



University of International Business and Economics International Summer School

HUM 230 Introduction to American Culture

Instructor: Nicholas Birns

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Credit: 2 units

Students

This course will survey major aspects of American culture, including the roles of music, sports, class differences, housing and home ownership, the road and mobility, regional, gender and ethnic differences, and speech. We will see what makes American culture distinct and also how universal aspects of human culture receive specific embodiment in the United States. Short selections from important fictional and nonfictional works will be used to illustrate these themes.

Teaching Language

This course is taught in English.

Methods of Instruction

Teaching, cases analyzing and seminar, debates on topics between groups of students

Evaluation

Assessment

10% attendance and participation

50% major paper of 5-6 pages (1300-1500 words), to be submitted before session 5; topic is: if you had to pick one major trait of characteristic of American culture, what would it be?

40% final exam comprised of in-class short essays.

About the Instructor

Nicholas Birns's book *Theory After Theory: An Intellectual History of Literary Theory From 1950 to the Early 21st Century* appeared from Broadview in 2010 and is now widely used in classrooms, and his monograph *Contemporary Australian Literature A World Not Yet Dead*, a major overview of contemporary fiction from *Down Under*, appeared from Sydney University Press in 2015, and co-edited projects on teaching Australian and New Zealand Literature and Roberto Bolaño as world literature are forthcoming with the Modern Language Association and Bloomsbury respectively. He has contributed to *The New York Times Book Review*, *The Hollins Critic*, *Exemplaria*, *Arizona Quarterly*, *MLQ*, and many other journals and edited anthologies. He lives in the New York area with his wife Isabella and their cats.

Course Description



This course surveys American culture through major constitutive elements such as music, sports, the road, housing and home ownership, regional and ethnic differences.

Syllabus

Session 1—Introduction; an overview of American history, politics, and regional diversity

Sessions 2: regional diversity continued the road in American culture

Session 3; Homes and home ownership in American culture

Session 4 Class and dialect in America culture

Session 5 Music in American culture

Session 6 Sports in American culture

Session 7 Gender in American culture

Session 8 is American culture now global culture? ? Final exam

Reference Readings

We will read both classic texts like Robert and Helen Lynd's Middletown and more recent articles on the topics covered. All readings will be distributed to the students in PDF form.