

Evaluation-form

Course-code: STV2330

Course title: Public Opinion and Political Behaviour

Language: Norwegian English

Course convener's evaluation of the course:

Assess how the course worked. Be concrete. Discuss what worked particularly well, as well as what worked less than optimal.

This was the second time the course was held. We think it worked very well. In particular, we are happy with our seminars. They are set-up to engage students in active learning where they have to perform an independent analysis (quantitative or qualitative) and improve their understanding of the relationship between theory and empirics. This is something we continuously aim to further improve (see our reply to the third point). We are also happy to report that 50 students completed the course and submitted exams and term papers, this is a significant increase from last year.

On the other hand, there is room for improvement in terms of organization of the seminars. This year, a very large number of students joined the course in the second round of admissions. This meant that we had to obtain many extra seminar leaders on a very short notice and create a large number of seminar groups. It turned out, however, that not all of the students eventually showed up. Some of the seminar groups then had quite few students, and this created problems for the way the seminars are set-up and the pedagogical aims of the seminar.

Summary of feedback from student contact-point:

Fill in the key points from the student feedback. Mention what worked well, what worked not so well, and suggest areas of improvement.

Generally, the student representatives had heard a lot of positive feedback from other students. They enjoyed the course and they particularly liked the division of labour between the lectures (more passive learning) and the seminars (more active).

The student representatives did note that the course is primarily about Western countries (mostly the US and Western+Eastern Europe), and that many of the students are from outside Europe (we have a high share of exchange students) and would be interested in hearing more about other continents such as e.g. Latin America. While we agree that this would be interesting, there are several reasons for why we stick to established democracies in this course. The theories we discuss were developed for and work quite well within this geographical area. There is a trade-off between breadth and depth – covering more continents would mean being less able to go in-depth about the phenomena we study. Also, the department offers other courses that specialize in politics elsewhere. We do say in our current course description that students “will learn about the political behaviour of citizens in Western democracies”, and we might consider adding it in the title (“Public Opinion and

Political Behaviour in Western Democracies”) to make it even clearer.

Another interesting suggestion from the student representatives was to have a lecture on the impact of recent crises on political behaviour. This could include a diverse set of phenomena such as the impact of financial crises, wars (Ukraine-Russia..), crime, terrorist attacks, pandemics, assassinations, refugee crises and so on, or more broadly about the effects of immigration and ethnic diversity. This is an interesting proposal and one we will consider.

Finally, the students would have liked more information about the weighting of the term paper and the school exam for the final grade. There is currently one joint grade for the course, and we do not want to replace this with a mechanical percentage on the two components. However, we do tell the students that the school exam is more important for the total grade, while the term paper is used to adjust the grade from the school exam. This could perhaps be stated more clearly in the course description.

One student was unhappy with the way our term papers are assigned, or rather the fact that they are assigned instead of selected by students. The student wanted us to state this in our course description, a proposal we will consider.

Suggestions for improvements:

Describe how the course can be improved for the next time it is on offer. Assess to what extent it is necessary to make major changes to the course.

Overall we believe the course is working well, supported by the increase in students taking the course and the positive feedback from the student representatives. We do not see a need for major changes. However, we will consider changes following the discussions in the previous section. Also, one of the course leaders (Langsæther) will be attending the final part of the UiO Pedagogy Course in the Spring (Development work for university pedagogy). The project he will consider as part of the development work is whether/ how the seminars can be modified to increase active learning and allow for even better learning outcomes for the students.