

Course Evaluations, Fall 2007
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General for all courses, Fall 2007:

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NORAM 1505: American Social History

I had emergency surgery during the first half of the semester, requiring some adjustments of teaching. A guest lecturer was hired for 2 weeks in NORAM 1505. I did the 3rd week of my absence as makeup classes later. The guest lecturer was my research assistant, who had access to my notes. He and I talked before and after his teaching, so there would be continuity and the students would not lose out. Despite this, student preparation and participation was poor throughout the semester (before, during, and after my absence).

Several students in the course filed a complaint about the exam. The complaints were unfounded. Because of the complaints, I wrote a large report analyzing the grades for the course in detail. Rather than write a separate version here, I am attaching both reports for inclusion in the course evaluation report. They should be included in the material which is sent to the tilsynssensor.

I experimented with library assignments as part of their required essay, and classroom activities. Through ongoing conversations with our fagreferent, Annette Møller-Madsen, I plan to adjust these activities so they are more manageable for me, the students, and the librarians. NORAM voted to require the Bibsys course of all NORAM students.

I plan to look into other textbooks. Even though the textbook is excellent, these students seemed to lack the ability to follow the narrative without a more tradition-bound textbook style.

NORAM 2571: Race and Racism

Because of the portfolio, we only had 10 meetings instead of the 14 allowed with a school exam. Therefore, my surgery only required an adjustment of which weeks in the semester were teaching-free. I changed the date of the midterm test, which was part of the portfolio, in order to cover the material before the test. One student had made travel plans for the new date. I accommodated her by giving a makeup test the week after the test.

With the new pensum and course arrangement this semester, I was much happier with the course than the last time it was offered. Students seemed to enjoy it as well. They participated in the seminar discussions, and worked consistently on their portfolios. They did work and many told me that they learned a lot.

Grades fit what I would expect of a class of this size, academic level and student commitment and interest. Several exchange students enlivened the discussion and brought the level of preparation up across the board.

NORAM 4571

Only one student took the MA section of the course. Because of a time conflict with NORAM 4500 and the student's own health problems, most of her work was independent reading. Despite this, her term paper was excellent. She was one of the students in NORAM 4521, as well, and did equally well there too.

NORAM 4521

This course began with four students. Two dropped out. Both talked to me about their decisions beforehand. Both were new MA students and they had misjudged the different level of work required at the MA level in comparison to the BA. Both had done well in earlier courses with me and took the course because they liked both the subject matter and my teaching style. One was trying to take 4 courses, instead of 3. The other had children and another career job on the side. Both were running their own small businesses. Both thought that they could simply read before the exam, as they had in BA courses. Neither realized that as MA students, they would need to keep up with the reading throughout the semester, or that they would be expected to fully contribute to a discussion. They sat with pens poised to take notes only. Each realized around the time of my surgery that this would not be enough at the MA level – in any of their courses.

The remaining two students had health issues (One was pregnant and teaching our NORAM 1506 groups), but were able to meet and prepare. We did more independent work and held fewer, longer discussion sessions. These times were mutually agreed upon by the three of us.

Both students did well, despite the challenges of the semester in terms of health and time changes. One of the students will be expanding the work she began for this paper in her MA thesis. The other is writing for David Mauk on a related topic, and found the different point of view helpful.