

Periodic evaluation of STV4341 “Comparative Environmental Politics”
Spring 2020

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The course STV4341 “Comparative Environmental Politics” was given in spring 2020 for the first time. The aim of the course was for students to acquire an in-depth understanding of the politics behind environmental issues and processes driving countries’ different responses to environmental problems.

There were a total of 49 applicants for the course, 29 remained registered till the end, 22 of them successfully completed the course and 11 participated in the evaluation of the course.

Syllabus

The syllabus consisted of one course book available online, 7 book chapters in a compendium, and 32 online articles, 898 pages total. The students had 4-6 articles/book chapters to read for each lecture/seminar, with approximately 100 pages in between the lectures. The content of the syllabus was the following:

Books: McBeath, Jerry and Rosenberg, Jonathan (2006). *Comparative Environmental Politics*. Series: Advances in Global Change Research, Vol. 25. 193 p. Available online.

Compendium, was available for purchase at Akademika:

Carter, Niel (2007) Policy Instruments and implementation. Chapter 12 in *The Politics of the Environment: Ideas, Activism, Policy*, 2d edition, Cambridge University Press

Duit, Andreas (2014). Introduction: The Comparative Study of Environmental Governance. Chapter 1 in *State and Environment: The Comparative Study of Environmental Governance*. MIT Press

Eckersley, Robyn (2004). Conclusion: Sovereignty and Democracy Working Together. Chapter 9 in *The Green State: Rethinking Democracy and Sovereignty*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, pp 241–254.

Jagers, Sverker C. (2007). Compatibility between Sustainable Development and Liberal Democracy. Chapter 1 in *Prospects for Green Liberal Democracy*. Univ Pr of Amer, 2007. Chapter 1', pp.

North, Douglass, C. (1990). Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance. *The Political Economy of Institutions and Decisions*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 3-10

Smith, Graham (2003). Deliberative democracy and green political theory. Chapter 3 in *Deliberative Democracy and the Environment*. London: Routledge, pp. 53-76

Stevenson, Hayley (2018). Is Poverty the Main Driver of Environmental Degradation? in Chapter 3 Population and Poverty in *Global Environmental Politics: problems, policy and practice*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 48-57

Online articles

Agrawal, A. 2001. Common Property Institutions and Sustainable Governance of Resources. *World Development* 29: 10: 1649-1672.

Beeson, M., 2010. The coming of environmental authoritarianism. *Environmental politics*, 19(2), pp.276-294.

Bättig, M.B. and Bernauer, T., 2009. National institutions and global public goods: are democracies more cooperative in climate change policy?. *International organization*, 63(2), pp.281-308.

Carattini, S., Kallbekken, S. and Orlov, A., 2019. How to win public support for a global carbon tax. *Nature* 565: 289-291

Maestre-Andrés, S., Drews, S. and van den Bergh, J., 2019. Perceived fairness and public acceptability of carbon pricing: a review of the literature. *Climate Policy*, 19(9), pp.1186-1204.

Duit, A., 2016. The four faces of the environmental state: environmental governance regimes in 28 countries. *Environmental politics*, 25(1), pp.69-91.

Duit, A., 2016a. Resilience thinking: Lessons for public administration. *Public Administration*, 94(2), pp.364-380.

Engels, A., 2018. Understanding how China is championing climate change mitigation. *Palgrave Communications*, 4(1), p.101.

Fairbrother, M., Sevä, I.J. and Kulin, J., 2019. Political trust and the relationship between climate change beliefs and support for fossil fuel taxes: Evidence from a survey of 23 European countries. *Global Environmental Change*, 59, p.102003.

Finnegan, J. 2019. Institutions, Climate Change, and the Foundations of Long-Term Policymaking. *Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment Working Paper 321/Centre for Climate Change Economics and Policy Working Paper No. 353*

Fiorino, D.J., 2011. Explaining national environmental performance: approaches, evidence, and implications. *Policy sciences*, 44(4), p.367.

Folke, C., Carpenter, S.R., Walker, B., Scheffer, M., Chapin, T. and Rockström, J., 2010. Resilience thinking: integrating resilience, adaptability and transformability. *Ecology and society*, 15(4).

Jagers, S.C., Haring, N., Löfgren, Å., Sjöstedt, M., Alpizar, F., Brülde, B., Langlet, D., Nilsson, A., Almroth, B.C., Dupont, S. and Steffen, W., 2019. On the preconditions for large-scale collective action. *Ambio*, pp.1-15. If you cannot access the published version: https://cecar.gu.se/digitalAssets/1717/1717752_cecar-wp1-final.pdf

Jagers, S., Matti, S., and Nordblom, K. 2019. The evolution of public policy attitudes: Comparing the mechanisms of policy support across the stages of a policy cycle. *Journal of Public Policy*, 1-21.

Han, H., 2017. Singapore, a garden city: Authoritarian environmentalism in a developmental state. *The Journal of Environment & Development*, 26(1), pp.3-24.

Hardin, G., 1968. The tragedy of the commons. *Science*, 162(3859), pp.1243-1248.

Harring, N., 2016. Reward or punish? Understanding preferences toward economic or regulatory instruments in a cross-national perspective. *Political Studies*, 64(3), pp.573-592.

Holzinger, K. and Sommerer, T., 2011. 'Race to the bottom' or 'race to Brussels'? Environmental competition in Europe. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 49(2), pp.315-339.

Laegreid, O.M. and Povitkina, M., 2018. Do Political Institutions Moderate the GDP-CO2 Relationship?. *Ecological economics*, 145, pp.441-450.

Li, Q. and Reuveny, R., 2006. Democracy and environmental degradation. *International studies quarterly*, 50(4), pp.935-956.

Madden, N.J., 2014. Green means stop: veto players and their impact on climate-change policy outputs. *Environmental Politics*, 23(4), pp.570-589.

Mansbridge, J. 2014. What is Political Science for? *Perspectives on Politics*, 12(1), 8-17.

Mourao, P.R., 2019. The effectiveness of Green voices in parliaments: Do Green Parties matter in the control of pollution?. *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, 21(2), pp.985-1011.

Povitkina, Marina 2018. Necessary but not Sustainable? The Limits of Democracy in Achieving Environmental Sustainability. *Göteborg studies in politics* 155, edited by Bo Rothstein, Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg. Introductory chapter to the dissertation. Available at: <https://gupea.ub.gu.se/handle/2077/56151>

Povitkina, M., 2018. The limits of democracy in tackling climate change. *Environmental politics*, 27(3), pp.411-432.

Povitkina, M. and Bolkvadze, K. 2019. Fresh pipes with dirty water: How quality of government shapes the provision of public goods in democracies. *European Journal of Political Research* 58(4), pp. 1191-1212

Rothstein, B.O. and Teorell, J.A., 2008. What is quality of government? A theory of impartial government institutions. *Governance*, 21(2), pp.165-190.

Sjöstedt, M. and Jagers, S.C., 2014. Democracy and the environment revisited: The case of African fisheries. *Marine Policy*, 43, pp.143-148.

Sommerer, T. and Lim, S., 2016. The environmental state as a model for the world? An analysis of policy repertoires in 37 countries. *Environmental Politics*, 25(1), pp.92-115.

Sundström, A., 2015. Covenants with broken swords: Corruption and law enforcement in governance of the commons. *Global Environmental Change*, 31, pp.253-262.

Ungaro, D., 2005. Ecological democracy: The environment and the crisis of the liberal institutions. *International Review of Sociology*, 15(2), pp.293-303.

Vogel, D., 2003. The hare and the tortoise revisited: the new politics of consumer and environmental regulation in Europe. *British Journal of Political Science*, 33(4), pp.557-580.

Most students rated the amount and difficulty of reading as about right:

Difficulty of readings

About right	9
Should be increased	1
Should be reduced	1

Amount of readings

About right	9
Should be increased	1
Should be reduced	1

I also received personal feedback from students that they appreciated the literature selection:

20-03-13: "The literature list you have made is so good! The articles seem perfectly interconnected and on point."

Therefore, next time the course is given, I will not do major changes to the amount and content of reading.

Among the most helpful readings, the students mentioned:

"Li & Reuveny, Jagers"

"There were many, so it is hard to point out some. But Povitkinas introduction chapter to her dissertation and McBeath and Rosendal were great to have on the side as a «guide» through the rest of the syllabus."

"McBeath and Rosenberg, all online articles I found quite helpful. I find it is much better to include articles instead of book chapters."

Among the least helpful readings, the students mentioned:

"Carter, North"

"There was one article I found hard to understand, but as there was a lot of syllabus, so I have some difficulties tracking it down."

"Eckersley, Smith, North"

To follow students' preferences, I will make a few corrections to the next years syllabus by removing a chapter from North 1990 and Carter 2007 and replacing them with other articles.

Teaching

The course was given in the second period of the spring term in weeks 10-16, from 2d of March the 17th of April, and consisted of 10 meeting occasions: 7 lectures by the course convener, one lecture by a guest lecturer – Steffen Kalbekken from CICERO and two compulsory activities – a discussion seminar and a seminar with oral presentations.

The first compulsory activity "Regime type and the Environment" was planned to be a debate, but due to the restrictions related to COVID-19, the format switched to a more flexible form (discussion seminar). The goal of the activity was for students to learn how to engage in an informed discussion about the benefits and shortcomings of democracy and authoritarian regime in addressing environmental problems. Those who were unable to attend the first compulsory activity, submitted a complementary assignment in the form of written reflections.

The aim of the second compulsory activity was for students to practice an oral presentation of their work and share knowledge gathered during the individual work on the home assignments.

The lectures were spread unevenly, with 3 lectures in the first week of the course, no lectures in the second week of the course to give students time to prepare for the seminar, a seminar and 2 lectures in the third week of the course, 2 lectures in the fourth week of the course, 1 lecture in the fifth week of the course, and a final seminar with oral presentation after the submission of the home exam.

The content of the lectures was the following:

- Lecture 1: "Introduction. Causes of environmental problems. Why compare?"
- Lecture 2: "State and institutions in environmental politics"
- Lecture 3: "Democracy and the Environment"
- Compulsory activity 1: Discussion seminar: "Regime type and the Environment"
- Lecture 4: "Political decision-making processes and the environment"
- Lecture 5: "Implementation of environmental policies"
- Lecture 6: Environmental policies. How to measure environment
- Lecture 7: "Alternative models of environmental governance"
- Lecture 8: "Public support for environmental policies"
- Compulsory activity 2: Oral presentations

Overall, the students liked the lectures. Among the most interesting lectures, the students mentioned *Lecture 3. Democracy and the environment*, *Lecture 5. Implementation of environmental policies* and *Lecture 4. Political decision-making processes and the environment*.

Most interesting lectures

Lecture 3. Democracy and the environment	7
Lecture 5. Implementation of environmental policies	7
Lecture 4. Political decision-making processes and the environment	6
Lecture 8. Public support for environmental policies (by Steffen Kallbekken)	4
Lecture 2. State and institutions in environmental politics	3
Lecture 6. Environmental policies. How to measure environment	3
Lecture 1. Introduction. Causes of environmental problems. Why compare?	1

Among the least interesting lectures, the students mentioned *Lecture 7 Alternative models of environmental governance*

Least interesting lectures

Lecture 7. Alternative models of environmental governance	4
Lecture 1. Introduction. Causes of environmental problems. Why compare?	3
Lecture 2. State and institutions in environmental politics	2
Lecture 6. Environmental policies. How to measure environment	2
none/I did not follow the lectures	1

Following the results from the evaluation, next time the course is given, I will reconsider the content of all lectures that were ranked as “least interesting” and add more content on lectures that were ranked as “most interesting”.

I kept the content of the slides to minimum, to make the lectures more engaging, but received a comment stating that it would be better with more information on the slides as it favors learning. Therefore, next year, apart from minimal content on slides, I plan to prepare detailed notes to lectures.

"I prefer powerpoints with more explanation or text, in order to understand them afterwards."

Most students evaluated the difficulty of the lecture as about right and 3 out of 11 found the lectures easy. Following the comments, next time the course is given, I will spend less time on explaining basic terms and concepts.

Difficulty of the lectures?

	Difficulty
About the right level	8
Easy	3

"Some things have been difficult to understand at first, but it has been easier when I could go back to the lectures after gaining further insights.\r\n\r\nIn general it has been the right level of teaching."

"For mye tid brukt på basale statsvitenskapelige aspekter til kostnad for et umiddelbart dypdykk i komparativ miljøpolitikk. Forelesers prioritering om dette fokuset er dog ikke kritikkverdig, siden så mange av studentene ikke har statsvitenskapelig bakgrunn."

Nevertheless most students replied that lectures helped them to understand the topics.

Did the lectures help you understand the topic?

	Understanding
To a large extent	6
To a very large extent	3
To some extent	2

To engage students I used polls and surveys through Mentimeter.com. I also made sure to pose open questions and invite questions from students throughout the lectures. In the course evaluation, the majority indicated that they considered the lectures engaging.

Engaging lectures?

	Engaging
To a large extent	5
To some extent	3
To a limited extent	2
To a very limited extent	1

"The lectures prior to going digital were very engaging. Again, the problem was not Marina, but me."

"It is harder to engage digitally, in form of group discussions, but in general I prefer lectures that are less cooperative, where the teacher gives more lectures instead."

"This is mainly because it was over zoom, in person this class would have been more engaging I am sure"

With regards to the discussion seminar as a compulsory activity, the students gave a very positive feedback.

Compulsory activity

Good	8
Very good	2

[2] "The compulsory assignment was good, though I felt that there were too many questions for three pages. Two questions would have been sufficient. Also it should have been clearer which democracy types to explain in the second question. Great that we could choose between different ways to do it - discussion or a paper."

Resources and infrastructure

When meeting live was still allowed, the resources used for the course were an auditorium, a chalk board, a projector for showing slides, and an audio equipment to play videos on the screen. The compulsory chapters from books were included in a compendium available for purchase through Akademika, but could also be found in a library.

When the course moved to a digital form, the course required Zoom application for arranging meetings online, video editor (I used iMovie) for cutting the recordings into smaller pieces before putting them online. stable internet, computer with a camera, microphone and audio device.

Examination

The examination included a term paper of 5000-7500 words and an oral presentation. Overall, all students who answered the question regarding the exam, liked the examination, but preferred to have the paper shorter.

Exam

Good	8
Very good	2

"I would like to point to the fact that the current situation has made it hard to perform as good as usual as the lack of structure, social contact, and opportunity to cooperate with other students face to face. The situation has taken a toll on the

mental health of many of the students and should, in my opinion, be taken into account."

r\n\r\nThe exam was very good. I liked that we could design our own study, and choose to go deeper into some of the syllabus. The teacher was great in guiding us, helping out and providing information."

[3] "In the future I would have also liked to have an exam in this course, probably before the due date for the paper. And made the paper shorter"

"I didn't feel I had enough to say to write 5k words given the exam description"

In view of these assessments, next time the course is given I plan to make the writing task larger so that the students do not feel like they did not have ideas to fill in the required space.

Learning outcomes

The information on learning outcome in the course description provides a good description on what the students are expected to learn after completing the exam.

Assessment of the course

Statistics on the grades, withdrawals and appeals.

Students registered in course: 29

Students completed course: 22

A = 6

B = 8

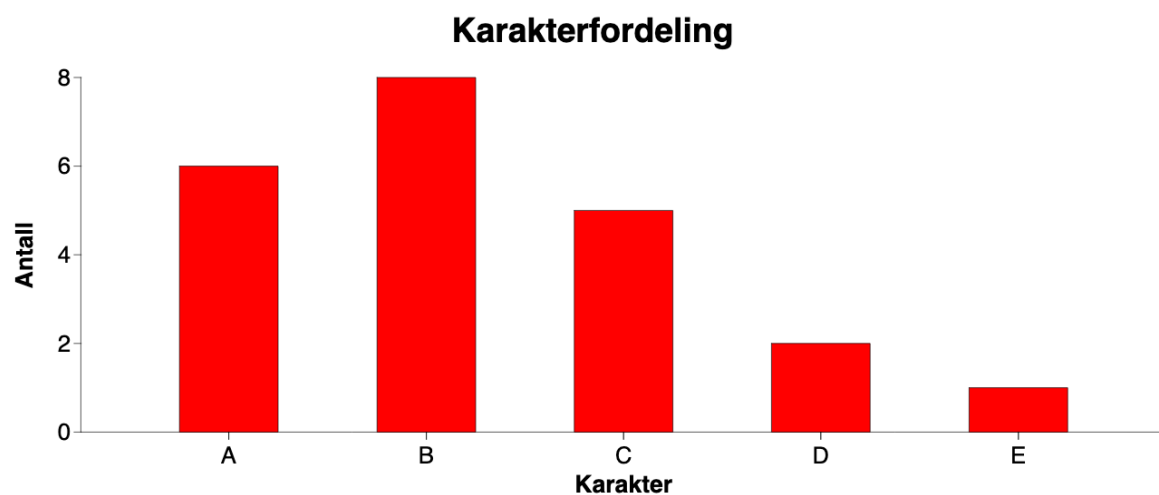
C = 5

D = 2

E = 1

F = 0

Appeals: 1.



Overall, the course worked very well and received a positive feedback from the students. Most students reported that they had learned a lot from the course.

Learning outcome

I learned a lot	4
I learned very much	3
I learned a fair amount	2
I hardly learned anything	1

"Marina was very good. The problem was me. I did not take to digital classes well at all and found it nearly impossible to concentrate."

"The teacher is very good and knowledgable, and the syllabus was great and gave a variety of views within the subject."

The majority of students spent less time than expected for preparation to the course meetings:

Time spent studying

10 - 20 hours (2 - 4 hours per day)	5
0 - 5 hours (less than 1 hour per day)	4
20 - 30 hours (4 - 6 hours per day)	1
5 - 10 hours (1 - 2 hours per day)	1

The majority also noted that the workload was about right, but some students mentioned that it was somewhat excessive.

Workload

About right	5
Somewhat excessive	3
Somewhat light	1
Too excessive	1

"The problem was not within the subject, but the current situation. Personally, I am an international student coming from a country that has been harshly affected by the virus. I am separated from my family, who is not safe due to the fact that my mother works on a hospital and is a high risk worker. With this personal circumstances going on, I was not in the best psychological situation for producing content."

The majority of the students believed that the communication with the course convener was either good or very good:

Communication	
Good	3
Very good	7

The course description

The course description is OK, no students have commented on it and therefore, I am not planning to make any changes next time the course is given. I will only add recommended prerequisites as described below.

The course is placed correctly in regards to level/recommended semester

Yes

The course is defined correctly in regards to recommended/required prerequisites

STV4341 does not have any recommend previous knowledge / prerequisites. Next time the course is given, I will introduce "bachelor degree in political science or similar" as recommended previous knowledge.

Suggestions for improvement

In the next iteration of the course I plan to change the syllabus slightly, to address comments by students in the course evaluation, change the description of the exam to make students feel that they can write more on the topic, change the content of lectures a bit, to talk less about basic concepts and more about topics that students rated as most interesting, add lecture notes if time permits, and add more interactive elements to the lectures.