University of Gdańsk

Subject card

Subject name and code	Narcissism and the Culture of the Self: Pathological Narcissism in American Literature, Film and Television, PG_00205055		
Field of study	American Studies		
Date of commencement of studies	October 2025	Academic year of realisation of subject	2026/2027
Education level	Bachelor's studies	Subject group	Obligatory subject group in the field of study Optional subject group
Mode of study	full-time studies	Mode of delivery	at the university
Year of study	2	Language of instruction	English
Semester of study	4	ECTS credits	2.0
Learning profile	academic	Assessment form	credit
Conducting unit			
Name and surname of lecturer (lecturers)	Subject supervisor	dr Barbara Miceli	
	Teachers		

Lesson types	Lesson type	Lecture	Tutorial	Laboratory	Project	Seminar	SUM
	Number of study hours	0.0	30.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	30
	E-learning hours included: 0.0						

Learning activity and number of study hours	Learning activity	Participation in didactic classes included in study plan	Participation in consultation hours	Self-study	SUM
	Number of study hours	30	2.0	18.0	50

Subject objectives	The aim of the course is to introduce students to psychological and cultural theories of narcissism, with particular emphasis on pathological narcissism, and to develop their ability to critically analyse its representations in American literature, film, television, and popular culture in relation to identity, interpersonal relationships, and contemporary sociocultural transformations.

Learning outcomes

Course outcome	Subject outcome	Method of verification
[AMERL3_K01] is ready to critically evaluate his knowledge and skills, especially in American cultural and literary studies, as well as the basic contextual knowledge of American studies concerning history, social sciences, geography, linguistics and art and English.	Is prepared to critically assess his own knowledge and skills, particularly in the fields of contemporary American cultural studies and literary studies, as well as the basic contextual knowledge of American studies pertaining to the social sciences, the arts, and the English language.	[SK1] oral statement/conversation/ discussion [SK4] test/exam - oral or written
[AMERL3_U03] is able to use acquired subject knowledge to identify, analyze, interpret and explain cultural phenomena and processes in North America, using concepts and methods from cultural and religious studies.	Can apply the subject-area knowledge they have acquired to identify, analyze, interpret, and explain contemporary cultural phenomena and processes in North America, using concepts and methods from the studies of culture.	[SU1] oral statement/conversation/ discussion [SU4] test/exam - oral or written
[AMERL3_W05] Has advanced knowledge of the basic conceptual and terminological apparatus of cultural and religious studies applicable to the study of cultural phenomena and processes in North America.	Has advanced knowledge of the basic conceptual and terminological framework in the field of cultural studies as it applies to the study of contemporary cultural phenomena and processes in North America.	[SW4] test/exam - oral or written [SW1] oral statement/ conversation/discussion
[AMERL3_U06] Able to communicate orally and in writing on issues related to American and British culture and literature, using specialized terminology in cultural and religious studies and literary studies.	Can communicate orally and in writing on topics related to contemporary American culture and literature, using specialized terminology from the fields of cultural studies and literary studies.	[SU1] oral statement/conversation/ discussion [SU4] test/exam - oral or written
[AMERL3_W07] Has advanced detailed knowledge of selected issues concerning cultural phenomena and processes in North America.	Has advanced, in-depth knowledge of selected topics related to contemporary cultural phenomena and processes in North America.	[SW4] test/exam - oral or written [SW1] oral statement/ conversation/discussion

Subject contents

Narcissism and the Culture of the Self explores the psychological, social, and cultural dimensions of narcissism, with particular emphasis on its pathological manifestations. Through selected literary works, films, television series, and popular cultural texts, students examine grandiosity and vulnerability, emotional manipulation, the need for admiration, dysfunctional interpersonal relationships, and identity construction. The course also considers narcissism as a cultural phenomenon associated with contemporary individualism, social media, and the culture of self-presentation.

Prerequisites and co-requisites

none

Assessment methods and criteria

Subject passing criteria	Passing threshold	Percentage of the final grade
active participation in classes	51.0%	50.0%
test	51.0%	50.0%

Recommended reading

Basic literature

Freud, Sigmund. “On Narcissism: An Introduction.” 1914.

Kernberg, Otto F. Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism. Jason Aronson, 1975.

Kohut, Heinz. The Analysis of the Self. International Universities Press, 1971.Lasch, Christopher. The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations. W. W. Norton, 1979.

Pincus, Aaron L., and Mark R. Lukowitsky. “Pathological Narcissism and Narcissistic Personality Disorder.” Annual Review of Clinical Psychology, vol. 6, 2010, pp. 421–446.

Krizan, Zlatan, and Anne D. Herlache. “The Narcissism Spectrum Model: A Synthetic View of Narcissistic Personality.” Personality and Social Psychology Review, vol. 22, no. 1, 2018, pp. 3–31

	Supplementary literature	American Psychiatric Association. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. 5th ed., text revision (DSM-5-TR), American Psychiatric Association Publishing, 2022. Miller, Joshua D., and W. Keith Campbell, editors. The Handbook of Narcissism and Narcissistic Personality Disorder: Theoretical Approaches, Empirical Findings, and Treatments. Wiley, 2011. Highsmith, Patricia. The Talented Mr. Ripley. Coward-McCann, 1955. Flynn, Gillian. Gone Girl. Crown, 2012. Fitch, Janet. White Oleander. Little, Brown, 1999. McRobbie, Angela. The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change. SAGE, 2009.
	eResources addresses	
Example issues/ example questions/ tasks being completed	1. What are the defining characteristics of pathological narcissism, and how do grandiose and vulnerable narcissism differ? 2. How do the need for admiration, recognition, and external validation influence identity and interpersonal relationships? 3. How do American literature, film, and television represent emotional manipulation, idealization, devaluation, and narcissistic injury? 4. How do contemporary popular culture, social media, and celebrity culture contribute to the construction of narcissistic self-images? 5. Analyse a selected literary text, film, television episode, or song, identifying representations of narcissistic behaviour and interpreting them through relevant psychological theories.	
Work placement	Not applicable	

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