



Universidad  
de Alcalá

# GUÍA DOCENTE

## NARRATIVA NORTEAMERICANA // AMERICAN FICTION

**Grado en Estudios Ingleses**  
**Universidad de Alcalá**

**Curso Académico 2019/2020**  
**Curso 3º – Cuatrimestre 2º**

## GUÍA DOCENTE

Nombre de la asignatura:	<b>Narrativa Norteamericana // American Fiction</b>
Código:	251045
Titulación en la que se imparte:	Estudios Ingleses
Departamento y Área de Conocimiento:	Departamento de Filología Moderna: Filología Inglesa
Carácter:	Obligatoria
Créditos ECTS:	6
Curso:	Third Year/ Second Semester/ Tercer Año/ Segundo cuatrimestre
Profesorado:	Dra. Luisa Juárez Hervás
Horario de Tutoría:	<b>Por determinar</b>
Idioma en el que se imparte:	<b>INGLÉS / ENGLISH</b>

### 1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This module is designed to reflect the diversity of voices and traditions in American fiction from the period of Independence to the present. The topics and theoretical concepts in the syllabus are meant to probe into the issue of “Americanness” by examining the connection between literature and history, as well as between changes in literary modes and social forms, conventions and values in the United States. The texts on the reading list have been selected to acquaint students with the extraordinary plurality of American literature in terms of geographical and historical realities, ethnic expressions, political discourses and literary forms. Despite their differences, the assigned readings do raise some common concerns, and invite thematic and formal comparison. Whenever it is possible, a dialogue with texts and concepts discussed in previous modules that deal with American literature, history and culture will be established. When analysing the assigned texts, we shall explore how authors must reconstruct / subvert / manipulate received literary conventions to accommodate them to their purposes, thus advancing new technical / formal solutions to the problem of narration, representation, characterization, etc., and, at the same time, providing a critique of traditional models or art and individual consciousness to promote or challenge the construct of a truly American literary tradition.

### Course summary:

This module is designed to reflect the diversity of voices and traditions in American fiction from the period of Independence to the present. The topics and theoretical concepts in the syllabus are meant to probe into the issue of “Americanness” by examining the connection between literature and history, as well as between changes in literary modes and social forms, conventions and values in the United States. The texts on the reading list have been selected to acquaint students with the extraordinary plurality of American literature in terms of geographical and historical realities, ethnic expressions, political discourses and literary forms. Despite their differences, the assigned readings do raise some common concerns, and invite thematic and formal comparison. Whenever it is possible, a dialogue with texts and concepts discussed in previous modules that deal with American literature, history and culture will be established. When analysing the assigned texts, we shall explore how authors must reconstruct / subvert / manipulate received literary conventions to accommodate them to their purposes, thus advancing new technical / formal solutions to the problem of narration, representation, characterization, etc., and, at the same time, providing a critique of traditional models or art and individual consciousness to promote or challenge the construct of a truly American literary tradition.

### Prerequisites and recommendations:

The course will be taught in English. Students are expected to follow explanations in English, read extensively, take notes, actively discuss literary issues, give oral presentations and write literary essays in English. Following the guidelines issued by the Department of Modern Philology, students are expected to have acquired the language level required for each course (close to a C 1. in all four skills at the end of the 3rd year).

## 2. COURSE OBJECTIVES

### Generic Competences:

1. To show independent and critical attitudes towards the analysis of American short stories and novels.
2. To appreciate the role literature plays in national identity building or as a site of resistance to the dominant social and political hegemony.
3. To develop critical reading skills and the capacity to synthesize and interpret information.
4. To be able to work with different bibliographical sources effectively.
5. To be able to defend literary opinions in English, orally and in writing, through analysis and argument.
6. To display greater understanding and tolerance to individual and collective differences.
7. To enhance team work and the capacity of autonomous learning.

### Specific Competences:

1. To be able to examine and comment on the development of fiction writing in America, from Independence to the present.
2. To be able to identify the different literary periods.
3. To be able to explore the social, cultural, and historical issues underlying the different literary movements and works.
4. To be able to examine the connections between the writers' purpose, themes and audience expectations.
5. To develop personal and critical opinions related to the different topics discussed in the course.
6. To be able to explore and analyze the rhetorical and linguistic as well as literary, cultural, and historical topics related to American narrative from the Independence to the present.
7. To acquire the specific terminology associated to the literary analysis of the given texts.
8. To analyze, understand and discuss the selected readings and fragments in detail.
9. To be able to develop consistent arguments and defend them through the writing of essays in English at C1 level.

### 3. CONTENTS

Unit	Topics
<b>1. – Introduction to American fiction.</b>	The origins of American fiction
<b>2. – American romanticism</b>	Romanticism
<b>3. – American realism(s)</b>	Realism
<b>4. – American modernism(s)</b>	Modernism
<b>5. – The new realism</b>	The novel after WW2
<b>6. – Postmodernism(s)</b>	A new formalism and multiculturalism

### 4. TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS

There is no substitute for reading in a literature class so students must be prepared to read extensively. The class will be based on the format of a participative seminar;

therefore, students must prepare all readings prior to our weekly meetings and be ready to discuss them in depth during class. Readings will have a guide with questions and activities to help students to reflect on the text. Throughout the term students will be asked to hand in their homework, which will be assessed as part of the requirements for continuous assessment. There will also be quizzes in class to ensure texts have been read.

Students will have tutorials with the instructor for additional activities to probe into the study of the assigned texts. These tutorials will be compulsory for all students.

Regular class attendance during the term (a minimum of 80%) is mandatory.

#### 4.1. Student workload: 150 hours

Contact Hours:	36 hours 15 one hour lectures 15 one hour seminars 2 hours of tutorials 4 hours for evaluation tests (quizzes, midterm and final exams)
Independent Study Hours:	114 hours

#### 4.2. Learning activities, materials and resources

LECTURES	During lectures students will deal with the acquisition of the theory related to the different literary periods explained as well as to the general approach to the readings.
SEMINARS	<p>Seminars will be conducted through class discussions. Students will participate actively in the analysis of texts, examining their form and content, establishing connections with the historical background and the author's biography, as well as assessing their adscription to a literary period. The method of analysis is close-reading, therefore students must bring a hard copy of the text to class.</p> <p>Students are expected to read assigned literary texts and criticism thoroughly in advance and to actively and meaningfully participate in class discussions and related activities.</p> <p>Students could be assigned a text to lead the discussion (based on the reading guide provided by the instructor). In such case, selected or voluntary students will act as "experts" on a specific text and author from the syllabus, and will exercise their ability in critical literary analysis for the rest of the group.</p>
TUTORIALS	Students will attend tutorials for the preparation of "expertise" on a

	text and for further study of set readings.
<b>INDEPENDENT WORK</b>	Reading assigned texts. Research for specific theoretical and biographical information. Preparation of readings questions with written answers to discussion guides. Quizzes and short written assignments. Mid-term exam and final exam.

### **Texts for seminars and workshops:**

Several novels and short stories, also some brief excerpts of longer narratives. The titles will be given at the beginning of the course. Students must provide themselves with hard copies of the texts to be read and discussed in class. Texts on screens (mobile phones, laptops, e-books, etc.) will not be accepted for lessons and literary analysis of texts. Shorter texts will be uploaded on the platform.

## **5. ASSESSMENT**

### **Assessment criteria:**

- Demonstrate the capacity to form and articulate independent, critical thinking on the construction of an American identity and its reflection in literature, both orally and in writing, with the required level of English.
- Demonstrate the capacity to read critically and analytically literary texts.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the historical and cultural background to the different literary movements and how these are articulated through the literary texts themselves.
- Demonstrate the capacity to effectively write a critical paper on a literary text in English (at a near C.1 level or higher), using appropriate terminology and adequate support.
- Ability to find, use effectively and cite correctly a variety of bibliographic and specialized sources.
- Show awareness, respect and tolerance of different opinions, the ability to positively engage in group work and demonstrate active and meaningful class participation and an effective compliance with assignments.

**Important: Students are warned that plagiarism will not be tolerated. The ideas from other sources, regardless of whether they are quoted, summarized or paraphrased, must be documented adequately. This caution must be followed for all activities in the course, whether it is homework, essay or any written/oral activity.** According to article 34 of the University regulation on evaluation, any plagiarism found in the final version of a paper will be penalised and will result in the failure of the course. The teacher will provide students with assessment cover sheets for written work, which certifies that their submitted work is entirely their own or appropriately referenced.

### **Grading criteria:**

**Excellent (SB)**

- Clearly shows independent and critical thinking, being able to analyze texts and identify their bias or faulty logic. Shows a depth of understanding of the historical and cultural background and how it informs the literary texts. Demonstrates the ability to argue effectively (orally and in writing at the appropriate level of English) and write a critical paper in English, using appropriate terms and support from diverse sources. Use of sources is very effective and correct throughout. Clearly shows respect and tolerance for alternative opinions and the ability of team work. Lively and meaningful class participation, producing quality work.

**Very Good (N)**

- Shows critical thinking and is able to analyze texts, identifying their bias. Understands the historical and cultural background of the literary movements and can argue a point in English (orally and in writing at the appropriate level) as well as writes a critical paper, using some specialized terms and sources. Use of sources is effective and correct. Shows respect and tolerance for alternative opinions and the ability to work in groups. Active and meaningful class participation with effective task compliance.

**Satisfactory (A)**

- Shows some ability for critical thinking, being able to analyze the basic aspects of a given text. Understands the basic aspects of the historical and cultural background of most literary movements. Is able to construct an argument in acceptable English (orally and in writing) and write a very basic paper, using some specific terms and sources. Use of sources is basically correct but with limited effectiveness. Shows respect for alternative opinions, and has collaborated in the group project. Has participated in class, though not actively and has complied with the minimum class assignments.

**Fail (S)**

- Unable to neither think critically nor analyze the basic aspects of a text, or to do so in a very limited manner. Tends to a simplified overview of the historical and cultural background with some inconsistencies and is not able to apply them meaningfully to the understanding of the texts. Oral and written ability in English is limited and significantly below a C1 level, often causing difficulties in understanding. Research paper is limited to a descriptive plot or character analysis with limited sources. Use of sources is little effective, mechanical and often incorrect. May respect alternative opinions. Class participation has been very limited and task achievement very weak. Commits plagiarism.

**Assessment procedures:**

The course will be marked by continuous assessment except for those students who are granted evaluation by final exam, according to the University regulations. Students who follow the continuous assessment process will be assessed by:

- Participation in class seminars and tutorials.
- Occasional short written assignments.

- Class presentations.
- Other activities such as quizzes, exams, reading guides.

Students must read all the texts, submit all the written and / or oral assignments, and attend a minimum of 80% of the classes. Likewise, students must prepare and attend scheduled workshops and tutorials. Failure to comply with class assignments and activities will result in failing the continuous evaluation. Students who fail the continuous evaluation will be asked to sit the make-up exam in June.

Students who are unable to follow continuous assessment must request the overall final exam option to the Dean's office. Once they have received the authorization to be exempted from class attendance, they will be evaluated by a comprehensive final exam covering all the material of the course at the end of the term. The exam will consist of essay questions and written discussion of all reading questions that will be turned in on the final exam date. **Students who plan to take the overall exam should contact the professor early in the course** to obtain specific information about the reading questions and exam, since they must be assessed on all the competences stated in the syllabus.

The make-up exam will follow the same format as the overall final exam (essay questions and text analysis) for students who have not succeeded in the first exam period.

## 6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

### General Bibliography:

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LaVonne Brown Ruoff, A. and Jerry W. Ward Jr. (Editors). *Redefining American Literary History*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1990.

Miller, Quentin D. *The Routledge Introduction to African American Literature*. Routledge, 2016.

Pizer, Donald (Editor). *The Cambridge Companion to American Realism and Naturalism. Howells to London*. Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Wagner-Martin, Linda. *A History of American Literature: 1950 to the Present*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2012 ISBN: 978-1-119-06252-3

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