

Periodisk emnerapport

NORAM 4515
Cities and American Life
Spring, 2013

Part I: Important facts

Attendance and participation:

There were nine students enrolled in this class. Attendance was not obligatory and there were many absences, which certainly affected morale and at times impinged the possibility for better discussions, though absences were not crippling for the course.

Comments on student performance:

There were some excellent discussions and very good presentations. The papers were both relevant to the course material and—in most cases—incorporated additional research.

Student evaluation questionnaire:

Only 3 of 9 students bothered to fill in the form. I don't find anything there representative of student opinion.

Part II: Evaluation

Course description and self-evaluation:

The course engages methodological and theoretical issues as well as considering the content of the readings. Students are encouraged to ask questions of the material and to see the epistemological and methodological foundations of each work. The subject—American cities—is approached through different disciplinary perspectives and students are required to consider the implications of these discourses in their analysis of the works.

This course actually operated as a seminar in which student presentations dominated the course. I gave talks at the beginning of the semester and filled in as needed. It worked well; they were a talented group.

Student evaluation of the course:

Well there is very little useful information in the official questionnaire and I lacked the time to hand out my own—which I normally do. I think generally students thought the course went well and some of them appreciated the methodological discussions. However, the majority of students in this course were not interested particularly in the course material. I think at this point in their study they should be taking courses directly relevant to their thesis work.

Final Thoughts:

While overall this was undoubtedly the most successful Master's seminar I have given here, I continue to be baffled by academic culture of this institution. I removed obligatory attendance in order to acknowledge the students' status as Master's students. I was surprised and deeply saddened to find that a good number of students decided that optional attendance should mean that taking multiple cuts from class—at the cost of the good of the class as a whole—was a perfectly acceptable option. Students who at the doorstep of writing a thesis at their own initiative, fail to exercise the required responsibility in a seminar. I hasten to add that this does

not apply to all students, but attendance at one's own initiative should be expected of Master's degree students, in my opinion.