

Advanced English: US Politics in Popular Culture - Words and Images Telling the Story of a Nation

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This course is meant for students of the advanced C1 and C2 levels. Theme-based language classes aim at developing written and oral skills through the study of a specific topic.

Course objectives

The objective of this course is to improve students' English skills (writing, reading, listening and speaking) through the study of both American politics and of the way a society portrays its political history, system and actors in popular culture.

The course has three main objectives:

- Introducing students to the specificities of **the American political world and history**, as well as to major representations of this world in popular culture (music, movies, TV shows, comic books, novels...)
- Expanding students' reading and listening skills through the study of analytical articles, excerpts from novels, clips from TV shows and movies, radio interviews
- Developing students' speaking and writing skills through topical class discussions, presentations and the writing of an analytical essay about a chosen work of fiction or piece of popular culture.

Course description

American culture pervades our own. American cultural powerhouses like **Hollywood and Netflix** provide **movies and TV series** watched all over the world. What can they teach us about American history, society and politics?

This course will examine the United States through the culture – mostly popular culture – it produces. How does a Nation tell its own story? The first weeks of the course will be devoted to looking at **important moments in American political and cultural history** such as slavery and the Vietnam War through the lens of popular culture (movies, TV shows, songs...). The following weeks, the focus will shift to contemporary American national and international politics, still using the lens of popular culture with popular TV shows such as *The West Wing*, *House of Cards*, *24*, *Homeland*... but also movies, music, comic books, etc. The viewing and discussion of popular culture will be articulated with the reading of scholarly book excerpts and articles.

The course will encourage students to develop their analytical skills and their ability to articulate their opinions concerning these topics in English.

Organization

This course is, first and foremost, intended as a language course. In other words, students will be expected to improve the five skills of communication (reading, speaking, listening, writing and interacting).

- Reading: excerpts from novels, analytical articles...
- Speaking: presentation of a chosen work of fiction or piece of popular culture, presentation of a groupwork...
- Interacting: in-class discussions, preparation of a group project (in class) ...
- Listening: excerpts from movies and TV shows, interviews, news clips...
- Writing: writing of an op-ed about American popular culture and writing of an analytical essay about a chosen work of fiction or song.