

**Subject card**

<b>Subject name and code</b>	Historical and Cultural Contexts of American Literature, PG_00137665						
<b>Field of study</b>	English Studies						
<b>Date of commencement of studies</b>	October 2025	<b>Academic year of realisation of subject</b>			2026/2027		
<b>Education level</b>	Bachelor's studies	<b>Subject group</b>			Obligatory subject group in the field of study		
<b>Mode of study</b>	full-time studies	<b>Mode of delivery</b>			at the university		
<b>Year of study</b>	2	<b>Language of instruction</b>			English		
<b>Semester of study</b>	3	<b>ECTS credits</b>			2.0		
<b>Learning profile</b>	academic	<b>Assessment form</b>			credit		
<b>Conducting unit</b>	Institute of English and American Studies -> Faculty of Languages -> Rector						
<b>Name and surname of lecturer (lecturers)</b>	<b>Subject supervisor</b>		dr Alicja Chmiólek				
	<b>Teachers</b>						
<b>Lesson types</b>	<b>Lesson type</b>	Lecture	Tutorial	Laboratory	Project	Seminar	SUM
	<b>Number of study hours</b>	30.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	30
	E-learning hours included: 0.0						
<b>Learning activity and number of study hours</b>	<b>Learning activity</b>	Participation in didactic classes included in study plan		Participation in consultation hours		Self-study	SUM
	<b>Number of study hours</b>	30		2.0		18.0	50
<b>Subject objectives</b>	This course will discuss formative documents, concepts, and metaphors, specific to American culture, such as the idea of American exceptionalism, the pursuit of happiness, civil disobedience, thanksgiving, immigration and the melting pot, race, migrations, and cultural diversity. It will focus on the rhetoric of formative documents, such as the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States with the amendments, and the Gettysburg Address. We will discuss the politics of multiculturalism, minority cultures, womens rights, social activism, and ecology.						

Learning outcomes	Course outcome	Subject outcome	Method of verification
	[FAL3_W12] Knows and understands selected issues and terminology relevant to the study of history, culture and realities of English-speaking countries, which constitute the basic context for research on the English language and English-language literature.	K_W12 Knows and understands selected issues and terminology in the knowledge of U.S. history, culture and realities, providing the basic context for the study of U.S. English language and literature.	[SW4] test/exam - oral or written [SW1] oral statement/ conversation/discussion [SW5] implementation of a problem task
	[FAL3_W02] Knows and understands to an advanced degree selected issues constituting the basic general knowledge in the field of literary studies of English-speaking countries.	K_K01 Knows and understands to an advanced degree selected issues that constitute basic general knowledge in the field of literary studies of the US.	[SW4] test/exam - oral or written [SW1] oral statement/ conversation/discussion [SW5] implementation of a problem task
	[FAL3_U08] Talks and writes about the history, culture and realities of English-speaking countries.	K_U08 Is able to use and communicate orally and in writing basic contextual knowledge of U.S. history, culture, and reality studies, as well as supporting and related sciences in English and Polish.	[SU1] oral statement/conversation/ discussion [SU4] test/exam - oral or written [SU5] implementation of a problem task [SU8] observation of student's independent or team work
	[FAL3_K01] Critically evaluates the extent of their knowledge and skills, in particular in the field of the English language, linguistics and English-language literature.	K_01 Ready to critically evaluate the extent of their knowledge and skills, especially in English language, American rhetoric, and American literature.	[SK1] oral statement/conversation/ discussion [SK4] test/exam - oral or written [SK8] observation of student's independent or team work
[FAL3_U02] Properly uses the acquired subject knowledge to identify, analyze, interpret and explain facts, phenomena and processes in the field of English, linguistics and English-language literature, using concepts and methods in the field of linguistics and literature	K_U02 Can appropriately use acquired knowledge to identify, analyze, interpret and explain facts, phenomena and processes in the historical and cultural contexts of American literature, using concepts of literary studies (literary period, genre).	[SU1] oral statement/conversation/ discussion [SU4] test/exam - oral or written [SU5] implementation of a problem task [SU6] demonstration of practical skills [SU8] observation of student's independent or team work	
Subject contents	<p>The seminar presents topics selected by the instructor on the historical and cultural contexts of British literature, for example: Demographic characteristics of the United States; colonization and competition for influence; taxation and smuggling; motivation of colonists to fight for independence. Formative documents: Jefferson's Declaration of Independence; the rhetorical structure of the document and its growing importance in the US history. Formative documents: The U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights - how to create a modern state from scratch. Native Americans, early trade relations, eastward expansion, unfulfilled promises and broken treaties, reservations and land division, forced assimilation and schooling, contemporary relations with tribes. Concepts shaping the American culture from the colonial period to the present. The formation of the political system and American institutions. Exceptionalism and individualism. Henry David Thoreau and the concept of civil disobedience. The Civil War 1860-1865, its causes and consequences; slavery, abolitionism; the meaning and practical applications of the 13th and 14th Amendments to the Constitution; Formative documents: Abraham Lincoln, "Gettysburg Address"; respect for those who lost the battle as a basis for reuniting the country. The suffrage movement, the women's right to control the money they earn, and access to education; 19th Amendment to the Constitution of United States. History of health care in the U.S., privatization of medical insurance, Medicaid, Medicare and Obamacare. Migration and the concept of Thanksgiving; state and federal regulations on migration. The conservation movement and the first national parks; federal laws on environmental protection. Formative documents: Theodore Roosevelt and the "Infamy Speech" following the attack on Pearl Harbor; the war discourse and American isolationism. Rise of the Second Amendment, its interpretation; widespread access to guns; assassinations and mass shootings in a variety of public places. Media and current American cultural phenomena; significant social movements: Rosa Parks and Montgomery Bus Boycott; Martin Luther King and protests in Birmingham; March on Washington and "I Have a Dream" speech. Use of contemporary media by the civil rights movement in the 1960s (television and the modern sound system at the March on Washington); basic laws limiting racial discrimination passed in the 1960s. Multiculturalism and minority cultures; the conservative argument for marriage equality; partnership rights in individual states up to the 2015 federal law.</p>		
Prerequisites and co-requisites	English language skills at B2 level		
Assessment methods and criteria	Subject passing criteria	Passing threshold	Percentage of the final grade
	Attendance, participation in discussions,	50.0%	20.0%
	Problem solving pertaining to specific issues in class	50.0%	30.0%
	Exam	50.0%	50.0%

Recommended reading	Basic literature	<p>Rottenberg Anette and Donna Haisty Winchell, <i>The Structure of Argument</i>, Bedford/St. Martin 2009.</p> <p><i>Rereading America. Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing.</i> Colombo et al. Bedford/St. Martin 2007; 2016.</p> <p>Campbell Neil, and Alasdair Keen. <i>American Cultural Studies: An Introduction to American Culture.</i> New York: Routledge, 2006.</p> <p>Michael Sandel, Justice (lecture series) <a href="http://justiceharvard.org/">http://justiceharvard.org/</a></p>
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George Lakoff. *How Liberals and Conservatives Think* (2002).

George Lakoff. *The Political Mind: A Cognitive Scientists Guide to Your Brain and Its Politics* (2009).

George Lakoff. *The All New Dont Think of an Elephant! Know Your Values and Frame the Debate* (2014).

Benjamin Barber, *If Mayors Ruled the World: Dysfunctional Nations, Rising Cities* (2013)

Barbara Ehrenreich, *Bright-sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America* (2009)

Michael Sandel, *Justice: What is the Right Thing to Do?* (2010).

Michael Sandel, *What Money Cant Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets* (2012).

Paul Krugman. *The Return of Depression Economics and the Crisis of 2008* (2009).

Paul Krugman, *The Conscience of a Liberal* (2009).

Jennifer Burns, *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right* (2009).

Jeff Flake, *Conscience of a Conservative: A Rejection of Destructive Politics and a Return to Principle* (2017)

David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5000 Years* (2011)

David Graeber, *Bullshit Jobs: A Theory* (2018)

Tom Mueller, *Crisis of Conscience: Whistleblowing in an Age of Fraud* (2019)

Simon Winchester. *Land: How the Hunger for Ownership Shaped the Modern World* (2022).

*The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump: 27 Psychiatrists and Mental Health Experts Assess a President* (2017).

Bob Woodward, *Fear: Trump in the White House* (2018).

Craig Unger, *House of Trump, House of Putin* (2018)

David E. Sanger, *The Perfect Weapon: War, Sabotage, and Fear in the Cyber Age* (2018)

Philippe Sands, *East West Street: On the Origins of Genocide and Crimes against Humanity* (2016)

Tymothy Snyder, *The Road to Unfreedom* (2018)

Timothy Snyder, *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* (2017)

**NONFICTION:**

Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (2016).

Barbara Ehrenreich, *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy* (2006)

Ronan Farrow, *War on Peace: The End of Diplomacy and the Decline of American Influence* (2018)

Masha Gessen, *The Brothers: The Road to an American Tragedy* (2015).

A.J. Jacobs, *The Year of Living Biblically. Ones Man Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literary as Possible* (2008).

Maggie Nelson, *The Art of Cruelty: A Reckoning* (2020)

Rebecca Solnit, *Savage Dreams. A Journey into the Hidden Wars of the American West* (1994)

Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust. A History of Walking* (2000)

Rebecca Solnit, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost* (2005)

**BLACK LIVES MATTER:**

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave Written by Himself*, Boston 1845 <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/antin/land/land.html>

Harriet Ann Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl Written by Herself*, Boston 1861.

<http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/11030/pg11030-images.html>

Sojourner Truth, *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth* (1850) <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1674>

William Wells Brown, *Clotel or the Presidents Daughter* (1853)

<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2046>

Frances E.W. Harper, *Iola Leroy* (1892)

<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/12352>

Charles W. Chesnutt, *The House Behind the Cedars* (1900)

<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/472>

Paul Laurence Dunbar, *Sport of the Gods* (1902)

<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/17854>

James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of Ex-Colored Man* (1912)

<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/11012/pg11012.html>

Nella Larsen, *Passing*, 1929

Martin Luther King, *Why We Cant Wait* (1964)

Toni Morrison, *Jazz* (1992).

Chris Gardner, *The Pursuit of Happyness* (2006).

Margot Lee Shetterly, *Hidden Figures* (2016).

Michelle Obama, *Becoming* (2019)

Ilyon Woo, *Master Slave Husband Wife: An Epic Journey from Slavery to Freedom* (2023)

#### **NATIVE AMERICANS:**

Eduardo Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*. Introduction by Isabel Allende (1971)

M. Kat Anderson, *Tending the Wild. Native American Knowledge and the Management of Californias Natural Resources* (2005)

John P. Bowes, *Northern Indian Removal* (2016)

Benjamin Madley, *An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe, 1846-1873* (2016)

Andrés Reséndez, *The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America* (2016)

Dennis Banks and Richard Erdoes, *Ojibwa Warrior: Dennis Banks and the Rise of the American Indian Movement* (2014).

Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West* (1970)

S.C. Gwynne, *Empire of the Summer Moon: Quanah Parker and the Rise and Fall of the Comanches, the Most Powerful Tribe in American History* (2010)

Scott Zesch, *The Captured: A True Story of Abduction by Indians on the Texas Frontier* (2004)

*Birth of the FBI* (2017).  
David Grann, *Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the*

Zitkala-Ša, *American Indian Stories* (1921) (online)

Joy Harjo, *Crazy Brave: A Memoir* (2012)

Joy Harjo, *Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings: Poems* (2015)

Joy Harjo, *An American Sunrise: Poems* (2019)

#### **IMMIGRANTS:**

Mary Antin, *The Promised Land* (Cambridge 1912). <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/antin/land/land.html>

Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (1907) <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/140>

Susan Sontag, *In America* (2000).

#### **HEALTH, ILLNESS, ADDICTION:**

Timothy C. Winegard, *The Mosquito: A Human History of Our Deadliest Predator* (2019)

Porochista Khakpour, *Sick: A Memoir* (2018).

Julie Rehmeyer, *Through the Shadowlands: A Science Writers Odyssey into an Illness Science Doesn't Understand* (2017).

Chris McGreal, *American Overdose. The Opioid Tragedy in Three Acts* (2018)

Barbara K. Lipska, *The Neuroscientist Who Lost Her Mind* (2018)

#### **ECOLOGY:**

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, 1854. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/205/205-h/205-h.htm>

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (1962). <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1962/06/16/silent-spring-part-1>

Philip Lymbery, *Farmageddon: The True Cost of Cheap Meat* (2014).

Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism versus the Climate* (2015).

Barack Obama, *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream* (2006).

Naomi Klein, *No Is Not Enough: Defeating the New Shock Politics* (2017).

Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* (2009). (Yes, the writer is Canadian, but this dystopian novel is really about the U.S.)

**FICTION:**

Joyce Carol Oates, *Black Water* (1992)

Margaret Atwood, *The Testaments* (2019)

Zadie Smith, *On Beauty* (2005).

Patricia Highsmith, *Carol* (1952)

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Americanah* (2013).

Donna Tartt, *The Secret History* (1992); *The Goldfinch* (2013).

Elizabeth Strout, *Anything is Possible* (2017).

Ocean Vuong, *On Earth We Were Briefly Gorgeous* (2019).

Gillian Flynn. *Dark Places*. Broadway Books (2010).

Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner* (2003).

Khaled Hosseini, *And the Mountains Echoed* (2013)

Hanya Yanagihara, *A Little Life* (2015)

Hanya Yanagihara, *To Paradise* (2022)

Otessa Moshfegh, *My Year of Rest and Relaxation* (2018)

R.F. Kuang, *Yellowface: A Novel* (2023)

**#METOO**

Ronan Farrow, *Catch and Kill: Lies, Spies, and Conspiracy to Protect Predators* (2019)

Roxane Gay, *Bad Feminist: Essays* (2014)

Kate Manne, *Entitled: How Male Privilege Hurts Women* (2020)

Mary L. Trump, *Too Much and Never Enough: How My Family Created the World's Most Dangerous Man* (2020)

Curtis Sittenfeld, *Rotham: A Novel* (2020)

Rebecca Solnit, *Recollections of My Nonexistence: A Memoir* (2020)

Rebecca Solnit, *Men Explain Things to Me* (2014)

Martha C. Nussbaum, *Citadels of Pride: Sexual Abuse, Accountability, and Reconciliation* (2021)

## **LGBTQIA**

Michael Bronsky, *A Queer History of the United States* (2011)

Angela Chen, *Ace: What Asexuality Reveals about Desire, Society, and the Meaning of Sex* (2020)

Lillian Faderman, *The Gay Revolution. The Story of the Struggle* (2015)

Lillian Faderman, *Harvey Milk: His Life and Death* (1918)

Lillian Faderman, *Naked in the Promised Land. A Memoir* (2003)

Halberstam, J. *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011)

Christopher Isherwood, *A Single Man* (1964)

Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name: A Biomythography* (1982)

Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (1984)

Kate Bornstein, *Gender Outlaw* (1994)

Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* (2006)

David Sedaris, *Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim* (2004).

David Leeming, *James Baldwin: The FBI File* (2017)

Jonathan Net Kats, *The Daring Life and Dangerous Times of Eve Adams* (2021)

Carolina De Robertis, *The Gods of Tango* (2015)

## **ART / CULTURE / BORDERS/PERIPHERIES**

Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (1977)

Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003) (on war photography specifically)

Julia Bryan-Wilson: *Fray: Art and Textile Politics* (2017)

Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987)

		The course ends with an exam. The exam consists of 3 questions (2 concerning two books of student's choice, and one pertaining to the topics covered by the lectures. The student should be able to expand on how the book of their choice relates to or in which way it reflects American culture. No more than 3 students within one division can choose one book.
	eResources addresses	
Example issues/ example questions/ tasks being completed		
Work placement	Not applicable	

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