

Sophister Module Description Template 2024-25

Full Name: The American classic: Romance to Modernism

Short Name: American Classic

Lecturer Name and Email Address: Stephen Matterson smttrson@tcd.ie

ECTS Weighting: 10

Semester Taught MT/HT: HT

Year JS/SS: SS

Module Content: The very idea of the American classic has undergone radical conceptual shifts over the last fifty years, yet it endures as a statement of literary achievement and national identity. This option is an opportunity for a reevaluation of the idea of classic while critically considering texts that have been considered as among the most important and influential of all American writing. Texts will likely include: Poe, Selected stories; Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*; the slave narratives by Douglass and Jacobs; Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*; Alcott, *Little Women*, Crane, *Maggie A Girl of the Streets*; Chopin, *The Awakening*; Wharton, *The Age of Innocence*; Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*; Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*.

Learning Outcomes: On successful completion of this module you should be able to

1. Identify and describe the characteristics of the 'American Classic'.
2. Employ a highly developed range of interpretive strategies using appropriate critical vocabulary and theory.
3. Examine US cultural and historical contexts for the course texts.
4. Articulate the development of American prose fiction from 19th century to the 1920s
5. Generate research questions through the applied techniques of literature review, bibliographic enquiry, database and archive search.
6. Evaluate prose works in sophisticated written and oral presentation.

Learning Aims: The module engages critically with a variety of texts from the 1840s to the 1920s and specifically encourages fresh critical interpretations and interventions. This module encourages you to engage independently with key texts of American literature and to do so in an active and informed way. This is a seminar-based course; classes will require your articulation of your reading experience each week.

Assessment Details: This module will be assessed by one essay (5,000 words).

Preliminary Reading List: The primary texts will likely include those listed above, and relevant critical material for each author will be provided. Important overviews of the period can be found in Richard Gray, *A History of American Literature* (2004) and Sacvan Bercovitch (ed) *The Cambridge History of American Literature*, vol 3, *Prose writing, 1860–1920* (2005). For the historical contexts of the works, the relevant chapters of *The Limits of Liberty, American History 1607-1992* by Maldwyn A. Jones (1995) is recommended.

Please note:

Curricular information is subject to change.

- **Information is displayed only for guidance purposes, relates to the current academic year only and is subject to change.**

