

## COURSE REPORT – Summary of course evaluation

### Background information (To be completed by the course administrator)

<b>Course LADOK code:</b> KK168A	<b>Scope (hp):</b> 15,0 hp
<b>Course title:</b> Working-Class Literature - Historical and International Perspectives	
<b>Course coordinator:</b> Philip Clover	<b>Number of registered students:</b> 35
<b>Semester in which the course is conducted:</b> HT25	
<b>Is the course an independent course, programme course or contract course? If the course has been completed within a programme, enter the programme name.</b> Independent online course	

### Forms of evaluation and feedback (To be completed by the course coordinator)

<b>Summative course evaluation</b> (obligatory) Only via Canvas	<b>Number of students who participated in the summative course evaluation:</b> 10
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### Student's perspective (To be completed by the course coordinator)

**Summary of the students' oral and written feedback:**

**Two comments near the top of the evaluation sum up the overall tone of the evaluations:**

“Course is a little bit "all over the place", clearly stated objectives and goals missing.”

“A very interesting subject that also opened up for interesting discussions.”

**Positive Feedback.**

There was plenty of positive feedback, with 8 out of 10 students rating the course 5 or 6 out of 6. (This comes with the normal caveat that it tends to be students who have successfully completed the course who do the evaluation. It is difficult to know why people who discontinued the course did do.)

People were generally positive about seminars.

**Negative feedback and suggestions.**

The overall tone of the negative feedback was very much phrased as ‘suggestions’ rather than complaints.

I have grouped all of these comments in broad categories. (To save space, I have done away with normal spacing.) More than one comment may be by one student, as they are answers to different questions.

Course's organisation/ General Admin

*Clearly stated learning outcomes missing.*

*The workload was quite uneven throughout the semester, perhaps present assignments a bit earlier so it is easier to plan your life.*

*Open upcoming modules earlier in Canvas.*

*I would've appreciated clearer instructions for the assignments. I was sometimes confused as to what was expected of us for each seminar, exam etc.*

*Maybe a more structured way of giving out assigned reading when it comes to the primary literature, especially when it comes to poetry.*

*Maybe assigning one or more poems to read and asking the students to bring something from the same time/place/culture to the seminar. Or that is related to the same subject.  
It would have been great to have one or two upcoming modules open, in addition to the current module, at any given time in Canvas. It would have allowed for better planning and pacing.*

### **Assessment**

*Writing, deadline, repeat. Need I say more?*

*When it comes to the papers, there should be a possibility for longer papers if the student finds it necessary. Not an obligation, but I feel that it would benefit both how one takes on the subject, as well as the results one finds after writing the paper.*

*A bit more clarity on each assignment. Shorten instructions, perhaps more peer reviews online rather than just text.*

*The exams should have more general structure - I really struggled with the first exam, because I am someone that needs proper rules and guidelines.*

### **General content of the teaching/reading**

*Since there is not enough time to read all one wants to read for the course, maybe one initial discussion about what we have read so far that is working-class literature. Also, films, plays, heck, even music.*

*Maybe at the start to kind of calibrate the student into the world of the working class, before the secondary literature comes with the examples and theories. There is nothing like connections being wired and rewired, and even more so when reading longer texts about theory.*

*As I never studied literature at university level before, I believe that half a lesson to introduce the basics of what constitutes literary analysis before diving into the working class literature definitions and history would have helped, not least in analyzing the primary literature later on in the course.*

*The lectures were based on recorded material to a great extent. It's hard to ask questions right away.*

*The course was fast paced due to the quantity of secondary literature to go through and the primary literature reading. I believe I would have benefited from more structured discussions which would sum up and analyze that literature.*

*More Canvas discussions about the secondary literature - preferably with a more specific opening question or two.*

*Brief intro to literary analysis at the beginning*

*Reading assignments of Marxist literary theorists such as Althusser, Lukács etc would have been welcomed.*

Teacher's perspective (To be completed by the course coordinator)

### **Summary of the teacher's views:**

Overall, this was a highly enjoyable course to run, with improved turnouts in non-compulsory seminars and with all students happy to contribute to discussions. Compulsory seminars, where students presented what they had been 'up to', research-wise were interesting for me too, and I was introduced to many new writers.

Being online and independent, the course attracts a wide variety of students with very different academic backgrounds, and this can be problematic. Reading "Althusser, Lukács etc" as suggested by one student would improve the course for some students, but be very daunting for others.

The fairly widespread students' view (quoted above) that the course feels slightly disorganized, and in particular that the 'objectives and aims' are not clearly enough stated is a fair one. For me now, it is a question of knowing how much to include in the objectives. (See comment about theory, above.)

Assessment remains a headache. In the days of A.I., the four-page paper feels of limited value as a form of assessment, although having ‘compulsory seminars’ to back these up was useful in some cases. The large 7.5-hp ‘block’ was particularly problematic, especially with students whose engagement in the course was at the lower end of the range. I suspect that across universities in Sweden, there has been a general deflation of what constitutes work worthy of 7.5 points, although officially it should be 10 weeks’ half-time work, which is 400 hours work.

I still get more disappointed than I probably should that some students do not attend (Zoom) class unless they are required to, as I am sure that in most instances they have insights, particularly when it comes to the history of a particular country, that would be very interesting to their colleagues.

#### Action plan (To be completed by the course coordinator)

**The underlying analysis and the action plan should be based on a summary of the students' individual course evaluations, views from teachers in the course and the knowledge development in the research field. If identified problems are left without action, this should be motivated.**

The following changes are planned in the short and long term:

##### **Short-term**

In the short term, the online information available at the beginning of the course, concerning both the ‘aims’ of the course and the way it is assessed, must be checked and where necessary increased or made clearer.

The best way to ‘spend’ the 15 hp points should be discussed. Possibly the 7.5 points should be awarded for some sort of portfolio of smaller tasks, rather than, as at the moment, for a not-very-long longer paper (+ presentation.) (Next term a change in the grading scale will come in, with students graded VG/G/U; this will be helpful.)

Be more consistent in using the Canvas ‘Discussion’ feature, possibly making it a large part of the 7.5-point ‘moment’ (to use the Swedish word.)

Related to the previous point, more obvious and more focused discussion of the secondary texts.

From the outset, discuss Cohen’s criteria, which are far more useful than the “by, with, for the working-class” mantra that has been used.

##### **Long-term**

Move away from having students write papers at all, with more emphasis on presentations and (particularly) seminar discussions about what they have been engaged in.

Promote more pair work, or group work, at least for those students who state that this motivates them. It seems to me that students might get more enjoyment from reading a particular writer if they have someone to discuss things with. (I have no experience of this in online courses, and need to ask colleagues for their experiences in other courses.)

With the exception of the module on Swedish lit. of the 1930s, a very obvious example of a ‘golden age’ of WCL, I would disperse with organising the first three or four units in terms of geography. Instead, I would ‘go heavy’ on Professor Nilsson’s assertion that WCL is a broad church because the way it is manifest is always because of where the writer is and when, and the peculiarities of the

circumstances vary greatly. (Rather than going Sweden-USA-Soviet- Britain/Ireland - anywhere-modern, which is the current set-up, I would go Sweden- anywhere -anywhere (old) -anywhere (modern).

With this in mind, I would eventually like to break WCL into genres, and look at them in turn. Even in 'classic' Swedish WCL these genres are apparent, and would form a good basis of and introduction to new modules. Some possible 'modules' are childhood memoir/parents; 'angry young man', often with sexist overtones; overt political activism, unions, and the battle in some instances between advocates of evolution and revolution; class and sexuality; relationship between 'traditional working class' and immigrants, which is often related to a change from secure but boring/dangerous/STEADY work to precarious work, (which may well be dangerous, particularly for women).

In general, make the course slightly more academic. ("Reading assignments of Marxist literary theorists such as Althusser, Lukacs etc would have been welcomed.") It seems to me that there needs to be more scope to allow students to spread their wings 'intellectually'. I don't see this as raising the bar for what is needed to gain VG for the course (the course should retain its status as an 'Introduction' to WCL, but more that there is G, VG, and then VG+, even if the latter category exists only in the mind and not in LADOK.