

**City University of Hong Kong**  
**Course Syllabus**

**offered by Department of English**  
**with effect from Semester A 2017 / 18**

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**Part I Course Overview**

<b>Course Title:</b>	America: Peoples and Cultures of the United States
<b>Course Code:</b>	GE2115
<b>Course Duration:</b>	One semester
<b>Credit Units:</b>	3
<b>Level:</b>	A2, B2
<b>Proposed Area:</b> <i>(for GE courses only)</i>	X Arts and Humanities <input type="checkbox"/> Study of Societies, Social and Business Organisations <input type="checkbox"/> Science and Technology
<b>Medium of Instruction:</b>	English
<b>Medium of Assessment:</b>	English
<b>Prerequisites:</b> <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	None
<b>Precursors:</b> <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	None
<b>Equivalent Courses:</b> <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	None
<b>Exclusive Courses:</b> <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	None

## Part II Course Details

### 1. Abstract

(A 150-word description about the course)

“Reading and Writing America: Peoples and Cultures in the United States” is an interdisciplinary course that will use literary texts and popular culture to introduce students to the ways American identities and cultures have been articulated in a global context in the 20th and 21st centuries. Using a thematic focus on American people and their identities—immigrant, class, race, gender, regional, and others—the course will trace the ways these identities have been configured in the last century and represented through diverse literary forms and media. Students will read and analyze fiction, poetry, drama, film and new media to apply their discoveries about the basic elements of literature to promote an active engagement with social issues. Though the focus is on literature, students will learn how a diverse factors—history, geography, language, class, etc—act in the development of culture and identity. By reading a variety of texts and producing literary critiques, the students will actively engage the material given and will be invited to reflect on their own experiences and knowledge about culture; group work will promote meaningful and active learning through peer interaction.

### 2. Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

(CILOs state what the student is expected to be able to do at the end of the course according to a given standard of performance.)

No.	CILOs <sup>#</sup>	Weighting* (if applicable)	Discovery-enriched curriculum related learning outcomes (please tick where appropriate)		
			A1	A2	A3
1.	Recognize formal elements—structures, narrative perspectives, style, rhetorical strategies, etc.—in American literature and other cultural productions of the 20 <sup>th</sup> and 21 <sup>st</sup> centuries and relate them to major genres and theories.		√	√	
2.	Analyze the aesthetic and creative aspects of contemporary American cultural productions evidenced by the particular structures, styles, and thematic elements in each text.		√	√	
3.	Apply critical thinking and reading skills in the interpretation of diverse American texts (essays, fiction and poetry, art and music, film and other media) of the last century, highlighting their local and global significance, and identifying connections between different traditions.		√	√	√
4.	Understand and be able to describe how culture and identity develop from the interrelation of diverse factors—history, geography, race, class, gender and religion, among others—and identify the ways these factors individually mark self-representation. Apply this new knowledge to their own experience of cultural paradigms.		√	√	√
5.	Reflect on the diversity of personal, cultural, and social human experiences and make intelligent connections between texts and cultures. Generate creative and critical responses to cultural productions		√	√	√
		100%			

\* If weighting is assigned to CILOs, they should add up to 100%.

<sup>#</sup> Please specify the alignment of CILOs to the Gateway Education Programme Intended Learning outcomes (PILOs) in Section A of Annex.

A1: Attitude

*Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.*

A2: *Ability*

*Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to self-life problems.*

A3: *Accomplishments*

*Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.*

### 3. Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs)

*(TLAs designed to facilitate students' achievement of the CILOs.)*

TLA	Brief Description	CILO No.						Hours/week (if applicable)
		1	2	3	4	5		
1.	<b>Lectures:</b> Critical introductions to essential concepts and theories open the discussions of specific texts. Students will also be asked to read critical articles to contribute to the discussion.	√				√		
2.	<b>Discussions:</b> Each week students will be introduced to literary and cultural texts in the lecture and will be required to discuss the texts in tutorials. Students will learn to apply theoretical knowledge to critically discuss the issues related to forms of identity and culture in America and discover how these issues relate to their own experience of culture	√	√	√		√		
3.	<b>Writing critiques:</b> Students will be introduced to the conventions and structures of literary critiques. Students will actively demonstrate their understanding and application of their theoretical readings by writing reasoned discussion of particular texts or issues, which will require some research.	√	√	√	√	√		
4.	<b>Group work and presentation:</b> Students will be required to choose a topic from among those discussed in class and do further research on the topic. They are encouraged to structure their presentation around a cultural product: a novel, a film, music, or art and make relevant connections with issues of American cultures and identity. They will then make a presentation to the rest of the class that emphasizes the ways this cultural product reflects the issues they are analyzing. This activity requires critical reading, thinking and speaking skills.	√	√	√	√	√		

#### 4. Assessment Tasks/Activities (ATs)

(ATs are designed to assess how well the students achieve the CILOs.)

Assessment Tasks/Activities	CILO No.					Weighting*	Remarks
	1	2	3	4	5		
Continuous Assessment: 100%							
<b>Individual written assignments: literary critiques/essays (3)</b> Students will demonstrate their understanding and their own interpretation of the themes and issues discussed in the assigned readings through essays of different lengths.	√	√	√	√		50%	
<b>Class participation and critical reflection</b> Students will be required to participate actively in class discussions and demonstrate their active learning process through short in-class writing assignments and group discussions.	√	√	√	√	√	20%	
<b>Quizzes</b> Students will be required to do 3 quizzes to assess their reading and understanding of the texts.	√	√	√			15%	
<b>Group project and presentation</b> Students will be required to choose a topic from among those discussed in class and do further research on the topic. They should produce a creative or critical project that demonstrates their learning and reflection on a topic. They will then make a presentation to the rest of the class.	√	√	√	√	√	15%	
						100%	

\* The weightings should add up to 100%.

## 5. Assessment Rubrics

(Grading of student achievements is based on student performance in assessment tasks/activities with the following rubrics.)

Assessment Task	Criterion	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B, B-)	Fair (C+, C, C-)	Marginal (D)	Failure (F)
1. Individual written assignments: literary critiques/essays (3)	Task fulfilment	<p>The critiques are extremely well-reasoned, thoughtful and well articulated;</p> <p>There is intelligent understanding of themes in the texts;</p> <p>The purpose of critiquing and sharing perspectives on texts is completely achieved.</p>	<p>The critiques are competently reasoned and articulated;</p> <p>There is very good recognition of themes and their significance in the texts;</p> <p>The purpose of critiquing and sharing perspectives on texts is achieved.</p>	<p>The critiques are adequately reasoned and the discussion is reasonably good</p> <p>The recognition of themes and their significance is adequate;</p> <p>The purpose of critiquing and sharing perspectives on texts is partially achieved.</p>	<p>The critiques are sketchy and not clearly reasoned or articulated;</p> <p>The recognition of themes and their significance is limited;</p> <p>The purpose of critiquing and sharing perspectives on texts is not fully achieved at all.</p>	<p>The critiques are highly inadequate and analysis of texts very poor;</p> <p>There is almost no recognition of themes and their significance;</p> <p>The purpose of critiquing and sharing perspectives on texts is not achieved in any way.</p>
2. Class participation and critical reflection	Task fulfilment	<p>Has made significant contributions to in-class group work and is inquisitive and asks questions.</p> <p>Shows a great deal of self- development in the journal entries</p> <p>Demonstrates that s/he has read productively.</p>	<p>Has been on task during the in-class group work most of the time.</p> <p>Shows her/himself as an active participant in the class generally.</p> <p>Shows areas of self-development in the journal entries.</p>	<p>Has generally been on task during the in-class group work.</p> <p>Has not distinguished her/himself as an active participant in the class.</p> <p>Shows only some areas of self-development in the journal entries.</p>	<p>Has not made much contribution to class discussion.</p> <p>Shows little reflection on learning and reading.</p> <p>Does not demonstrate that s/he has not read anything from the reading list.</p>	<p>Has not made much or any contribution to class discussion.</p> <p>Shows very little reflection on learning and reading.</p> <p>Does not demonstrate that s/he has not read anything from the reading list.</p>
3. Quizzes	Task fulfilment	Demonstrate excellent understanding of the subject	Demonstrate good understanding of the subject	Demonstrate fair understanding of the subject	Demonstrate poor understanding of the subject	Demonstrate very poor understanding of the subject

4. Group project and presentation	Content	The topic has been extensively investigated and presentation is through and well thought out.	The topic has been investigated well and the speakers provide and well constructed examination of the topic.	Only part of the topic has been investigated. More work could have been done in providing a comprehensive examination of the topic.	Only a limited part of the topic has been investigated. More work could have been done in providing a comprehensive examination of the topic.	The topic has not been investigated well. The audience has not been well informed and much more work could have been done in presenting the topic.
	Comprehensibility <i>(Use of vocabulary, accuracy, and fluency)</i>	Entire message understood. All speakers notably good.	Entire message understood. Most speakers notably good. Some weaknesses in one area of comprehensibility.	Messages sometimes hard to understand. Speakers not notably good in most areas.	Messages sometimes hard to understand and are not delivered accurately. Speakers is not good.	Message hard to understand. Lots of breakdowns and/or hesitations in pronunciation, accuracy or vocabulary.
	Interaction <i>(Listens and handles questions from audience. Able to give additional information)</i>	Students are active listeners and provide thoughtful and accurate follow up responses to questions	Students are able to understand most of the questions and deal with them appropriately. Some disagreement or confusion in answering questions.	Students do not demonstrate an ability to handle questions well. After some time can give responses.	Students confused when asked questions. After some time can give responses.	Students confused when asked questions. Are not able to give adequate replies to the questions.
	Group Management <i>(Organization of students' contributions)</i>	The group is well organized. Each member has a significant and well defined role. The handover between students is smooth. All parts of the presentation are well thought out.	Each participant makes a significant contribution to the presentation. Group management is mostly successful with only a few minor problems.	Only some of the group's members are able to perform as a group. Some disorganization and unclear handover.	Members are not work in a group. Some disorganization and unclear handover.	Group management attempts are unsuccessful and inappropriate.

**Part III Other Information** (more details can be provided separately in the teaching plan)

**1. Keyword Syllabus**

(An indication of the key topics of the course.)

United States of America; literature; genre; film; media; music; popular culture; language; dialects; creativity; stereotypes; immigration; race; class; identity; region; religion

**2. Reading List**

**2.1 Compulsory Readings**

(Compulsory readings can include books, book chapters, or journal/magazine articles. There are also collections of e-books, e-journals available from the CityU Library.)

1.	Colombo, Gary, Robert Cullen and Bonnie Lisle, eds. <i>Rereading America: Cultural Contexts</i> . Bedford/St. Martins, 2010.
2.	Kottak, Conrad Phillip and Katryn Kozaitis, eds. <i>On Being Different: Diversity and Multiculturalism in the North American Mainstream</i> . McGraw-Hill, 2003.
3.	Maasik, Sonia and Jacob Solomon, eds. <i>Signs of Life in the USA: Readings on Popular Culture</i> . Bedford/St. Martins, 2009.
4.	Moser, Joyce and Ann Watters, eds. <i>Creating America</i> . Prentice Hall, 2001.
5.	Takaki, Ronald T. <i>A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America</i> . Little, Brown & Co., 1993.
6.	Wolfram, Walt, and Natalie Schilling-Estes. <i>American English: dialects and variation</i> . Wiley-Blackwell, 2006.

**2.2 Additional Readings**

(Additional references for students to learn to expand their knowledge about the subject.)

**Literary texts**

1.	Angelou, Maya. <i>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</i> . Ballantine Books, 1969.
2.	Barry, Lynda. <i>One Hundred Demons! Sasquatch Books, 2005</i> .
3.	Cisneros, Sandra. <i>The House on Mango Street</i> . Penguin, 1984.
4.	Diaz, Junot. <i>Drown</i> . Riverhead Trade, 1997.
5.	Gillan, Maria Mazziotti and Jennifer Gillan, eds. <i>Unsettling America: An Anthology of Contemporary Multicultural Poetry</i> . Penguin, 1994.
6.	Gillan, Maria Mazziotti, ed. <i>Growing Up Ethnic in America</i> . Penguin, 1999
7.	Lahiri, Jhumpa. <i>The Interpreter of Maladies</i> . Mariner Books, 1999.
8.	Momaday, N. Scott. <i>The Names</i> . University of Arizona Press, 1997.
9.	Obama, Barack. <i>Dreams from my Father</i> . Crown, 2007.
10.	Potok, Chaim. <i>My Name is Asher Lev</i> . Fawcett Crest, 1972.
11.	Tan, Amy. <i>The Joy Luck Club</i> . Vintage, 1991.
12.	Thoreau, Henry David. <i>Civil Disobedience and Other Essays</i> . Dover, 1993.
13.	Vonnegut, Kurt. <i>Slaughterhouse Five</i> . Delta, 1969
14.	Washington, Booker T. <i>Up From Slavery in Norton Anthology of American Literature</i> . Norton, 2003.

*Films and other media*

1.	42
2.	<i>Gone with the Wind</i>
3.	<i>Malcolm X</i>
4.	<i>My Big Fat Greek Wedding</i>
5.	<i>Smoke Signals</i>
6.	<i>The Namesake</i>
7.	<i>The Godfather</i>
8.	<i>American Tongues</i> (documentary on American dialects)

A. Please specify the Gateway Education Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) that the course is aligned to and relate them to the CILOs stated in Part II, Section 2 of this form:

<b>GE PILO</b>	<b>Please indicate which CILO(s) is/are related to this PILO, if any (can be more than one CILOs in each PILO)</b>
PILO 1: Demonstrate the capacity for self-directed learning	Students will be asked to write short essays that require some research. They will design and develop a group project. CILO 2, 3, 4, 5.
PILO 2: Explain the basic methodologies and techniques of inquiry of the arts and humanities, social sciences, business, and science and technology	The students will be introduced to literary theories and texts as a form of entry into an analysis of identity and culture. The interdisciplinary nature of the course, which also draws from history, geography, linguistics and social sciences, will broaden their perspectives on the ways different methodologies allow us to understand reality. CILO 1, 2, 4.
PILO 3: Demonstrate critical thinking skills	Students will be required to analyze literary and cultural texts and write essays that critique specific questions related to the course material. CILO 3, 4, 5.
PILO 4: Interpret information and numerical data	
PILO 5: Produce structured, well-organised and fluent text	Students will be required to write essays on the topics studied in class. CILO 3, 5.
PILO 6: Demonstrate effective oral communication skills	Participation in class is central to the course. Students will also be required to do at least one individual class presentation. CILO 2, 3, 4, 5.
PILO 7: Demonstrate an ability to work effectively in a team	Students will be required to do one group project. CILO 2, 3, 4, 5.
PILO 8: Recognise important characteristics of their own culture(s) and at least one other culture, and their impact on global issues	The course's emphasis on the peoples and cultures of United States will allow the students to think about the paradigms of their own culture and the relationship between the two. CILO 1, 2, 4, 5.
PILO 9: Value ethical and socially responsible actions	Many of the issues engaged in the discussion of identity and culture directly connect with ethical and socially responsible actions. CILO 4, 5.
PILO 10: Demonstrate the attitude and/or ability to accomplish discovery and/or innovation	Students will discover diversity and be encouraged to re-examine their own lives and world. CILO 4, 5.

*GE course leaders should cover the mandatory PILOs for the GE area (Area 1: Arts and Humanities; Area 2: Study of Societies, Social and Business Organisations; Area 3: Science and Technology) for which they have classified their course; for quality assurance purposes, they are advised to carefully consider if it is beneficial to claim any coverage of additional PILOs. General advice would be to restrict PILOs to only the essential ones. (Please refer to the curricular mapping of GE programme: [http://www.cityu.edu.hk/edge/ge/faculty/curricular\\_mapping.htm](http://www.cityu.edu.hk/edge/ge/faculty/curricular_mapping.htm).)*

B. Please select an assessment task for collecting evidence of student achievement for quality assurance purposes. Please retain at least one sample of student achievement across a period of three years.

<b>Selected Assessment Task</b>
Critical Essays