

Culture and Society of the English-speaking World (A005821)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 4.0 **Study time 120 h**

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2026-2027

A (semester 2)	English	Gent	seminar	0.0h
			lecture	0.0h

Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

Jooken, Lieve	LW22	lecturer-in-charge
de Grootte, Brecht	LW22	co-lecturer

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027

	crdts	offering
Bachelor of Arts in Applied Language Studies: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, English, French)	4	A
Bachelor of Arts in Applied Language Studies: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, English, German)	4	A
Bachelor of Arts in Applied Language Studies: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, English, Italian)	4	A
Bachelor of Arts in Applied Language Studies: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, English, Language Technology)	4	A
Bachelor of Arts in Applied Language Studies: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, English, Russian)	4	A
Bachelor of Arts in Applied Language Studies: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, English, Spanish)	4	A
Bachelor of Arts in Applied Language Studies: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, English, Turkish)	4	A
Exchange Programme Applied Language Studies	4	A
Linking Course Master of Arts in Multilingual Communication: a combination of at least two languages	4	A
Linking Course Master of Arts in Translation: a combination of at least two languages	4	A
Preparatory Course Master of Arts in Interpreting: a combination of at least two languages	4	A
Preparatory Course Master of Arts in Multilingual Communication: a combination of at least two languages	4	A
Preparatory Course Master of Arts in Translation: a combination of at least two languages	4	A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

culture, society, historical context, literature, United Kingdom, United States, international connections

Position of the course

This unit of study extends students' cultural and socio-historical knowledge of developments in UK and US society. It intends to introduce students to topical debates and issues in modern British and American society and situates these topics in a wider historical and cultural context, also taking into account the political and cultural positions of both societies within the broader English-speaking world. In engaging with the course material, students also expand their terminological command of concepts, cultural references and social phenomena. A key feature of the course is the guided self-study component of preparatory reading of a selection of literary or non-fiction texts. Students will be asked to read

materials ahead of each lecture and classes will stimulate their critical interaction with texts and skills of interpretation. Exchange students may take up this course unit. No prior knowledge of Dutch is required.

Contents

The Culture and Society course addresses a selection of topical issues in modern British and American society and situates them in their historical, cultural and international context.

Themes will be set annually to reflect topical interests. They may include discussions of British identity, political traditions and changes (devolution, Brexit), the legacy of the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland, postcolonial society and attitudes to the history of slavery, education and the impact of social class, freedom of speech, the American Dream from the 19th century to the present, American 'exceptionalism', racial debates, the 'culture war', the origins and development of the two-party system.

Class discussion is based on a selection of relevant publications and fragments from a range of (audio-visual) media. Also literary works that reflect on the themes treated in class will be integrated into the discussion.

Initial competences

Final competences obtained in the first bachelor year of English.

Students are also expected to be able to retrieve information about the language area's cultural history, drawing on appropriate sources.

Final competences

- 1 Have a command of English (listening, reading, interpreting, vocabulary) at C1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference. (assessed)
- 2 Acquire a profound knowledge and interpretation of topical social and cultural contexts and debates in the UK and US, be able to critically reflect on them and to discuss new developments in light of that in-depth understanding. (assessed)
- 3 Have a critical understanding of the general context of ideas in British and American language and culture, be able to reflect on them and situate them in their social and intercultural context. (assessed)
- 4 Show intellectual curiosity and an interest in lifelong learning. (not assessed)

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is unrestricted: the student takes into consideration the conditions mentioned in 'Starting Competences'

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Seminar, Lecture

Extra information on the teaching methods

12 lectures/seminars in one group

Thematically focused lectures are supported by PowerPoint presentations and lecture notes. Some classes will be organised as seminars to stimulate critical interaction. Articles and other texts discussed are uploaded to Ufora. Students are expected to read materials critically and engage with their reading task before attending class.

Study material

Type: Slides

Name: PowerPoint presentation UK and US Society and Culture

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Available on Ufora : Yes

Online Available : No

Available in the Library : No

Available through Student Association : No

Type: Reader

Name: Reader UK and US Culture and Society

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Available on Ufora : Yes

Online Available : No

Available in the Library : No

Available through Student Association : No

References

- Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Verso.
- Cannadine, D. (1998). *Class in Britain*. Yale University Press.
- Colley, L. (1992). *Britons. Forging the nation 1707-1837*. Yale University Press.
- Colls, R. (2004). *Identity of England*. Oxford University Press.
- Ferguson, Niall (2004). *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire*. Penguin.
- Fox, K. (2004). *Watching the English. The hidden rules of English behaviour*. Hodder & Stoughton.
- Garton Ash, T. (2016). *Free speech. Ten principles for a connected world*. Atlantic Books.
- Grant, A. & Stringer, K.J., eds. (1995). *Uniting the kingdom? The making of British history*. Routledge.
- Green, S. (2017). *Brexit and the British. Who are we now?* Haus Curiosities.
- Hall, S. (1997). *Representations: cultural representations and signifying practices*. Sage publications.
- Hobsbawm, E. (1994). *The age of extremes: the short twentieth century, 1914-1991*. Michael Joseph.
- Hobsbawm, E. & Ranger, T., eds. (1983). *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge University Press.
- Life in the United Kingdom: a guide for new residents*. (2017). Great Britain: Home Office.
- Mak, G. (2015). *In America. Travels with John Steinbeck*. Vintage.
- Marr, A. (2007). *A history of modern Britain*. Macmillan.
- Marwick, A. (2000). *A history of the modern British Isles 1914-1999*. Blackwell Publishers.
- O'Driscoll, J. (2009). *Britain. The country and its people*. Oxford University Press.
- Oakland, J. (2015, 7th edition). *British civilization. An introduction*. Routledge. See also student site: <http://www.routledge.com/textbooks/oakland>
- Oxford Guide to British and American Culture*. (2005). Oxford: OUP.
- Paxman, J. (1999). *The English. A portrait of a people*. Penguin Books.
- Reynolds, David (2010). *America, Empire of Liberty*. Penguin.
- Rosen, A. (2003). *The transformation of British life 1950-2000*. Manchester University Press.
- Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books.
- Scruton, R. (2017). *Where we are. The state of Britain now*. Bloomsbury.
- Skinner, J. (2016). *Anglo-American cultural studies*. A. Francke Verlag.
- Storry, Mike & Peter Childs (eds.). (2013, 4th edition). *British cultural identities*. Routledge.
- Thompson, E.P. (1963). *The making of the English working class*. Vintage.
- Verhagen, F. (2017). *Geschiedenis van de Verenigde Staten*. Boom.
- Williams, Jan & Chris Teasdale. (2005). *Welcome to Britain: A celebration of real life*. Headline Book Publishing Ltd.

Course content-related study coaching

Lecturers can be contacted by appointment via Teams or on campus.

Assessment moments

end-of-term assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Written assessment with open-ended questions

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Written assessment with open-ended questions

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

not applicable

Extra information on the examination methods

End-of-term written examination with open questions.

The examination contains a set of discursive, interpretative questions (short essay) and questions that assess knowledge of facts and references. Also literary and non-fiction texts discussed in class are integrated into the examination. A list of pointer questions is distributed in the course of the semester.

Calculation of the examination mark

The examination contains two equally weighted modules:

UK module (50%) / US module (50%)

Students pass the examination if they obtain a total final grade of 10/20 or more, and if the mark obtained for the UK as well as the US module is at least 8/20. The final grade is automatically updated to 9/20 or below if the mark for any of the two modules is lower than 8/20.

Partial resit exemption is granted if at least 10/20 is obtained for a module.

-

Facilities for Working Students

Possible exemption from educational activities requiring student attendance. The examination can be rescheduled.