

Assessment guidelines in ENG1304 American Literature

Part I: Introduction

For the course content and learning outcomes, please see the course description here:

<https://www.uio.no/studier/emner/hf/ilos/ENG1304/index.html#course-content>.

You will find the current syllabus among the course pages for this semester on the university web and linked in the first module in Canvas for this course.

- Teaching is in the form of 10 double lectures and 8 double groups.
- All syllabus texts are to be covered in the lectures and the groups.
- To be allowed to take the final written exam, students must attend at least 6 out of 8 group sessions and have a 5-page essay approved on a topic chosen from a list provided by the course instructor.
- The 4-hour written exam may cover any part of the syllabus, including texts that have been given as topics for the obligatory essay.
- At the exam, students are given access to an online English-English dictionary, but not to syllabus texts or other types of supplementary material. An extract from a syllabus text or the entire text of a poem may be given as part of the exam.

Part II: General assessment criteria

Length: We are looking for essays of at least 1,500 words in length. There is no upper limit on the length of the essay. Exam essays of less than 1,000 words are unlikely to pass.

Structure: Students are expected to respond to their chosen exam question in the form of an academic essay with a clear “introduction—body of argument—and conclusion” structure.

Language: Students are expected to write clearly, concisely, and in an appropriately academic style, i.e. avoiding slang and informal/unconventional English. Common language errors relate to subject-verb concord, verb tense, prepositions, comma usage, genitives, idioms, spelling, and incomplete sentences with no finite verb. You need to ask if these errors are so numerous and serious that they impair the student’s ability to communicate. Language counts as part of a total assessment and is not given any specific percentage of the final grade.

Criteria relating to content (formulated as questions to ask in your assessment):

- Does the essay adequately respond to the chosen topic? Does the student answer the question?
- Does the student have a clearly formulated thesis? Is there a central point the student wants to prove in the essay in response to the question/topic he or she has chosen?

- Does the essay contain interesting or original ideas supported by relevant examples from the primary text(s)?
- Does the student demonstrate a good knowledge of the primary text(s)? (For example, forgetting the name of a character is not considered a serious fault, but consistently forgetting the names of the characters is usually a sign of insufficient familiarity with the text being discussed.)
- In relation to “open” topics, where the primary texts are selected by the student: Are the primary texts selected relevant to the question being asked? Do they allow the student to discuss the topic fully and adequately?
- Is the student able to analyze poetic or narrative techniques and, beyond that, can the student describe the function and effect of these techniques?
- In writing about a non-fictional prose text is the student able to give a fair and nuanced account of the author’s argument?

Part III: Criteria for various levels of achievement

Strong

A very good performance. The candidate demonstrates sound judgment and a large degree of independent thinking.

- The student is able to conduct a sophisticated and interesting discussion of the chosen question by using relevant analytical terms and supporting his/her argument with pertinent examples that demonstrate a very good understanding both of the question and the primary text(s).
- There are only a few language errors and the student demonstrates a very good command of written English.

Satisfactory

A satisfactory performance, but with some clear shortcomings. The candidate demonstrates an average degree of judgment and independent thinking.

- The student is able to conduct a satisfactory discussion of the chosen question, which may involve using relevant analytical terms and/or supporting his/her argument with some examples that demonstrate a satisfactory understanding both of the question and the primary text(s).
- There are several language errors, but they don’t impede communication. Overall the student demonstrates a fair command of written English.

Weak

A performance that meets the minimum criteria, but no more. The candidate demonstrates only a limited degree of judgment and independent thinking.

- The student only responds minimally to the question *and/or* partially misunderstands the question *and/or* demonstrates only a basic understanding of the primary text(s).
- There are many language errors relating to syntax, punctuation, subject-verb concord, verb tense, vocabulary, idioms, and/or spelling, but these errors do not fundamentally impair the student’s ability to communicate in English.

Failure

A performance that does not meet the minimum academic criteria. The candidate demonstrates an absence of both judgment and independent thinking.

- The student fails to respond adequately to the question *and/or* fundamentally misunderstands the question *and/or* demonstrates little or no understanding of the primary text(s) *and/or* the essay is too short (less than 1,000 words).
- There are numerous and serious language errors relating to syntax, punctuation, subject-verb concord, verb tense, vocabulary, idioms, and/or spelling, which fundamentally affect the student's ability to communicate in English.
- An exam may fail on the basis of poor content or poor language or a combination of the two.