End of term course evaluation

**HGO4401 Democratization and civil society in developing countries (Autumn 2023)**

The course examines the dynamics and forms of democratization and autocratization in developing countries. The first part of the course focuses on drivers and modalities of democratization and representation. This is followed by a section that examines the contemporary forms and dynamics of autocratization and the sources of resilience and resistance against autocratization. The last part of the course studies international engagement in democratization and peacebuilding and the links between democratization/autocratization and (il)liberal peacebuilding. Throughout the course there is a focus on the interplay between key political actors (elites, political parties, civil society organizations) and their political spaces (institutions, discourses, alliances etc.) and how these relations produce and transform democracies/autocracies. Primary attention is given to popular actors in civil society and their political strategies. The teaching is organized as 7 lectures and 3 seminars, and the examination is in the form of a term paper.

The course was evaluated through the department’s standard online form and conversations with students in class. Students also gave direct feedback to the course convenor in class and in individual supervision meetings. The feedback from the students that have responded is very positive. The course is said to be well organized; the lectures and the Canvas room are found to be informative and clear; and the lecturer is mentioned as knowledgeable and approachable. The students also appreciate that the lectures are recorded, allowing them to follow the course online and to revisit the lecture when they do the readings or work on the term paper. There are no major critical comments that require structural changes in the course.

The course convenor’s self-assessment is that the course went very well and was indeed a positive and enjoyable experience. The lectures were well-attended, the students participated actively in the lectures and seminars, and almost all students that had enrolled for the course completed the exam. Some learning points for the next time the course is offered are: (1) The course could strengthen the emphasis on civil society and social movements; (2) bring in more literature from human geography; (3) broaden the geographical coverage of the case studies; (4) create a better mix of introductory/review texts and research articles in the reading list; and (5) strengthen the organization of the seminars. I look forward to offering this course again.

December 6, 2023

Kristian Stokke