

## COURSE SPECIFICATION DOCUMENT

**Academic School/Department:** Social Sciences and Humanities

**Programme:** American Studies  
Political Science  
International History

**FHEQ Level:** 6

**Course Title:** American Culture Wars

**Course Code:** AMS 6102

**Student Engagement Hours:** 160

Lectures: 22.5

Seminar / Tutorials: 22.5

Supervision: 15

Independent / Guided Learning: 100

**Semester:** Fall/Spring/Summer

**Credits:** 16 UK CATS credits

8 ECTS credits

4 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:**

*One of the following:*

COM 5205 Cultural Theory

AMS 5100 Politics and Elections in the USA

AMS 5400 American Television Drama

HST 5210 Of Myths and Monsters - A History of History

PLT 5201 Research Methods: Social Sciences

**Aims and Objectives:**

- To examine and assess key debates relating to contemporary cultural conflict in the United States.
- To demonstrate the ability to critically apply knowledge of American culture to a variety of contemporary cultural situations and interpretations
- To provide a background for eventual careers in fields which require articulate, clear-thinking individuals with a grasp of American Studies
- To foster the acquisition, development, and consolidation of a variety of interdisciplinary and transferable skills through the study of particular themes in American Studies
- To promote critical engagement with a wide range of primary and secondary historical sources, and the development of both a succinct writing style and the ability to present complex arguments orally

**Programme Outcomes:**

American Studies: A6(I), A6(ii), A6(iii), B6(I), B6(ii), C6(I), C6(iii), C6(iv), D6(ii), D6(iv)

Political Science: A(ii), B(ii), B(iii), C(I), C(iii), C(iv), D(ii), D(iv).

International History: A(iii), B(ii), B(iv), C(I), C(iii), C(iv), D(ii), D(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 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 regarding 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 and located at:

<https://www.richmond.ac.uk/university-policies>

**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.

**Indicative Texts:**

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.

Thomas Frank *Listen, Liberal or Whatever Happened to the Party of the People?* Scribe. 2016.

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*

See syllabus for complete reading list.

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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	
	Various updates as part of the UG programme review	AB Jan 2022	