

## **STV 4313 The Welfare State: Policies, Politics, and Feedback**

**Evaluation Spring 2022**

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### *Remarks from the course convenor*

About 20 students followed lectures and 18 did the exam. This is very suitable group size number at this level; large enough for the lectures/seminars to feel meaningful and to allow a multitude of contacts and input. But not too big so as to overload the two seminar groups.

Approximately 60% of the students signed up for the course were women, 40% men.

The grades varied mostly between A (3), B (7), and C (6), with only 2 receiving a lower grade (1 D, and 1 E).

Around one-third of the group were international exchange students. (Countries represented this year included Italy, Austria, and the US.) This is satisfying as one of the reasons the course is given in English is to improve opportunities for this group. At the same time, it is obviously important to also attract the regular oslo-based masters students, which also seems to be the case.

The course followed the departmental policy of not recording lectures. In my assessment, this seems to have had a positive impact on attendance, which was about 70-75% in any given lecture all through the course (also on days adjacent to holidays). Few students, if any, only participated in compulsory activities. From this lecturer's vantage point, it is a welcome relief to not have to devote time on the recording technicalities, and rather lecture in a "free" and hopefully inspired way.

The seminars worked well from my point of view. Students had prepared, stuck to the topic, and asked each other questions. Their presentations were useful for me when making connections with broader points discussed in lectures and the literature. For the most part, we had plenty of time for all the presenters. The student efforts in seminars and in lectures suggested that students were engaging with the reading.

### *Student feedback and possible improvements*

Two meetings with the student representatives were held. One half-way and one at the end of the course. Overall, the course was "very well received" among students, according to the representatives in the final meeting, and they found the seminars useful and engaging. The exam questions were thought of as "appropriate".

Two aspects were discussed in these meetings. One was that the material can be linked to more concrete and current real-world policy examples. As a result of this discussion in the half-way meeting, the seminar 2 task was tweaked so as to accommodate this. The task given was the following:

“...discuss briefly a concrete case of welfare state reform from the 2000s (in a country of your choice). You might already know of such cases. Or you might find them in the reading, or in political discourse more generally.

“..reflect briefly on how well some concept/theory from the reading/lectures may (not) illuminate the nature and/or the causes of the reform.”

Like other seminar tasks, this question was answered orally and in writing, with students commenting on each other during the seminar and afterwards using the CANVAS “peer review” function. This focus on concrete cases will be continued and possibly expanded next year. An alternative strategy would in principle be to bring the term paper back (between 2018 and 2021 there was both an exam and a term paper in which students focused on a real-world case of welfare state change). Unfortunately, it will likely not be economically feasible to bring back the term paper so in my assessment it’s better to use the seminars to this end.