

12 December 2023

PECOS First Semester Courses Evaluation Meeting

Present at the meeting:

- Student representatives Hennie Refstad Steinveg and Xenia Kelemen
- Course Convenors Jana Krause, Jacob Nyrup, Scott Gates
- Absent/excused: PECOS Administrator Mari Eidstuen

PECOS 4025

Course Convener

2nd time this course was offered. I have only taught three lectures this time, but my impression of the course and teaching was very positive. A different mix of lecturers due to availability of colleagues. The course included 10 lectures with seminar discussions. Student group was very active and engaged, lots of small group meetings during the course time, including practicing drafting different aspects of a research design.

The course received positive feedback last year and I did not receive suggestions to make major changes to the course program. Most feedback last year focused on communication around expectations of the final course paper.

Most important change for this year was the addition of 5 seminars for the students. Seminars were led by doctoral students and the feedback that I heard was very positive. Students presented and discussed their draft papers in the seminars. I graded together with the doctoral students. We thought that the quality of the term papers was very good.

Some critical student feedback included a request to use more visual teaching material; I have done so in my last lecture, where I incorporated more video material that was appropriate for the session topic.

Student Representatives

- Seminars were appreciated
- Confusion regarding assignment; one group experienced both seminar teachers, the two seminar teachers had somewhat different focus; some disappointment about the grades because of this
- Current political debates should be incorporated more prominently
- More information about interpretivist research; people did not feel confident about writing a research design about this
- Suggestion to change the order of courses (Scott's course first): Coming up with research questions very early in the PECOS program when not having studied the field felt overwhelming to some students

PECOS 4022

Course Convener

- 3rd year Jacob has been running it

- This year Anton replaced Jonas
- Students have very different backgrounds in statistics
- Student discomfort about statistics
- Feedback was positive
- Exam: very positive and good grades

Challenges

- Administration and organization of exam; emails not responded to, wrong room bookings, last year the same challenges
- Updated syllabus; catering to both advanced students and those with no background knowledge;
- Update seminars next year, major update planned to better train the student's programming skills and better complement the coding café.
- Term papers as part of the exam, 50% of grade; this year they were mandatory but not marked; term papers prepare students for a quantitative MA thesis; but students who don't like statistics don't want a term paper
- Weekly assignments are just too much? [Jana: might be necessary to keep weaker students learning]
- Math refresher course would be nice, has been pointed out every year; econ has a bootcamp – can PECOS students participate? Or can we design our own?
- Reduce grading workload for the weekly assignment; e.g. just provide solution to exercises on Canvas

Student representatives:

- Opinions on the weekly assignment are split; that the weekly assignments are not graded frustrates some students who only want to do the minimum amount of work
- Seminar structure: more teaching and not just option to get advise because the coding café is doing that; explaining better how the coding works;
- Term paper gives option to engage with code directly, term paper is more challenging; topic more substantive
- Clarity on the aims of the course; to what extent deeper theoretical understanding versus learning R and applied statistics
- Just general complaints about the administration; wrong information online; missing information on deadlines; announcement only in Norwegian

PECOS 4010

Course Convener

- Course not yet finished, exam not yet done; 3 essay choices: State development, civil war, interstate violence
- Very engaged class, lots of questions; but sometimes only few students talk but it is useful
- Class is going ok
- No term papers; but should change in the future again: Term semester projects allowed for starting on the MA thesis
- Attendance taking is time consuming [needs admin support to provide course list]
- Discussion questions for seminar style
- Course open to MA statsvitenskap

Jana Krause

- Seminars would be a good addition to the course and allow for more student discussion in smaller groups

Student representatives

- Demand for seminars for more engaged discussion because the lecture is big and there is not enough time for debate; for some students only big lectures is “too passive” teaching experience
- Back to term papers and discussion of term papers in seminars; more theory engagement
- More visual teaching material; seminars online to incorporate into Canvas program

Overall discussion: Switch order of courses:

PECOS 4010 (blok 1)

PECOS 4025 (blok 2)

PECOS 4022 (blok 3)