Assessment guidelines in ENG2340 Nineteenth-Century 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/ENG2340/index.html.

The current syllabus is to be found here: https://www.uio.no/studier/emner/hf/ilos/ENG2340/v19/pensumliste/index.html.

- Teaching is in the form of 14 double seminars. To be able to complete the course, students must attend at least 11 out of 14 seminars.
- The student's grade is based 100% on a three-day take-home exam.

Part II: General assessment criteria

Length: We are looking for essays of at least 5 pages and no longer than 8 pages in Times New Roman 12 point with 1½-spacing and 2.5 cm margins on all four sides (not including the title page and bibliography).

Structure: The take-home exam responses are expected to have 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.

Scholarly documentation: The citation of sources and the construction of the bibliography/works cited list is to be correct and consistent with an internationally recognized style of scholarly documentation, such as MLA or Chicago.

Secondary reading: Students are expected to engage to some degree with previous scholarship and criticism on the primary text(s) they have chosen to write about.

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

- 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 topic he or she has chosen?
- Does the essay contain interesting or original ideas and arguments supported by relevant examples from the primary text(s)?
- Does the student demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the primary text(s)?

- If literary theory or theory from other fields is introduced is it well integrated in the ongoing discussion and literary analysis? Does the student demonstrate an understanding of the theoretical concepts he or she is using and are they integral to the analysis he or she is conducting?
- If the student employs a methodology beyond close reading or comparison and contrast is the methodology relevant and productive in exploring the topic he or she has chosen?

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 their chosen topic by using relevant analytical terms and supporting his/her argument with pertinent examples that demonstrate a very good understanding both of the topic 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 their chosen topic, which involves using relevant analytical terms and supporting his/her argument with some examples that demonstrate a satisfactory understanding both of the topic 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 their chosen topic *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 their chosen topic *and/or* demonstrates little or no understanding of the primary text(s) *and/or* the essay is too short (see length requirements above).

- 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.
- A take-home exam essay may fail on the basis of poor content or poor language or a combination of the two.