

Course Description

Course Unit

Cultural Geography of the USA

UC Code

LAC2.12593

ECTS Credits

6 ECTS

Work Hours

168H (6 ECTS)

Level

BA

Academic year and Semester

2024/2025, S2

Faculty

Margarida Vale de Gato

Class

TP 1

Language of instruction

English

Class Description

The main purpose of this curricular unit is to master and develop critical concepts of US cultural, human and natural geography. Combining these concepts with practical examples will contribute to a better understanding of the positions of “America” as nation and imagination: its human and cultural diversity, its interdependence with bio-regional non-human species, its geopolitical ambitions, its negotiations with the border/lands, and its responsibilities in the Anthropocene. A first part of the program will be divided into the historical and political background for regional divisions of landscapes and human-(es)scapes in the US. A second part will address frameworks for the developments of environmental humanities, especially ecocriticism since the

1970s, with specific examples regarding US "topophilia". Yet a third part will be dedicated to the study of the "transnational turn" in American Studies in what concerns ecology and the environment, addressing on the one hand the relation with(in) America(s) and, on the other hand, transatlantic links with Europe and especially with Portugal – all of these strongly based on cultural and literary texts, as the professor's background is in literature.

Students will reflect on the semiotic construal of native and transitory identities, of inter-species divisions and dynamics, and of permeable and overdetermined keywords such as "space", "place", "border(s)", "frontier(s)", "nature," "bioregionalism," "environmental justice" or "transatlanticism".

Grading and Assessment

Students are expected to participate in classes with critical readings of assigned texts, and to prepare interventions in debates; they will also produce short written commentaries and complete one final essay or creative (and reflective) project.

Class participation. 15%: For students who do not participate in class so often, there is a blog with regular calls for comments according to class contents: <http://USculturalgeography.blogspot.pt>

Midterm paper: 15%. Commentary on contrasting/actualized views of nature, landscape, place and culture, regions, borders. I

Oral presentation: 15%. Oral presentation in groups of 2-3, or debate groups on topics complementing those developed in class. The presentation will be preceded by a tutorial with the teacher, by appointment.

Final Project: 25 % Field /textual research on environmental organizations in the US, or other groups working for environmental justice (thinking race, gender, class – ex. Climate jobs). Or creative/artivism work [with context and rationale].

Bibliography

N. A.

Prerequisites (if applicable)

N. A.