

Cultural History of the USA

Code: 106285
ECTS Credits: 6

2025/2026

Degree	Type	Year
English Studies	OB	2
English and Catalan Studies	OB	3
English and Spanish Studies	OB	3
English and French Studies	OB	3
English and Classics Studies	OB	3

Contact

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Teachers

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Teaching groups languages

You can view this information at the [end](#) of this document.

Prerequisites

1) "Història cultural dels Estats Units d'Amèrica" focuses on sociocultural and textual analysis and promotes student participation and reflection. It also revolves around the historical events that have shaped the USA as we know it today. Therefore, students interested in this subject are strongly recommended to be familiar with the subject "Història Cultural de les Illes Britàniques" (English Studies). This subject is NOT recommended to US passport holders who have taken similar subjects in their country of origin.

2) Students who want to take part in this course need a C2 level of English within the "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages", which in practical terms implies that they have to be able to: comprehend a wide variety of long and complex written and audiovisual materials and recognize their implicit meaning; express themselves with fluency and spontaneity; use English flexibly and efficiently for social and professional purposes; produce well-structured texts about complex topics, and demonstrate an appropriate command of the appropriate cohesive devices that are required in academic contexts.

Objectives and Contextualisation

- "Cultural History of the United States" provides an introduction to the most relevant issues and events in the History of the US from its colonial origins to the present. Likewise, this subject emphasizes the cultural production that emerges from the intersection between the history of this nation and its society.
- This subject fosters the analysis, debate and interpretation of the cultural production of the US, a production that is rooted in the main historical events that have shaped this nation as we know it today.
- The academic preparation that derives from this subject is essential for all remaining US literature subjects within the degree of English Studies, in the sense that the main aim of this subject is to provide students with a solid historical and sociocultural base from which to approach the literary texts of the US that are studied at a later stage. Moreover, the academic preparation that derives from this subject also establishes a perspective that helps students understand the particularities of the culture and the institutions of the US. "Cultural History of the United States," in fact, complements "19th Century US Literature," a subject that is taken in the second semester.
- On successfully completing "Cultural History of the United States," students will be able to: understand and explain the most relevant events that have occurred in the US throughout its history; link the history of this nation to its cultural production; demonstrate a strong understanding of historical texts from the periods examined; show clear evidence of understanding written texts and audiovisual materials that are related to the history and the culture of the United States of America; generate written analyses of the texts and audiovisual materials dealt with in class; relate historical periods to their literary manifestations (this skill will be developed jointly with the subject "19th century US literature"); and express an informed opinion about the texts and historical events studied throughout the course.

Competences

English Studies

- Act with ethical responsibility and respect for fundamental rights and duties, diversity and democratic values.
- Apply scientific ethical principles to information processing.
- Apply the methodology of analysis and critical concepts to analysing the literature, culture and history of English-speaking countries.
- Students must be capable of communicating information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
- Students must have and understand knowledge of an area of study built on the basis of general secondary education, and while it relies on some advanced textbooks it also includes some aspects coming from the forefront of its field of study.
- Understand and produce written and spoken academic texts in English at advanced higher-proficient-user level (C2).
- Use current philological methodologies to interpret literary texts in English and their cultural and historical context.
- Use digital tools and specific documentary sources for the collection and organisation of information.
- Use written and spoken English for academic and professional purposes, related to the study of linguistics, the philosophy of language, history, English culture and literature.

English and Catalan Studies

- Apply scientific ethical principles to information processing.
- Critically evaluate the literary and cultural production in the Catalan and English languages and their historical and social context.
- Demonstrate the ability to work autonomously and in teams with the aim of attaining the planned objectives in multicultural and interdisciplinary contexts.
- Develop arguments applicable to the fields of English and French literature, culture and linguistics and evaluate their academic relevance.
- Identify and interpret literary texts in different languages, analysing the generic, formal, thematic and cultural characteristics in accordance with the concepts and methods of comparative literature and literary theory.
- Make correct use of written and spoken English for academic or professional purposes, related to the study of language, history, culture and literature.

- Students must be capable of collecting and interpreting relevant data (usually within their area of study) in order to make statements that reflect social, scientific or ethical relevant issues.
- Students must be capable of communicating information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
- Students must have and understand knowledge of an area of study built on the basis of general secondary education, and while it relies on some advanced textbooks it also includes some aspects coming from the forefront of its field of study.
- Understand and produce oral and written academic texts with appropriateness and fluency in distinct communicative contexts.
- Use digital tools and specific documentary sources to gather and organise information.

English and Spanish Studies

- Analyse the main phonetic, phonological, morphological, syntactic, lexical and semantic properties of the English and Spanish languages, their evolution throughout history and their current structure.
- Apply scientific ethical principles to information processing.
- Correctly use written and oral English and Spanish for academic and professional purposes, related to the study of linguistics, history, culture and literature.
- Critically analyse linguistic, literary and cultural production in English and Spanish, applying the techniques and methods of critical editing and digital processing.
- Demonstrate the ability to work autonomously and in teams in order to achieve the planned objectives in multicultural and interdisciplinary contexts.
- Develop arguments applicable to the fields of literature, culture, literary theory, language and linguistics, in Spanish and English, and evaluate their academic relevance.
- Students must be capable of collecting and interpreting relevant data (usually within their area of study) in order to make statements that reflect social, scientific or ethical relevant issues.
- Students must be capable of communicating information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
- Students must have and understand knowledge of an area of study built on the basis of general secondary education, and while it relies on some advanced textbooks it also includes some aspects coming from the forefront of its field of study.
- Understand and produce oral and written academic texts with appropriateness and fluency in distinct communicative contexts.
- Use digital tools and specific documentary sources to gather and organise information.

English and French Studies

- Apply scientific ethical principles to information processing.
- Critically apply the different current philological methodologies to interpret literary texts in English and French and their cultural and historical context.
- Develop arguments applicable to the fields of English and French literature, culture and linguistics and evaluate their academic relevance.
- Evaluate and propose solutions to theoretical or practical problems in the fields of English and French literature, culture and linguistics.
- Students have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (normally within their study area) to issue judgments that include reflection on important issues of social, scientific or ethical.
- Students must be capable of communicating information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
- Students must have and understand knowledge of an area of study built on the basis of general secondary education, and while it relies on some advanced textbooks it also includes some aspects coming from the forefront of its field of study.
- Understand and produce oral and written academic texts with appropriateness and fluency in distinct communicative contexts.
- Use digital tools and specific documentary sources to gather and organise information.
- Use spoken English and French correctly for academic and professional purposes related to the study of linguistics, history, culture and literature.

English and Classics Studies

- Apply scientific ethical principles to information processing.
- Apply the methodology of analysis and knowledge of genres, metrics and stylistics to comment on literary texts and analyse the culture and history of English-speaking countries and the ancient world.

- Demonstrate the ability to work autonomously and in teams in order to achieve the planned objectives in multicultural and interdisciplinary contexts.
- Develop arguments applicable to the fields of literature, culture and linguistics and evaluate their academic relevance.
- Students must be capable of collecting and interpreting relevant data (usually within their area of study) in order to make statements that reflect social, scientific or ethical relevant issues.
- Students must be capable of communicating information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
- Students must have and understand knowledge of an area of study built on the basis of general secondary education, and while it relies on some advanced textbooks it also includes some aspects coming from the forefront of its field of study.
- Use digital tools and specific documentary sources to gather and organise information.
- Use written and spoken English correctly for academic and professional purposes related to the study of English linguistics, history, culture, and literature.

Learning Outcomes

1. Actively participate in forums on the online learning platform.
2. Analyse and interpret at an advanced level any aspect of current culture and society in the English language and its textual representation.
3. Apply the acquired work planning methodologies to individual and group professional tasks.
4. Apply the work-organisation methodologies acquired to individual and group-based professional tasks.
5. Autonomously search, select and process information both from structured sources (databases, bibliographies, specialized magazines) and from across the network.
6. Carry out bibliographic searches of secondary sources related to current culture and society in English and their textual representation, using digital technologies (catalogues and databases).
7. Demonstrate a full understanding of a wide range of literary, audio-visual and essayistic texts related to aspects of current culture and society in English, and recognise implicit meaning at a higher-proficient-user level (C2).
8. Demonstrate an understanding of compulsory texts on the cultural history of the British Isles and the United States.
9. Demonstrate full comprehension of a wide range of literary, audiovisual and essay texts related to aspects of current culture and society in English at proficient-user level (C1), and recognise implicit meaning.
10. Demonstrate full comprehension of a wide range of literary, audio-visual and essayistic texts related to aspects of current culture and society in English and recognise implicit meanings in these at Advanced User level (C1).
11. Demonstrate understanding at advanced proficient-user level (C1) of a wide range of nineteenth-century literary texts in English and recognise implicit meaning.
12. Develop advanced-level critical arguments applied to the interpretation of primary and secondary sources dealing with current English-language culture and society and its textual representation.
13. Discuss with critical arguments orally in the classroom primary and secondary sources dealing with current English language culture and society and their textual representation.
14. Distinguish principal ideas from secondary ideas and summarise literary, audiovisual and essayistic texts related to current culture and society in the English language and their textual representation.
15. Distinguish principal ideas from secondary ideas and synthesise literary, audiovisual and essayistic texts related to current culture and society in the English language, and their textual representation.
16. Express oneself effectively by applying argumentative and textual procedures in formal and scientific texts, in the language studied.
17. Express oneself fluently, correctly, appropriately and effectively, both orally and in writing, in an academic environment.
18. Express oneself in English, orally and in writing, in a formal register and using appropriate terminology in relation to the study of the cultural history of the British Isles and the United States.
19. Express oneself in English orally and in writing in an academic register and using appropriate terminology in relation to cultural, transnational and gender studies in English-speaking countries.
20. Incorporate ideas and concepts from published sources into work, citing and referencing appropriately.
21. Issue rating pertinent criticism supported in understanding the relevant information on issues related to the literature and culture of social, scientific or ethical concern.

22. Locate and organise relevant English-language information available on the internet, databases and libraries, and apply this to work and/or research environments.
23. Locate specialised and academic information and select this according to its relevance.
24. Participate in face-to-face and virtual discussions in English on topics related to current culture and society in the English language and their textual representation.
25. Plan work effectively, individually or in groups, in order to fulfil the planned objectives.
26. Produce advanced academic work of critical content in relation to primary and secondary sources dealing with current English language culture and society and its textual representation.
27. Produce works in which the fundamental digital and bibliographic tools for the field of study are applied.
28. Produce written and oral academic discourse with a fluency and accuracy appropriate at Advanced User level (C1).
29. Produce written and oral academic discourse with a fluency and accuracy appropriate to a higher-proficient-user level (C2).
30. Produce written and oral academic discourse with a fluency and accuracy appropriate to a proficient-user level (C1).
31. Rigorously assess the values conveyed by the texts analysed, making constructive criticism.
32. Take part in face-to-face and online debates in English on topics related to the culture and society in English and their representation in texts.
33. Weigh up the impact of any long- or short-term difficulty, harm or discrimination that could be caused to certain persons or groups by the actions or projects.

Content

1. Indigenous North America and Colonial Contact
2. Political and Religious Enthusiasm: the Road to Independence
3. Union and Discord: the Constitution and the First Decades of Independence
4. Native Americans and the "Trail of Tears"
5. African Americans' and Women's Rights
6. The West and "Manifest Destiny"
7. From the Civil War and "Reconstruction" to the "Jim Crow" Era
8. The "Gilded Age": Immigration, Industrialization, and Urbanization
9. The "Frontier" and Beyond: Expansionism and Imperialism
10. The Progressive Era: Workers' and Women's Rights
11. Diversion, Depression, and Modernism: the Culture of the Interwar Period
12. The Postwar Period and the Cold War
13. Civil Rights Movements: African Americans, Native Americans, Women, and the LGBTQ Collective
14. The Politics of Fear: from the Cold War to the Wars on Terrorism, Drugs, and Immigrants

Activities and Methodology

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Type: Directed			
Debates in class	20	0.8	2, 13, 9, 11, 10, 7, 8, 12, 15, 14, 21, 17, 16, 19, 18, 1, 24, 32, 30, 28, 29, 31, 33
Lectures	30	1.2	2, 3, 4, 5, 13, 9, 11, 10, 7, 8, 12, 15, 14, 27, 21, 17, 16, 19, 18, 6, 20, 22, 23, 1, 24, 32, 25, 30, 28, 29, 26, 31, 33
Type: Supervised			
Assessment	5	0.2	2, 9, 10, 7, 8, 12, 15, 14, 21, 17, 16, 19, 18, 20, 30, 29, 33

Assessment in class	5	0.2	2, 3, 4, 5, 13, 9, 11, 10, 7, 8, 12, 15, 14, 27, 21, 17, 16, 19, 18, 6, 20, 22, 23, 1, 24, 32, 25, 30, 28, 29, 26, 31, 33
Written assignments	15	0.6	2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 11, 10, 7, 8, 12, 15, 14, 27, 21, 17, 16, 19, 18, 6, 20, 25, 30, 28, 29, 26, 31
Type: Autonomous			
Personal Study	30	1.2	2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 15, 14, 21, 6, 22, 23, 25
Reading and Research	40	1.6	7, 8, 20

The teaching methodology of this subject is based on:

1 ECTS credit = 25 hours of learning > 6 credits = 150 hours

Directed activities (2cr., 50 hours)

Supervised activities (1 cr., 25 hours)

Autonomous activities (3 cr., 75 hours)

Classes combine theory and practice. It is essential that students study in advance the texts and the audiovisual materials selected by the professors, as the dynamics of the class revolve around the active participation of students in every session.

Note: Within the teaching period established by the Faculty calendar, 15 minutes of class time will be reserved for students to complete the subject and teacher-assessment surveys.

Annotation: Within the schedule set by the centre or degree programme, 15 minutes of one class will be reserved for students to evaluate their lecturers and their courses or modules through questionnaires.

Assessment

Continous Assessment Activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Exam 1 (Midterm)	40	2	0.08	2, 3, 4, 5, 13, 9, 11, 10, 7, 8, 12, 15, 14, 27, 21, 17, 16, 19, 18, 6, 20, 22, 23, 1, 32, 24, 25, 30, 28, 29, 26, 31, 33
Exam 2 (Final)	40	2	0.08	2, 3, 4, 5, 13, 9, 11, 10, 7, 8, 12, 15, 14, 27, 21, 17, 16, 19, 18, 6, 20, 22, 23, 1, 32, 24, 25, 30, 28, 29, 26, 31, 33
Short Quizzes (2)	20	1	0.04	5, 7, 8, 21, 17, 18, 29

Assessment for this course is based on the following:

- Midterm exam (or exam 1) = 40%
- Final exam (or exam 2) = 40%
- 2 short quizzes and class participation = 20%

All evaluation dates will be confirmed at the beginning of the semester.

ASSESSMENT:

- This subject follows the system of continuous assessment, unless the student opts for single assessment (see below).
- All the exercises are **COMPULSORY**.
- All students are required to study the compulsory texts for this subject and participate in class exercises. Any indication that students have not completed their work in this respect will affect their assessment in a negative way.
- Students will obtain a "Not assessed"/"Not submitted" course grade unless they have submitted more than 30% of the assessment items (in this case, at least one of the two exams).
- On carrying out each assessment activity, professors will inform students of the procedures to be followed for reviewing all grades awarded, and the date on which such a review will take place.
- The minimum pass mark for the subject is 5.
- The student's command of English will be taken into account when evaluating students' written work and overall performance; it will count as 25% of all the exercises.

SINGLE-ASSESSMENT:

- 2 quizzes on the contents of the course (1 map and 1 test on basic concepts) (20%)
- Comparative analysis on two provided excerpts (40%)
- Essay based on a prompt related to the content of the course (40%)

REASSESSMENT:

Re-assessment for this subject requires a content-synthesis test, for which the following conditions are applicable:

- The student must previously have submitted the two written exams and at least one in-class exercise.
- The student must previously have obtained an average grade of at least 3.5 in the two written exams.
- The maximum grade than can be obtained through re-assessment is 5.

PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:

Plagiarism in any of the exercises will automatically lead to FAILING (0/10) the exercise, which cannot be reassessed. If the student plagiarizes a second time, s/he will fail the course. PLAGIARISM means copying a text (and this includes a single sentence) from unidentified sources and pretending it is part of one's own production (THIS INCLUDES COPYING SENTENCES OR FRAGMENTS FROM THE INTERNET, WHICH ARE INCLUDED WITHOUT ANY CHANGES TO THE TEXT THAT IS PRESENTED AS ONE'S OWN) and it is a serious academic offence. Students must learn to respect others' intellectual property and to always identify the sources they use. It is absolutely necessary for students to become entirely responsible for the originality and authenticity of their texts.

In the event of a student committing any irregularity that may lead to a significant variation in the grade awarded to an assessment activity, the student will be given a zero for this activity, regardless of any disciplinary process that may take place. In the event of several irregularities in assessment activities of the same subject, the student will be given a zero as the final grade for this subject.

Irregularities refer, for instance, to copying in an exam, copying from sources without indicating authorship, or a misuse of AI such as presenting work as original that has been generated by an AI tool or programme. These evaluation activities will not be re-assessed.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

This subject allows the use of AI technologies exclusively for preparatory tasks such as content-based searches and linguistic correction. The use of AI (or any other form of assistance) is not permitted during in-class assessments (exams and quizzes).

Lack of transparency regarding the use of AI in the assessed activity will be considered academic dishonesty; the corresponding grade may be lowered, or the work may even be awarded a zero. In cases of greater infringement, more serious action may be taken.

Important note for exchange students (Erasmus, etc.) on exams and other tests: Erasmus students who request to bring forward an exam or any other type of assessment activity must present the teacher with an official document from their home university justifying their request.

Bibliography

Compulsory reading:

A dossier of short texts selected and provided by the teachers.

Recommended Bibliography:

Anderson, Carol. *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide*. Bloomsbury, 2016.

Barney, William (ed). *A Companion to 19th Century America*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.

Boles, John (ed.). *A Companion to the American South*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

Bronski, Michael. *A Queer History of the United States*. Beacon Press, 2012.

Ceniza Choy, Catherine. *Asian American Histories of the United States*. Beacon Press, 2022.

Collins, Patricia. *Black Feminist Thought*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Davis, Angela J. (ed.) *Policing the Black Man: Arrest, Prosecution and Imprisonment*. Pantheon Books, 2017.

Deverell, William. *A Companion to the American West*. Blackwell, 2006.

Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne. *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*. Beacon Press, 2014.

Foner, Eric. *A Short History of Reconstruction*. Harper and Row, 1990.

Foner, Eric. *The Story of American Freedom*. Norton, 1998.

Ford, Lacy (ed.). *A Companion to the Civil War and Reconstruction*. Blackwell 2005.

Genovese, Eugene. *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World Slaves Made*. Vintage Books, 1976.

Greene, Jack. *A Companion to the American Revolution*. Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

Hewitt, Nancy. *A Companion to American Women's History*. Blackwell 2002.

Jenkins, Philip. *A History of the United States*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2017 (5th Edition).

Jones-Rogers, Stephanie E. *They Were Her Property: White Women as Slave Owners in the American South*. Yale UP, 2019.

King, David C. *American History. A Visual Encyclopedia*. Penguin Random House, 2019 (3rd Edition).

Kleinberg, S. Jay, Vicki Ruiz & Eileen Boris (eds). *The Practice of US Women's History*, Rutgers UP, 2008. ebook.

Morgan, Edmund. *American Heroes: Profiles of Men and Women Who Shaped Early America*. W.W. Norton & Co., 2009.

Nielsen, Kim E. *A Disability History of the United States*. Beacon Press, 2013.

Ortiz, Paul. *An African American and Latinx History of the United States*. Beacon Press, 2018.

Vickers, Daniel (ed.). *A Companion to Colonial America*. Blackwell, 2006.

Vorenberg, Michael. *Final Freedom, The Civil War, the Abolition of Slavery, and the Thirteenth Amendment*. Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Whitfield, Stephen (ed.). *A Companion to 20th-Century America*. Blackwell, 2006.

Wood, Gordon. *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic: 1789-1815*. Oxford University Press, 2009.

Zinn, Howard. *A People's History of the United States: 1492-Present*. Longman, 2010.

Journals:

Journal of American History. Electronic journal. <https://www.jstor.org/journal/jamericanhistory>

The Journal of African American History. Electronic journal. <https://www.jstor.org/journal/jafriamerhist>

Websites:

"The American Yawp." <http://www.americanyawp.com/>

Software

No specific software will be used.

Groups and Languages

Please note that this information is provisional until 30 November 2025. You can check it through this [link](#). To consult the language you will need to enter the CODE of the subject.

Name	Group	Language	Semester	Turn
(PAUL) Classroom practices	1	English	first semester	morning-mixed
(PAUL) Classroom practices	2	English	first semester	morning-mixed
(PAUL) Classroom practices	3	English	first semester	morning-mixed
(TE) Theory	1	English	first semester	morning-mixed
(TE) Theory	2	English	first semester	morning-mixed
(TE) Theory	3	English	first semester	morning-mixed

