



Universitat de Lleida

DEGREE CURRICULUM  
**POPULAR CULTURE IN  
ENGLISH AND THE  
CONTEMPORARY WORLD**

Coordination: SANTAULARIA CAPDEVILA, MARIA  
ISABEL

Academic year 2023-24

## Subject's general information

<b>Subject name</b>	POPULAR CULTURE IN ENGLISH AND THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD			
<b>Code</b>	101296			
<b>Semester</b>	1st Q(SEMESTER) CONTINUED EVALUATION			
<b>Typology</b>	<b>Degree</b>	<b>Course</b>	<b>Character</b>	<b>Modality</b>
	Bachelor's Degree in English Studies	4	OPTIONAL	Attendance-based
	Double degree: Bachelor's degree in English Studies and Bachelor's degree in Applied Languages and Translation	4	OPTIONAL	Attendance-based
<b>Course number of credits (ECTS)</b>	6			
<b>Type of activity, credits, and groups</b>	<b>Activity type</b>	PRAULA		TEORIA
	<b>Number of credits</b>	2.5		3.5
	<b>Number of groups</b>	1		1
<b>Coordination</b>	SANTAULARIA CAPDEVILA, MARIA ISABEL			
<b>Department</b>	FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES			
<b>Teaching load distribution between lectures and independent student work</b>	60 hours in-class teaching 90 hours autonomous work			
<b>Important information on data processing</b>	Consult <a href="#">this link</a> for more information.			
<b>Language</b>	English			
<b>Distribution of credits</b>	Agnès Guardiola: Unit 5 and classroom exercise Isabel Santaulària: Units 1, 2, 3 and 4			

Teaching staff	E-mail addresses	Credits taught by teacher	Office and hour of attention
GUARDIOLA PASTOR, MARIA INES	agnes.guardiola@udl.cat	1,5	
SANTAULARIA CAPDEVILA, MARIA ISABEL	isabel.santaularia@udl.cat	4,5	

## Subject's extra information

After introducing the concept 'popular narratives' and the characteristics and potential of this type of fiction, the course will be devoted to analysing some popular genres as well as their use as tools to understand the world we live in through the prism of cultural studies. The course is, therefore, not only intended to establish the limits of popular narratives and the genres they comprise, but also to study their worth as texts through which we can make sense of our contemporary world.

## Learning objectives

- Identify the objectives and dynamics of cultural studies.
- Identify popular narratives and describe their characteristics.
- Know the major genres of popular narratives.
- Know the origins, evolution and major representatives of a selection of popular genres.
- Develop critical thinking about popular narratives.
- Make connections between history & society and popular narratives.
- Recognise what different examples of popular narratives reveal about the contemporary world.
- Recognise how popular narratives condition our understanding of the world we live in.
- Be able to explain aspects of the contents of the subject clearly and analytically and to express these contents in a grammatically correct way.
- Recognize the contributions to the contestation of power relations and gender norms in feminist, LGBTI and queer art and artistic practices.
- Develop critical thinking about the forms of sexual representation in contemporary visual culture, with special attention to television and cinema.

## Competences

### General Competences

- CG15 Look for and handle information and use different resources and documents.
- CG16 Use techniques and methodology related to the professional world and the field of study of the degree.

### Specific competences:

- CE11 Analyse the projection and popularization of English literature through film and the mass media.
- CE14 Analyse the interaction between history and society and cultural products in English.

### Cross-curricular competence:

- CT6 Apply a gender perspective to tasks related to specific professional settings.

## Subject contents

**UNIT 1:** Media, popular narratives and society: Sample topics and texts. Compulsory texts:

- Old age and ageism: “Granny O’Grimm’s Sleeping Beauty” (Nicky Phelan, 2008; short) and a selection of additional clips, excerpts and/or images.
- Coming to terms with 9/11: “Guantanamo by the Bay” (3.22) from *Boston Legal* (ABC, 2004-2008). (TV episode)
- Donald Trump, leader of the free world: the case of *The Good Fight* (CBS, 2017-). (TV series; excerpts and clips)
- Cis masculinity and its discontents. In search of alternatives to toxic and hypermasculine men: the case of Batman (a TV and film anthology from 1966 to 2022), *Arrow* (The CW, 2012-2020) and *The Umbrella Academy* (Netflix, 2019-2023/24). (films and TV series; a selection of images)

**UNIT 2:** State of the crime: Detective fiction as chronicler of history and society. Discussion of **Worksheet 1**. Compulsory texts for worksheet:

- Conan Doyle, Sir Arthur. “A Scandal in Bohemia”. (Short story)
- *Seven* (David Fincher, 1995). (Film)
- *Cracker* (ITV, 1993-1996): “To Be a Somebody” Parts I, II and III (season 2). (TV episodes)
- *Joker* (Todd Phillips, 2019). (Film)

**UNIT 3:** YA (Young Adult Fiction), fantasy, science fiction and dystopia: Femininity in a post-feminist world. Discussion of **Worksheet 2**. Compulsory texts for worksheet:

- *The Hunger Games* (Gary Ross, 2012). (Film)
- *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire* (Francis Lawrence, 2013). (Film)
- *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay – Part 1* (Francis Lawrence, 2014). (Film)
- *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay – Part 2* (Francis Lawrence, 2015). (Film)
- *Game of Thrones* (HBO, 2011-2019): “The Long Night” (8.3), “The Bells” (8.5) and “The Iron Throne” (8.6). (TV episodes)

**UNIT 4:** Domestic Noir: The ills festering in the Secret Theatre of Home. Discussion of **Worksheet 3**. Compulsory text for worksheet:

- Flynn, Gillian. *Gone Girl*. (2012). (Novel)

**UNIT 5:** The Feminist Western. Discussion of **Worksheet 4**. Compulsory texts for worksheet:

- Godless (Netflix, 2017) (Mini series)

**CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:** Written exercise on a text (to choose from 2) you will prepare on your own:

- Lourey, Jess. *Unspeakable Things*. Seattle: Thomas & Mercer, 2020. (Novel)
- Melissa Lenhardt’s *Heresy*. Brooklyn: Redhook, 2018. (Novel)

## Methodology

The course is divided into:

**LECTURES:** will be devoted to introducing popular narratives and some of the most relevant genres, their characteristics and relation to society, as well as examples to illustrate how popular narratives engage with contemporary debates.

**SEMINAR SESSIONS:** will focus on the analysis of texts students will have read/watched beforehand. Worksheets will be provided to focus the discussion.

**SELF-STUDY:** there will be a class exercise on a novel students will have to read and prepare on their own. The

exact instructions will be given in due course.

## Development plan

	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
<b>UNIT 1: lectures and discussion of case studies</b> Isabel	14 September	15 September
	21 September	22 September
	28 September (no class)	29 September (no class)
	5 October	6 October
<b>UNIT 2: lectures and discussion of worksheet 1</b> Isabel	12 October (no class)	13 October
	19 October	20 October
	26 October	27 October
<b>UNIT 3: lectures and discussion of worksheet 2</b> Isabel	2 November	3 November
	9 November	10 November
<b>PE1 (written exam 1)</b>		
<b>UNIT 4: lectures and discussion of worksheet 3</b> Isabel	16 November	17 November
	23 November	24 November
	<b>WEDNESDAY</b>	<b>THURSDAY</b>
<b>UNIT 5: lectures and discussion of worksheet 4</b> Agnès	29 November	30 November
	6 December (no class)	7 December (no class)
	13 December	14 December
	20 December	
<b>AP1: Classroom assessment exercise - Agnès</b>		21 December
<b>PE2 (written exam 2)</b>		

## Evaluation

### GENERAL INFORMATION:

- Students who want to ask for alternative assessment must submit an employment contract or justify, in a letter addressed to the dean, the reasons that make it impossible for him/her to carry out the continuous assessment within five (5) days after the beginning of the semester. For information, please send an e-mail to [lletres.secretariacentre@udl.cat](mailto:lletres.secretariacentre@udl.cat) or ask for information at the Faculty's academic office (Secretaria Acadèmica de la Facultat de Lletres).
- Attendance to classes is compulsory.
- NP will be given when a student's assessment activities weigh less than 50% of the overall grade for the subject.
- Dates for assessment activities will be provided at the beginning of the semester. Date for PE2 (written exam 2) is the one established in the Faculty's exam calendar.
- Activities handed in after the deadline will not be accepted.
- Language will be taken into account in all of the assessment activities. There will be a penalty of -0.15 points per serious mistake.

- Students should read/watch compulsory texts before the corresponding sessions.
- All discussion worksheets will be provided by instructor before the corresponding sessions and should be prepared by students before discussion.
- If academic fraud or spontaneous copying is detected, we will apply what is established in the Regulations for the Assessment and Grading of Student Learning in UdL Bachelor's and Master's Degrees.
- In case the authorship of a work is doubtful, the instructor can establish a mechanism to certify this authorship.
- The course tutor reserves the right to introduce additional or alternative material for study at her discretion and to modify the programme if needs be.

## SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES:

### BLOCK 1 – 40 %

PE1: Exam on units 1, 2 and 3	40 %	Date, time and room to be determined. Date does not necessarily have to coincide with class schedules.
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### BLOCK 2 – 20 %

AP1: Classroom assessment exercise. Exact instructions for the classroom exercise on one novel to choose from two will be given in due course.	20 %	22 December in our classroom (1.32B)
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### BLOCK 3 – 40 %

PE2: Exam on units 4 and 5	40 %	17 January at 9.00, room 2.13
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## EXAM RESITS:

The resit for both exams (PE1 + PE2) will take place on **2<sup>nd</sup> February at 12.00, room 0.10A**

**IMPORTANT NOTE: To pass the subject, it is essential that the average of blocks 1 and 3 (PE1 and PE2), once the corresponding resits are done, is equal to or higher than 5.**

## Bibliography

- Berberich, Christine, ed. *The Bloomsbury Introduction to Popular Fiction*. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.
- Berger, Arthur Asa. *Popular Culture Genres: Theories and Texts*. Newbury Park, California: Sage, 1992.
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- Browne, Ray B. "Popular Culture – New Notes Towards a Definition." (in Hoppenstand)
- Cawelti, John. *The Six-Gun Mystique Sequel*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1999.
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- Cranny-Francis, Anne. *Feminist Fiction: Feminist Uses of Generic Fiction*. Cambridge: Polity, 1990.
- Creeber, Glen. *Serial Television: Big Drama on the Small Screen*. London: BFI Publishing, 2004.
- Douglas, Susan J. *The Rise of Enlightened Sexism: How Pop Culture Took Us from Girl Power to Girls*

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Gwenllian-Jones, Sara and Roberta E. Pearson, eds. *Cult Television*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

Hammond, Michael and Lucy Mazdon, eds. *The Contemporary Television Series*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005.

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Nelson, Robin. *State of Play: Contemporary 'High-End' TV Drama*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2007.

Palmer, Jerry. *Potboilers: Methods, Concepts and Case Studies in Popular Fiction*. London and New York: Routledge, 1991.

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Rockland, Michael A. *La cultura popular o ¿Por qué estudiar basura?* Texto bilingüe. Traducción de Fidel del Olmo González e Isabel Martín de Miguel. Introducción de Manuel González de la Aleja. León: Universidad de León, Taller de Estudios Norteamericanos, 1999.

Storey, John. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*. London and New York: Routledge, 2015. (seventh edition)

Strinati, Dominic. *An Introduction to the Theories of Popular Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

Todd, Richard. *Consuming Fictions: The Booker Prize and Fiction in Britain Today*. London: Bloomsbury, 1995.

Viñas Piquer, David. *El enigma best-seller: Fenómenos extraños en el campo literario*. Barcelona: Ariel, 2009.

Worpole, Ken. *Reading by Numbers: Contemporary Publishing and Popular Fiction*. London: Comedia Publishing Group, 1984.

