



Universidad
de Alcalá

GUÍA DOCENTE

Culturas y Civilizaciones de los Países de Habla Inglesa // Cultures and Civilizations of the English-Speaking Countries

**Grado en Estudios Ingleses
Grado en Lenguas Modernas y Traducción
Universidad de Alcalá**

Curso Académico 2018-2019
2º Curso – 2º Cuatrimestre

GUÍA DOCENTE

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| Nombre de la asignatura: | Culturas y Civilizaciones de los Países de Habla Inglesa // Cultures and Civilizations of the English-Speaking Countries |
| Código: | 251015 // 440015 |
| Titulación en la que se imparte: | Grado en Estudios Ingleses Grado en Lenguas Modernas y Traducción |
| Departamento y Área de Conocimiento: | Departamento de Filología Moderna Área de Filología inglesa |
| Carácter: | Obligatorio |
| Créditos ECTS: | 8 |
| Curso y cuatrimestre: | 2º curso, 2º cuatrimestre |
| Profesorado: | Grado en Estudios Ingleses: José A. Gurpegui Palacios Juan A. Sánchez Jiménez Grado en Lenguas Modernas y Traducción (Alcalá): José A. Gurpegui Palacios Juan A. Sánchez Jiménez Grado en Lenguas Modernas y Traducción (Guadalajara): Juan F. Elices Agudo Juan A. Sánchez Jiménez |
| Horario de tutorial: | Por determinar |
| Idioma en el que se imparte: | Inglés |

1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This subject introduces students to the cultural variety of English-speaking countries. The main focus naturally falls on the UK and the USA, as for historical, cultural and economic reasons, these countries still crucially nourish the culture of the English-speaking world at large. Attention will also be devoted to former British colonies and their development into independent nations.

The course centers its attention on the variety of cultural constructs which at present predominate in these countries. The focus will often, though not only, be synchronic. It will often be approached via documents which reach back in time, as it is in these documents that the sources for the current cultural constructs are to be found.

The sources used are various in kind, ranging from popular culture to serious academic reflection. This variety both reflects the multiplicity of cultural expression, and helps students raise their awareness to the possibility of interpreting any kind of cultural material.

Prerequisites and Recommendations

Since all activities will be conducted in English, students are expected to have at least a B2.1 level in the language within the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Students are reminded that at the end of the second semester, they are expected to have a B2.2 level of English (CEFR).

Course summary

This course unit examines some of the most relevant cultural constructs that can be observed in the different Anglo-speaking contexts that are going to be examined along the term. All the units that form part of the syllabus will focus on the variety of socio-political, religious and economic factors that determine the cultural identity of a country, which means that issues like music, cinema, sports or literature will be thoroughly explored. This course will try to help students detect and contextualise all those elements that configure the cultural background of a nation and how they also contribute to shape the cultural peculiarities of the United States, Great Britain or Ireland, among others. The sources that will be employed are various and will complement the texts, songs or movies that will be the object of the students' close analysis.

2. COURSE OBJECTIVES

Generic Competences:

1. To forge in students the idea that any kind of cultural constructs can be approached from a critical perspective.
2. To develop the students' critical thinking and to reinforce the idea that culture can be interpreted in multifarious ways.
3. To handle bibliography and to quote from specialized sources in an appropriate and effective way.
4. To develop the capacities for self-assessment, self-improvement and team work.
5. To be efficient presenting information in an oral report.

Specific Competences:

1. To be able to interpret a variety of cultural documents, e.g. movies, historical documents, cartoons, etc.
2. To relate students' own assumptions about reality to basic Western cultural assumptions, and the embedding of stereotypes of the English-speaking world in the latter.
3. To help students acquire a general overview of the variety that exists within the English-speaking countries, especially the UK and the USA.

4. To encourage students to reflect on the fundamental aspects which make English-speaking countries, especially the UK and the USA, unique cultural formations.

3. COURSE CONTENTS

| Week | Units / Contents |
|------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | General Introduction to the course |
| 2-7 | British and Irish Culture & Society |
| 8-14 | American Culture & Society |
| 15 | The Commonwealth Countries |

Each instructor will provide a detailed program for each unit at the beginning of the course. Students must be aware that, although every unit specified in the syllabus will be covered in the course, the hours assigned for each are tentative and might vary in order to properly attend the learning needs of the groups.

4. METHODOLOGY AND CLASS ACTIVITIES

4.1. Student workload

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|------------------------------|---|
| Class contact hours: 52 | Lectures: 15 hours Seminars: 30 hours Workshops: 3 hours ECTS tutorials: 2 hours Exam: 2 hours |
| Independent study hours: 148 | This time includes studying lecture notes, reading cultural texts, seminar preparation, which involves fulfilment of [type]written assignments, researching and working with other students to co-produce different kinds of assignments. |

Total hours: 200

4.2. Learning activities, materials and resources

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|-------------------------------------|--|
| <p>Face-to-face hours</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lectures will provide the theoretical explanations of the topics under discussion. - Seminars will explore the issues in more detail through analysis and discussion in individual and/or group work. Seminars will be based on the interpretation of texts, comics, statistics, maps, newspapers, movies. |
| <p>Written and oral assignments</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guided reading of the set texts. - Each reading together with the programmed activities for each unit will prepare students for active discussion and further reflection in an associated seminar. |
| <p>ECTS Tutorials</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students will attend several group tutorials providing a more personal, individual attention to their learning and, if necessary, recommend extra activities and resources in order to enhance their progress. These hours will be established by the instructor at the beginning of the term. Students will be informed in class of the weekly time the lecturer can be contacted at his office. |
| <p>Workshops</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students will attend and participate in three workshops designed to complement both lectures and seminars. - Students will be distributed in groups of approximately 10-15 in order to work on various tasks such as film viewing, web search, cultural and political debates, and others to probe into the cultural analysis of selected issues and texts. - They will also work on the planning and design of their oral presentations and final research project. |

Materials will be provided by the lecturer at the beginning of the course. They will include diverse material, such as comics, questionnaires, movies, academic articles, political/historical documents, websites, etc.

Students may be supported through a platform (EPD), which will be used mainly for class communication.

5. ASSESSMENT

Assessment criteria

Students should have acquired the desirable level in each of the competences specified in the assessment criteria:

- A thorough knowledge and understanding of a variety of cultural documents, including films and literary or historical discourses.
- A capacity to relate the student's own assumptions about the construction of reality with given stereotypes of the English-speaking countries.
- A detailed knowledge of the cultural variety that exists within the English-speaking countries, especially the UK and the USA.
- An ability to respond to texts critically, sensitively and in detail, using appropriate terminology and textual evidence, and coherent, accurate written expression.
- Understanding of the significance and influence of the social, cultural and historical contexts in which texts are embedded in culture.
- A considerable level of class participation, which will be assessed in all the learning activities.
- High standards of presentation and of written and oral English in all submitted coursework. By the end of the module students are expected to have reached the competences and communicative skills at the B2 level of the Common European Framework.
- A capacity to pass an exam on the topics covered along the course.

Students should have acquired the desirable level in each of the competences specified in the assessment criteria. Specific assessment criteria are the ability to distinguish between the facts and the abstract patterns which emerge from the facts, and which are elaborated on throughout the course, the ability to memorize and use the most relevant facts, and the ability to recognize the aforementioned patterns in texts. Patterns cover both the more specific knowledge about a culture, as well as the meta-knowledge about the validity of the first set of patterns. The term 'patterns' also covers the acquisition and use of strategies designed to deal with a variety of text-forms, such as statistics, maps, fictional texts, or informational texts. A further assessment criterion is the ability to write an essay in a methodologically and formally correct way.

Students are warned that plagiarism will not be tolerated. The ideas from other sources, regardless of whether they are quoted, summarized or paraphrased, must be documented adequately. According to article 34 of the University regulation on evaluation, any plagiarism found in the final version of a paper will be penalized and

could result in the failure of the module. The teacher will provide students with assessment cover sheets for written work, which certifies that their submitted work is entirely their own or appropriately referenced.

Grading criteria

Each professor will communicate at the beginning of the semester his grading criteria and percentages based on all or some of these modules: “Participation in Class”, “Final Exam”, “Oral Presentation”, “Research Paper or Home Papers”. For Estudios Ingleses and Lenguas Modernas y Traducción in Alcalá the percentage in the final grade corresponding to each professor will be 50%. Participation in class is HIGHLY encouraged and it will be assessed accordingly. Active participation will not only be restricted to the seminars, but also to lectures, which will also be conducted upon the comments and ideas posed by students.

Likewise, their final grade will be based on the following grading criteria:

- **Outstanding (MH):** Students display an outstanding grasp of the aims and contents of the module. All assessment criteria have been achieved at an exceptionally high level. Performance in all the tasks shows that students have read and thought at a level well beyond what is expected in the module. Students attend lectures and are always well-prepared for discussion in seminars. They obtain outstanding results in the exams.
- **Excellent (SB):** Students display an excellent grasp of the aims and contents of the module. All assessment criteria have been achieved at a very high standard and an exceptionally high level. Performance in all the tasks shows all or most of the appropriate characteristics expected for this type of work. Students attend lectures and are practically always well-prepared for discussion in seminars, with almost no absences. They obtain excellent results in the exams.
- **Very Good (N):** Students display a very good grasp of the aims and contents of the module. All assessment criteria have been met fully and many have been achieved at a good or very good standard. Performance in all the tasks shows a good knowledge of the syllabus contents. Students attend lectures and seminars, with few absences, and have done most of the preparation for them. They have a good foundation in the prescribed readings and build on ideas put forward in lectures and seminars. They obtain very good results in the exams.
- **Satisfactory (A):** Students show a satisfactory grasp of the aims and contents of the module. All assessment criteria have been met, but some barely exceed the threshold standard to pass the module. Performance in all the tasks shows some of the appropriate characteristics in relation to content, illustration, organization and expression. Students are present in lectures and seminars, with few absences, and occasionally contribute to discussions. They obtain acceptable results in the exams.
- **Fail (S):** Students show an unsatisfactory grasp of the aims and contents of the module. Some assessment criteria do not reach the threshold standard to pass the module. Performance in all the tasks shows limited understanding of essential concepts and/or minimal research. Students have multiple absences and when they come, they are often not prepared or they do not say much. Their results in the exams are insufficient considering the requirements of the course.

Assessment procedures and instruments

The main assessment process in this course will be continuous. Each professor will establish the percentage of attendance criteria (including lectures, seminars, workshops and ECTS tutorials) at the beginning of the semester. Students also have to do and submit all the activities requested in those sessions, which include:

- A course oral presentation.
- Hand in an academic essay (2,000-2,500 words) towards the end of the course.
- An exam on the topics covered during the contact classes.

If students consider that they will not be able to follow the continuous assessment process, within the first two weeks of the course they will have to request the Dean of the Arts Faculty to be exempted from this assessment process and to be assessed through a comprehensive final exam.

In accordance with the University regulation on evaluation, for those students who are not able to follow the continuous assessment scheme there will be one final summative two-hour written exam over the material covered during the module. This exam may include objective test questions, short answer questions and discussion questions. Students who fail the ongoing evaluation cannot sit this final exam in May.

There will be a reset opportunity at the end of the second semester for students who have failed their ongoing examination or the final exam. This will also take the form of a two-hour written exam, with a similar format to the above-mentioned final examination, which will constitute 100% of the reset mark.

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Basic bibliography

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- Cristopher, David P. *British Culture*. New York, Routledge, 2015.
- Higgins, Michael; Smith, Clarissa and Storey, John (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Modern British Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge, 2010.
- Jones, Harriet. (ed.) *A Companion to Contemporary Britain: 1939-2000*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2007.
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- Luedtke, Luther S (ed.). *Making America: The Society & Culture of the United States*. Chapel Hill: The U of North Carolina P, 1992.
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- Oakland, John. *British Civilization: An Introduction*. London: Routledge, 1995.
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- Sheerin, Susan et al. (eds.). *Spotlight on Britain*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990.
- Whitfield, Stephen J. *A Companion to 20th-Century America*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005.

Additional bibliography

- Brewster, Scott, Virginia Crossman, Fiona Becket and David Alderson, eds. *Ireland in Proximity, History, Gender, Space*. London and New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Falk, Randee. *Spotlight on the USA*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993.
- Ferriter, Diarmuid. *The Transformation of Ireland. 1900-2000*. London: Profile Books, 2004.
- Robertson, James Oliver. *American Myth, American Reality*. New York: Hill & Wang, 1980.