

Evaluation-form

Course-code: STV2350

Course title: Autocratic Politics

Language:  Norwegian  English

**Course convener's evaluation of the course:**

In our view the following things worked well:

- The inclusion of several instructors across all levels (PhD, Postdoc, Associate/full professors) as lecturers in the course. Having experts on a topic teach the respective lectures clearly improved the overall quality of individual lectures.
- A strong focus on the curriculum with an emphasis on reading comprehension worked also well. A reason why this is worked is, we believe, that focused the seminars (and seminar exercises) strongly on reading comprehension and discussion of the readings.
- Several of the lecturers also successfully tied course lectures to current events, particularly the Russian attack on Ukraine, which helped to relate the relevance of course contents to students.
- Having a textbook as core reading, plus specialized articles provided a good mix of introduction + going deeper into some topics

Things that worked less than optimal:

- Some of the specialized readings were a bit too technical and game-theory heavy which might be too advanced for a 2000-level course.
- Hybrid teaching + producing recordings reduced in-class attendance, making some exercises (group discussion or Mentimeter exercises) work less than optimal

**Summary of feedback from student contact-point:**

Things that worked well

- The course's strong focus on the curriculum and the readings in both lectures + seminars was seen as a big strength
- Having a textbook that offers an easy way into the topic is good!
- Lectures were seen as "quite good" and lecturers as well as seminar leaders were "well-prepared"
- Lecture recordings were appreciated as additional source to prepare for the exam

Things that could be improved:

- Lecturers could spend extra time on articles that they have written themselves to provide maybe a better insight into the research process itself rather than only a focus on research findings

- While students generally appreciated the focus in the seminars on discussing readings, some students note that the downside of that focus is that the seminars leave less room for discussing term papers & getting feedback on term papers.
- Seminar discussions seemed to be a bit halted and restrained at times.

### **Suggestions for improvements:**

- We will go over the curriculum and reduce the amount of technical readings per lecture somewhat.
- We will mention the comment on going through own work at least as thoroughly as other work on the curriculum, and ask each lecturer to reflect on possible benefits of adjusting emphasis/time use on own work.
- To facilitate more engaged seminar discussions, we will advise seminar leaders to include ice-breaker exercises in the beginning of the seminar. Also emphasis should be put on open questions, rather than right/wrong questions which might intimidate students.
- With respect to seminar format, we have already had a longer discussion on the pros and cons of keeping the format, which focuses on the readings, or open up for more discussion on term papers. Given the nature of the curriculum and the benefits (also appreciated by the students) of having a readings-focused seminar, we want to keep the same format also for next year. Given the limited amount of seminar hours, we can thus not allocate time for discussions of term papers. Fortunately, such discussions (and related learning outcomes pertaining to giving comments and incorporating feedback) are well covered in other ISV courses. We will implement some other measures for the term paper, such as providing information on the term paper format very early on. More importantly, we will allot some of the time during the last lecture to a discussion on term papers, both providing some general advice and summary comments from the document with guidelines on how to write a term paper that we provide the students. We will also allot some time to student questions. Since it's a large class and we might either get very idiosyncratic questions or many students may not ask questions in front of a large audience, we will ask them to submit question to us (the course convenors, who hold the last lecture) in advance. We will then make a selection of these questions to answer in class, and will respond to the remainder by e-mail.