American Cultural Studies

An introduction to American culture Fourth Edition

Neil Campbell and Alasdair Kean



Contents

Lis	et of plates	xi
Acknowledgements		xii
Int	troduction	1
	An exceptional place? or What is America? 2	
	What is American Studies? 5	
	Using the book 10	
	Critical approaches 11	
	A culture of many voices 14	
	Cultural politics/Cultural Studies 15	
	Power, position, hegemony 17	
	Dialogism 19	
	Transnational and Hemispheric American Studies 20	
	Long-form television and American Studies 21	
	The continuous 'play' of culture, history and power 23	
	Note 24	
	References and further reading 24	
1	New beginnings: American culture and identity	28
	Reading Columbus 30	
	The American dream of identity: The Great Gatsby (1925) 31	
	Maybe this is Heaven: Field of Dreams (1989) 34	
	'The surface of an identity': the past as presidential discourse 36	
	Counter-cultural dreams 39	
	Multiplicity, difference and re-vision 42	
	New interrogations: Gloria Anzaldúa, Barry Lopez and	
	Trinh T. Minh-ha 43	
	Conclusion: digging deep – Lone Star (1996) 48	

	References and further reading 50 Follow-up work 52	
2	Ethnicity and immigration: between many worlds	53
	Ethnic America: 'A vast ingathering' 53 Native Americans: assimilation and resistance 55 Reinscribing the tribe: writing ethnicity 57 Immigration and Americanisation 62 The crucible of difference 67 Immigrant stories: Jewish Americans 69 The future belongs to the mixture: melting pot, mosaic or hybrid? 75 The new Americans? 79 Conclusion: no border here 81 References and further reading 82 Follow-up work 87	
3	African Americans: 'I don't sing other people's voices'	88
	Out of slavery 88 Recovering black history 90 Imaginative cultural retrieval 96 Links in the chain: music and speech 101 New black voices: rap 106 New black voices: Boyz n the Hood (1991) 109 Conclusion: a story to pass on 110 References and further reading 115 Follow-up work 119	
4	In God we trust? Religion in American life	127
	Church and state 122 'The eyes of all people shall be upon us' 125 Changing patterns in American religious life 128 Contemporary evangelicalism 130 Religion and politics 137 African American religion 139 Islam 143 Rise of the unaffiliated 147 Conclusion 148 References and further reading 148 Follow-up work 151	

5	Approaches to regionalism: the West and the South	152
	Case study 1: revising the American West 153 Case study 2: the South – a world apart? 172 References and further reading 192 Follow-up work 199	
6	The American city: 'The old knot of contrariety'	200
	Can we read the city? 200 Competing versions of the city 202 Theoretical city: the desire for control and order 204 The undivulged city: Poe's 'The Man of the Crowd' (1845) 208 The 'persuasive light': commerce and the city 209 The spaces of the city: architecture, art and ambivalence 211 Collage city 216 Postmodern city: Las Vegas 221 Suburbia: lives placed side by side 222 The life and death of Detroit 223	
	Conclusion, or no conclusion possible? 226 References and further reading 227 Follow-up work 229	
7	Gender and sexuality: 'To break the old circuits'	231
	Nineteenth-century roots: cultural politics 233 Nineteenth-century roots: literature and the 'First Wave' of feminism 236 Gender and the 1950s 'Second Wave' 240 Out of the 1950s: Sylvia Plath, The Bell Jar (1963) 244 Sexuality and gender 248 Roseanne: the world blown apart 255 Conclusion: Nurse Jackie and Orange is the New Black 257 References and further reading 258 Follow-up work 261	
8	Representing youth: outside the sunken nursery	263
	Youth/history/representation 264 Boundaries and youth spaces 267 Housing the self 269 A model youth text? The Adventures of Tom Sawyer (1876) 272 The dream of Eden 274	

	The spaces of self-creation 2// At the edge: the dark mood 281 Generation X/Generation Y 285 The Twilight effect 288	
	Conclusion: Girls 290 References and further reading 291	
	Follow-up work 293	
9	The spread of freedom	295
	American power: rise and decline 297	
	Exceptionalism and the mission of freedom 300	
	Cultural superiority 304	
	America as a model 306	
	Pre-emption and unilateralism 309	
	Empire 313	
	Image 315 Anti-Americanism 317	
	War at home: security and liberty 319	
	Conclusion 323	
	References and further reading 324	
	Follow-up work 328	
10	The transmission of American culture	330
	Americanisation 330	
	Coming to terms with America 332	
	Globalisation 337	
	A one-way process? 339	
	Assessing America 341	
	Hollywood 346	
	The Internet 349 Case study 3: music 353	
	Conclusion 357	
	Note 358	
	References and further reading 358	
	Follow-up work 363	

Index 365