

Periodisk Review – ENG 4542 (Spring 2016)

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This is a robust emne intended to relate my research to teaching (Research in American Social History). This semester's topic was Hollywood's Romantic Comedies. The specific topic was defined as follows.

We will examine Hollywood's Romantic Comedies as a genre, with special focus on how race affects the genre. There will be theoretical readings to understand how to analyze this film genre. These theories will be examined in light of four different subgroups of films: Classic, Contemporary, Interracial, and Racial/Ethnic. Changes in the genre will be compared to the history of gender, race, and marital relations as well.

Unfortunately only four students signed up for the course. One student dropped out of UiO altogether early in the semester. This made it difficult to get good discussions going, especially as each student took advantage of the right to skip twice – at different times. As a compromise, the last half of the course met for double hours every other week, with students agreeing that all three would attend. That improved things a bit, but with small numbers a seminar course is never as good as if there were a few more students. Eight to ten students is ideal.

The small number of students also skews any statistics to the point of being meaningless. I do note that the one student who answered about time spent, listed 0-5 hours per week – which compounded the problems in getting students to discuss the readings.

Given the smaller numbers of MA students admitted into the program, there will continue to be possibilities of very small classes. For some reason no LEP students signed up for the course. It would be interesting to know if scheduling had any impact on this or not.

In talking with Tor Erik Johnsen, our studiekonsulent, I have decided to use much broader topics for all MA seminars, as the last couple of times there have also been few students. He thinks that students tend to want the broader topics even if they are not directly attached to research. This will make the course better for the students and be a more effective use of my time, as small courses require the same amount of preparation time but give very little in terms of plikt. When I used to broader topic earlier, I had 18 students. The course will be taught again next semester and I am working out a much broader theme for this. I hope that it can also be advertized to the LEP students in addition to our own ENGLABS students.