

Periodisk Emnerapport
JAP 1501 Present-Day Japan
Autumn 2019

1. Eventuelle avvik

There were no serious deviations from the course content as described in the course description.

2. Kvalitative gjennomføringsdata

More than 60 students applied for this course, of which more than 50 were present when the course started. 47 students handed in the obligatory assignment and thus were accredited to do their exam. 39 students handed in their final essay, 38 candidates passed, 1 failed. The quality of the assignments was generally more than satisfactory, and the final essays were even better, partly because of the feedback the students received. B and C were the most common grades (9 and 13 each) and the results were more or less identical to those of the previous year.

Apart from the enquete conducted by the university, which as usually has a relatively low response percentage, we distributed an anonymous questionnaire ourselves during the last class, which 37 students filled out. The general conclusion was that the students were satisfied with this course, as they have been ever since we did away with the group presentations and turned this course into a lecture-style (with some seminar elements) course in 2009.

3. Indikasjoner på særlig god kvalitet

There were 6 students who stood out and received an A-grade, which comes down to 15% and is relatively high. In general the students were inspired and the quality was up to standards, and accordingly 71% of the students scored in between A and C. Because of the large number of students, there is no way but to conduct this course mainly in a lecture style, but we have been able to involve the students more actively by introducing more debate elements and by means of the colloquia, and in our opinion the course worked very well.

4. Indikasjoner på sviktende kvalitet

The accumulated data of this course indicate a steady quality. We are especially happy with the colloquia conducted by our MA students, which help the new students to some basic knowledge of and training in writing an academic paper. On average the students were grateful for the extra opportunities the colloquia provided, and there is a distinct demand for a higher number of colloquia. We also allotted one collective class to giving a basic introduction on how to formulate a research question, and how to structure and write an academic paper. Moreover, there was a special class conducted by our Japanese librarian training the students how to find related academic sources through databases and the internet. Apart from the feedback the students received in the colloquia from one another and from the colloquia leaders, we also provided them feedback twice in the process of the writing of their papers. Many students who at first were somewhat bewildered by the freedom to choose their own topic eventually found that they learned a lot from their (often) first attempt at writing an academic paper, and there were hardly any students who preferred a different form of examination.

5. Utvikling av studiekvalitet / 6. Forslag for å forbedre emnet

The data of this year and previous years seem to show that the quality of this course is increasing. The students, in the form of their response to annual questionnaires, have also indicated that in general they are satisfied with the structure of this course, the content of the lectures, the selection of the textbooks and related readings, and the format of the exam. The inclusion of a film screening and the fact that this course was co-taught for the first time this year provided more variety. However, nothing has changed in the situation that in this course we have been compelled to do three somewhat different things at the same time: giving an overview of postwar and contemporary Japanese history, introducing various facets of present-day Japanese society, and training the students how to write an academic paper. Accordingly we very much welcome the new development that room has been created to establish a separate modern and contemporary Japanese history course. From the next academic year onwards the structure and content of JAP1501 will change from a three-fold to a two-fold one. Thus we will be able to focus more intensively on present-day Japanese society and the writing of an academic paper, and aim for even better results.

Dick Stegewerns
January 2020