English-Language Literature Teaching and Democratic (Higher) Education

Out of the values, norms, and practices that constitute the semantic field of democracy, this study hones in and reflects on those that are relevant for the goals and principles of higher education in the national context. Furthermore, the scope of this study is narrowed down to the teaching of English-language literature in Swedish institutions of higher education. Given the relatively high degree of autonomy that the teaching of literature has within the academic subject of English and the wide diversity of lecturers’ and professors’ research interests and backgrounds, it is important to account for the educators’ notions of, and attitudes toward, democratic education and democratic values as well as for the ways in which those values are reflected in their teaching practice. The main questions are: 1) Which norms, structures and practices are considered to foster democracy in higher education and which norms, structures and practices are considered real or potential challenges to democracy in higher education? 2) What specific advantages does the teaching of English-language literature have for democratic education? 3) How do the democratic values fare in the teaching practice (in objectives, content, assessment, as well as in the implementation and course/lesson design)? Empirical evidence will be gathered through semi-structured interviews with English-language literature faculty from several Swedish universities. Some partial results of this investigation, which is part of an on-going project, will be presented at the conference.

Biography

I am a senior lecturer in American literature at the University of Gävle. Before moving to Sweden in 2011, I was an assistant professor at the English Department of the University of Bucharest, where I coordinated the American Studies undergraduate program. I'm also a Fulbright alumnus (2007/2008 research grant at Louisiana State University, in Baton Rouge). My latest publications are “[Putting Context to New Use in Literary Studies: A Conceptual-Historicist Interpretation of Poe’s ‘Man of the Crowd](http://partialanswers.huji.ac.il/articles.asp?article_id=402)’” in *Partial Answers*, vol. 15, issue 2, June 2017, pp. 241-261, and *Constituting Americanness. A History of the Concept and Its Representations in Antebellum American Literature*, Peter Lang: Frankfurt am Main, 2015. My research interests lie with literary history writing, literary theory, and conceptual history. More recently, I have developed an interest in literature teaching didactics and methodology.