

- Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines
- www.unine.ch/lettres

Sém. Ang. II/TC: 21st Century American Fiction: The Unwinding (2AN2107)

Filières concernées	Nombre d'heures	Validation	Crédits ECTS
Pilier principal M A - littératures	Séminaire: 2 ph	Voir ci-dessous	5
Pilier secondaire M A - littératures	Séminaire: 2 ph	Voir ci-dessous	5

ph=période hebdomadaire, pg=période globale, j=jour, dj=demi-jour, h=heure, min=minute

Période d'enseignement:

- Semestre Printemps

Equipe enseignante

Professor Patrick Vincent

Contenu

In this seminar on contemporary fiction, we will approach five very different works published since 2000 as if they were state-of-the-nation novels, focusing in particular on the connected themes of identity, family, and society. Borrowing its title from George Packer's influential non-fiction narration of 'thirty years of American decline', the seminar will ask whether or not 'decline' should be considered as the period's defining trope.

Reading primary and secondary texts alongside the novels, we will first review some of the myths of American exceptionalism as well as myths of American decline. We will then read and discuss commentaries from both the Left and the Right on various symptoms of decline (e.g. inequalities of income and wealth, polarized parties, strained infrastructures, high incarceration rates, opioid epidemics, political extremism, ecocide, generalized spying, torture) and on their supposed causes (e.g. neoliberalism and globalization, end of empire, racism, identity politics, culture wars, immigration, new technologies and media, society of spectacle, foreign wars). Is America, as Julia Kristeva has argued, a society that is depressed because it cannot get passed its lost ideals?

OBJECTIFS D'APPRENTISSAGE

The aims of this course are the following:

- To familiarize students with literary and cultural history
- To pursue the study of a specific genre and period in more depth
- To improve research and writing skills
- To introduce students to some theoretical concepts
- To help students find a mémoire research topic

COMPETENCES TRANSFERABLES

oral discussion skills (in English)
online and library research skills
critical thinking skills
argumentative writing skills
general knowledge in history and culture

Forme de l'évaluation

Ev. Interne : research paper (10-15 pages) (students get one chance to rewrite a failed essay). Students will also be asked to lead the discussion of individual articles and essays.

Documentation

Philip Roth, *The Human Stain*, Vintage
Junot Diaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, Faber
Marilynne Robinson, *Gilead*, Picador
Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*, Picador
Ottessa Moshfegh, *My Year of Rest and Relaxation*, Jonathan Cape

All other reading material will be placed on the Moodle course platform.

Pré-requis

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'BA Lecture 4: Introduction to American Literature' is recommended.

Forme de l'enseignement

Seminar : 20% lecture, 20 % student presentations, 60% discussion. Because this course is mainly discussion-driven, attendance is mandatory. More than three unexcused absences can lead to a fail.