Course Evaluation
NORAM2305 Literature and Society in the U.S. and Canada
Spring 2014
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**1. Course overview**
Content and scope:
This course reveals how a selection of recent American and Canadian novels can be studied as a means to gain insight into a number of important aspects of contemporary American and Canadian culture. The primary focus will be on the ways in which these texts both reflect and produce discourses related to race, class, gender, sexuality, and species at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century. Books: Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*; Jeffrey Eugenides, *Middlesex*; Linda Hogan, *People of the Whale*; Tony Kushner, *Angels in America*; Toni Morrison; Ruth L. Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*; Philip Roth, *American Pastoral*; Karen Tei Yamashita, *Tropic of Orange*. Films: Andrew Niccol, dir., *Gattaca*; Mike Nichols, dir., *Angels in America.*
Teaching:
Seminar, two hours per week for ten weeks, 20 hours in all. Attendance is obligatory in at least 8 out of 10 seminars.
Examination:
The exam form is a portfolio, which consists of a five-page essay and a two-hour classroom exam. The student is given an opportunity to submit a draft of the paper, or a summary of the proposed argument, and receive individual feedback on both the form and content of the draft.

**2. Course objectives**
I believe the course description gives a good description of the knowledge that students should have acquired after finishing the course.
Learning outcomes:
After completing this course you will have: learned to explore literary texts as windows into central aspects of North American culture; developed your skills in literary and cultural analysis, engaging key texts with close reading, while connecting those texts to literary and theoretical debates related to race, class, gender, sexuality, and species; developed your skills analyzing literary texts in relation to dominant discourses and historical and cultural contexts; improved your ability to handle written and spoken (American) English.

**3. Assessment**
Grades, dropouts, complaints : 28 registered, 3 ikke møtt, 22 graded (21 pass, 1 fail), grade distribution: 7 A/B, 11 C/D, 4 E/F
Appropriate content, level, prerequisites: yes
Student evaluations (mid-term): (28 surveys)
Professor rating (1-5, 5=highest): avg.=4.37; 100%=4-5; 44%=5
Course rating (1-5, 5=highest): avg.=4.09; 74%=4-5; 19%=5
Comments: generally very positive about the instructor, the course, and the teaching; instructor praised, as, e.g., "inspiring", "motivating", "brilliant", "engaging and lively"; several comments about the course as one of the best ever taken by students at UiO
Student evaluations (at end of course): (11 responses; not very representative)
Comments: also generally very positive, including in response to the method for teaching how to write arguments (through problem statements)

**4. Changes since the last periodic evaluation**

All of the texts were changed. This is the first time I have taught this course.

## 5. Suggestions for improvement

Comments from students help me to understand that students at UiO like to have detailed information about exams and papers very early in the semester. I am not accustomed to this practice, but it is something I can work on. The vast majority of comments, both at mid-term and after the end of the course, were very positive about both the course and the instructor. In general, I enjoyed teaching this course. I think it will continue to work well in the future, but I think we should rename it, perhaps Literature and Culture in the U.S., or U.S. Literature in Cultural Contexts.