

## **COURSE SPECIFICATION DOCUMENT**

**Academic School/Department:** Communications, Arts and Social Sciences

**Programme:** American Studies

**FHEQ Level:** 6

**Course Title:** Cultural Conflict in America

**Course Code:** AMS 6200

**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 upon key debates in contemporary American popular culture, or what are sometime referred to the 'Culture Wars' which characterise contemporary America. The topics this course covers includes the key issue of regionalism in contemporary American culture, exploring the diverse cultural histories of the American South, Midwest, Appalachia, North East, Far West, etc. The crucial cultural battle between American conservatism and Liberalism is also an important theme and underlies the course's analysis of the development of 1960s popular culture – in particular the Civil Rights movement, the origins and development of Counterculture and its legacy in the contemporary popular cultural mainstream. Issues of race and class in contemporary American popular culture are also examined in the light of the contemporary resurgence of conservative populist nationalism.

**Prerequisites:** COM 5205

**Aims and Objectives**

- To examine and assess key debates relating to contemporary cultural developments in the United States, Canada, Latin America and in other regions influenced by Americanization.
- 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); 6A(iii), 6A(iv); 6B(ii); 6B(iii); 6B(iv); 6C(i); 6C(iii); 6C(iv); 6D(iv)

A detailed list of the programme outcomes are found in the Programme Specification.

This is located at the archive maintained by the Registry and found 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:**

- Cultural politics, cultural studies & American Studies
- Ethnicity, race and class in contemporary American society
- Cultural regionalism in the United States
- Gender & sexuality
- American 'culture wars'
- Counterculture and consumer culture
- Americanisation and Globalisation

**Assessment:**

This course conforms to the Richmond University Standard Assessment Norms approved at Academic Board and located at: <https://www.richmond.ac.uk/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.

**Bibliography:**

- Woodard, C American Nations : A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America (2011)
- Gest, J. The New Minority : White Working Class Politics in an Age of Immigartion and Inequality (2016)
- Hartman, A A War for the Soul of America : A History of the Culture Wars (2015)
- Frank, T The Conquest of Cool; Business Culture, Counterculture and the Rise of Hip Consumerism (1998)

