American Literature and Culture

Course Code: MENG165_1, Credits: 10 credits
Offered by: Faculty of Arts and Education, Department of Cultural Studies and Languages
Semester tuition start & duration: Autumn, 1 semester
Exam term: Autumn
Language of instruction: English

Course staff
- Jena Habegger-Conti (Course coordinator and course teacher)
- Camilla Melhuus Line (Programme coordinator)
- Eric Dean Rasmussen (Course teacher)

Introduction
ENG 165 provides an introduction to the literature and culture of the United States, from the early-colonial period to the postmodern present. Students will learn about significant issues in America's history through the lens of its literary writing. Students will study a diverse range of texts from several historical periods and literary genres (poetry, drama, short story, novel, essay) by authors who have contributed to America's dynamic literary tradition and, through their writing, shaped American culture. The emphasis will be on literary analysis and situating the texts, meaningfully, within relevant literary, sociocultural, and historical contexts.

Learning outcome

Knowledge
By the course's end, students are expected to have acquired knowledge about:

- Significant texts and authors from America's literary tradition.
- The relationship between U.S. history and culture and American literary tradition.
- Literary mediations of important historical events and sociocultural debates in US history.

Skills
By the course's end, students are expected to be able to:

- Analyze and understand American literature from multiple historical periods and literary genres.
- Interpret texts by conducting close readings and deploying relevant techniques and terms from literary studies.
- Explain the sociocultural significance of selected texts and authors.
General competence
By the course’s end, students should be able to:

- Use correct, varied, and precise English in order to participate in intellectual conversations about issues in literary and cultural studies.
- Analyze what others have written or said, then summarize their arguments and assumptions in a recognizable way.

Teaching methods
Lectures

Required prerequisite knowledge
None

Exam

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<th>Duration</th>
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<td>Written exam</td>
<td>1/1</td>
<td>5 hours</td>
<td>A - F</td>
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Overlapping courses

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<th>Course</th>
<th>Reduction (credits)</th>
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<tr>
<td>American Literature and Culture (ENG165_1)</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>The American Century (ENG160_1)</td>
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<td>The American Century (ENG160_2)</td>
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<td>American Genesis (ENG120_1)</td>
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Open to
Teacher Education including an MA

Course assessment
Quality control by students is a central element of the UiS plan to improve teaching. In the Department of Cultural Studies and Languages this system includes student evaluation of courses in the form of an early dialogue every semester and an end-of-semester rating of at least two courses within each subject during one academic year. For such purposes the Office for Teaching Standards has made guidelines.

Literature

REQUIRED TEXTS
Students must have all of the following texts, in the specified editions:
American Literature and Culture


Reference books


READING LIST

All readings, unless marked with an asterix (*), are in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, volumes A-E. Texts marked with a single asterisk (*) will be made available at the start of the semester. Texts marked with a double asterisk (***) must be bought separately.

Non-Fiction and Literary Essays

William Bradford, from *Of Plymouth Plantation* (extract, ca. 1637)

John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity" (1630)

Cotton Mather, "The Wonders of the Invisible World" (1693)

J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, "What is an American?" (1782)

Benjamin Franklin, "Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America" (1784)

Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-reliance" (1841)

Henry David Thoreau, "Resistance to Civil Government" (1849)

Theodore Roosevelt, from *The Strenuous Life* (1900) and from *American Ideals* (1897)

Helen Hunt Jackson, from *A Century of Dishonor* (1881)
Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1920)

Henry James, from "The Art of Fiction" (1884)

* David Foster Wallace, "David Foster Wallace on Life and Work" adopted from commencement speech at Kenyon College (2008)

All introductions to literary periods in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*.

All introductions to writers on the reading list from *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*.

**Fiction, Poetry, and Drama**

"The Iroquois Creation Story" (date unknown)

"Pima Stories of the Creation of the World" (date unknown)

Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown" (1835)

Edgar Allen Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839)

Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself" (Extracts: 1, 6, 24, 52) (1855, 1881)

Emily Dickinson, "Because I could not stop for Death" [479]; "The Brain - is wider than the his Sky" [598]; "I started Early - Took my Dog" [656] (ca. 1860s)

Henry James, *Daisy Miller: A Study* (1878)

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wall-paper" (1892)

** F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925)

*Ernest Hemingway, "Soldier´s Home" (1925)

William Faulkner, "A Rose for Emily" (1931)

Black Elk and John G. Neihardt, "The Great Vision" from *Black Elk Speaks* (1932)

Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947)

Ralph Ellison, "Prologue" and "Battle Royal" from *Invisible Man* (1952)

Allen Ginsberg, "Howl" and "A Supermarket in California" (1956)

Sylvia Plath, "Daddy" (1962)

Gwendolyn Brooks, "To the Diaspora" (1981)

Leslie Marmon Silko, "Lullaby" (1981)
Toni Morrison, "Recitatif" (1983)

* Don DeLillo, from White Noise (1985)

NB. Minor changes in the syllabus may occur.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS

**American History**


**American Literary History**


Sigmund Ro, Literary America: An Introduction to the Literature of the United States (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1997).

**American Studies**


Literary Theory and Criticism

This is an introductory survey of major American literature and culture. It explores a wide range of nineteenth century and early twentieth century American writers of fiction and poetry. The module addresses those questions about the nature of the American "canon" raised by successive generations of critics. It will also explore related developments in visual culture and music. It is seen as a "core" module, which will give the grounding for further study of American literature and culture. The emphasis will be on texts and cultural artifacts beyond those encountered in the core modules on American Literature and American History. In this respect we are likely to focus on a variety of forms, which may include music, painting, cinema, television and various genres of writing.