

Hans-Peter Wagner

**A Survey of American Literature:  
1900-2000**

Coursebook for Students

# **TESBA**

Teaching English Studies for the Bachelor's Degree

Edited by

Hans-Peter Wagner and Bernd Engelhart

Volume 2 · Coursebook for Students

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1900-2000**

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## Preface

The aims of TESBA (Teaching English Studies for the Bachelor's degree) are humble and simple. With the introduction of the Bachelor and Master degrees in German-speaking universities, both teaching and the contents of teaching had to be revised in view of the aims laid down in the various modular study programmes first developed by the universities and then approved by independent assessment centres. While the modules may differ from one university to another as far as content and sequence are concerned, it is obvious that they have to cover specific areas and subjects. Hence, despite the differences in modular programmes, a common ground needs to be covered in the end.

In view of this need, the contributors to the TESBA series would like to provide material for teaching and study to be used both by lecturers and students. This material is based on the long and extensive academic experience in teaching of the contributors. Eventually, the volumes in the new series will cover

- British and American Literature
- Cultural Studies (North America, Britain and Ireland)
- Language Practice (English as a first foreign language)
- Teaching English as a Foreign Language (Didactics)

Each volume offers an exemplary course in the specific fields of English Studies mentioned above. Students may use the course material for their own needs in their particular university setting, and lecturers may either adopt the example or adapt it to their needs.

The volumes are divided into chapters roughly corresponding to the sessions in one semester. In addition to the entire course material they contain a modular description, detailed bibliographies, an extensive glossary of technical terms as well as tests. With most volumes, separate handbooks intended for lecturers are available directly from WVT. We hope to have thus provided a new study forum that will profit everybody using the books in the series.

Hans-Peter Wagner  
Bernd Engelhart

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## Introduction

### General remarks

The course is intended for modules to be taken after an introduction to literature in a BA programme. Most universities now offer such an introduction as a lecture or seminar. The students attending the modular survey course can thus be expected to have a basic knowledge of literary studies, including genres and major approaches in analysing texts. The aims of this modular course can be summarised as follows. The participants will

- read and prepare literary texts for discussion in class
- learn to handle critical literature by themselves and in groups
- prepare presentations and handouts to be corrected by the lecturer
- write short papers or term papers on topics assigned by the lecturer
- learn about the periods of American literature and the problems of periodization in criticism
- learn to analyze texts in terms of genre and cultural setting
- deepen their knowledge of literary theory while reflecting on the critical approaches chosen for their particular analyses.

In terms of content, the course deals with selected literary texts by major canonical writers from early Modernist poetry (e.g. by Pound and Eliot) to post-modernist fiction (short stories by Carver, Pynchon and Walker) and the graphic novel. As far as literary theory is concerned, the major theories will be applied to selected texts, from New Criticism to Feminism and various post-structuralist approaches. Conceived in a way that allows maximum interaction between students on the one hand, and between student groups and the lecturer on the other hand, this modular course provides material that can be used in various formats.

### How to use this book

Part A of the book contains the major course material. The syllabus (*Semesterprogramm*, A.1) outlines both the topics discussed and the texts all students need to read, as well as the texts forming the basis of the presentations and handouts. It provides a short survey of the semester, followed (in part A.2) by the individual sessions with the themes to be discussed, selected literary texts and the most important critical literature to be considered in each case. Part A.3 proposes concrete ways of dealing with the literary texts and the theories

to be applied while also suggesting some alternative topics; and A.4 provides some topics for papers to be discussed with the lecturer.

Part B offers further critical literature for the texts to be analysed; some of this literature is annotated to provide guidance for the students. B.1 is a short bibliographical guide containing important introductions, handbooks and reference works while B.2 – based on the sequence of authors and texts in the syllabus – provides additional reading material for each session. This is complemented by academic websites and electronic resources in B.3, where students can find the most important reliable internet sources and portals for literary periods, authors, and primary texts.

Part C of the book offers three examples of modular exams (*Modulabschlussklausuren*) students may use to test their knowledge and capacity to finish tests within the allotted time (60 minutes for each modular exam).

The final part D consists of a glossary intended to help with the discussion of literary texts. It contains sections on the most important rhetorical figures, key terms used in the analysis of poetry, prose and drama, and a brief survey of the generally accepted periods of American Literature.