the students will have achieved the following learning outcomes:

- Demonstrate a systematic understanding of the major thinkers and intellectual paradigms relevant to the study of contemporary American culture.
- Demonstrate the ability to develop critical responses to, and a systematic and historical understanding of, theoretical approaches taken in various approaches to the study of contemporary American culture.
- Demonstrate a systematic understanding of how cultural, political and historical processes can be conceptualised at the global level, and the relevance of these to understanding contemporary social, cultural and political debates in USA and the Americas.
- Demonstrate the ability to gather, organise and deploy complex and abstract ideas and information in order to formulate arguments cogently, and express them effectively in written, oral or other forms.
- Takes responsibility for their own learning, and completes assigned work with a degree of clarity, contextualisation, conceptual and analytical sophistication, critical thinking, and reflexive normative and cultural understanding appropriate for a 6000-level course

Indicative Content:

- The contrasting regional cultural histories of the United States.
- Regional cultural historical legacies and their impact on contemporary racial and ethnic politics.
- The cultural politics of the 1960s and their legacies for contemporary cultural conflicts re. race, gender and religion.
- Contemporary economic and demographic changes in the United States and their impacts on changes in social class and contemporary cultural politics.

Assessment:

This course conforms to the University Assessment Norms approved at Academic Board.

Teaching Methodology:

The course will be taught through a combination of lectures and seminar classes. Lectures are primarily designed to give an overview of the issues and problems on a particular topic, and thereby provide guidance for seminar discussion. Seminars will

be used for debates and group/sub-group discussion, and are intended to provide an interactive and participatory learning environment. Students are expected to do the set readings for each week, and to be prepared to contribute to class discussion and discussion sub-groups. The general approach to classes is informal, and discussion is viewed as an essential part of learning. Where possible the course will make use of class visits. Students are expected to use the class visits as an opportunity to apply concepts and ideas developed in lectures, as well as to collect further information and impressions to provide a basis for subsequent class discussion.

Bibliography:

- Thomas Frank Listen, Liberal or Whatever Happened to the Party of the People ? Scribe. 2016.
- Andrew Hartman A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars (Second Edition) University of Chicago Press. 2019.
- Joan C. Williams White Working Class: Overcoming Class Cluelessness in America. Harvard Business Review Press. 2017.
- Colin Woodard American Nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America Penguin. 2011.

Please Note: The core texts will be reviewed at the time of designing the semester syllabus

Change Log for this CSD:

Major or Minor Change ?	Nature of Change	Date Approved & Approval Body (School or LTPC)	Change Actioned by Academic Registry
Minor	Title Change	15/02/21 DSS	
Minor	Course Description modified	15/02/21 DSS	
Minor	Reading list updated	15/02/21 DSS	
Minor	Aims and Objectives, Learning outcomes and indicative content adjusted to reflect modified course description.	15/02/21 DSS	