

**Course title:** American Cultural Studies VI

**Course code:** SA1061

**Type of course:** compulsory

**Level of course:** BA

**Year of study:** 3<sup>rd</sup>

**Semester:** 6<sup>th</sup>

**Number of ECTS credits allocated:** 5

**Name of the lecturer:** Mariana Hurjui

**Course objective:** The purpose of this course is twofold: first, to examine the politics, theory and methodology of studying American Popular Culture from its emergent modernity in the nineteenth-century to present day. Second, to examine the nexus between American popular culture and consumer culture. Third, to provide an interdisciplinary framework for the study of popular culture and consumer culture of the United States; to promote individual inquiry and small and large group interaction in meeting the Course objective; to nurture critical thinking skills; to focus on the analysis of two cultural phenomena that have shaped and continue to shape American culture and society

**Course contents:** Introduction: understanding the nature of culture. An historical approach to the differences between 'high culture', 'mass culture', 'popular culture'. 2. Raymond Williams. Culture is Ordinary. 2 Theorising the Transition: Gilded Age, Modern, Postmodern. The democratisation and 'massification' of culture. 3. Production, Consumption and the Popular. The role of productionism within major traditions (Marx, Weber); culture as mass production (Adorno's 'culture industry'). 4. Conspicuous Consumption: Thorstein Veblen's question of representation. 5. Engineering new values: commodity between use value and beyond it (Jean Baudrillard). 6. The fetishised object: mystification through reification. 7. The Dealers in Sign: surface-package-advertising image. 8. 'The Society of the Spectacle'  
Reading Material: Fred Davis, Fashion, Culture and Identity Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

**Recommended reading:** Arnold, Matthew, *Culture and Anarchy* in John Storey (ed.), *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, 2nd edition, Univ. of Georgia Press, 1998; Berman, Marshall, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air. The Experience of Modernity. Culture: An Introductory Reader*. New York: Edward Arnold, 1993; *Hierarchy in America*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988; Levine, Lawrence W., *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural*, Simon and Schuster: New York, 1982; Trachtenberg, Alan. *The Incorporation of America. Culture and Society in the Gilded Age*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1982; Williams, Raymond. *Culture is Ordinary*, in Gray and McGuigan (eds.), *Studying*

**Teaching methods:** interactive lectures

**Assessment methods:** homework; final (written) test

**Language of instruction:** English