

Periodic evaluation MEVIT4800: Methods in media and journalism research - Autumn 2017

Table of contents

Periodic evaluation MEVIT4800: Methods in media and journalism research Autumn 2017	1
<i>Course content and learning outcomes</i>	2
<i>Teaching: lectures, seminars and mandatory SPSS seminar</i>	2
<i>Students' evaluation of the course</i>	3
<i>Syllabus</i>	5
<i>Exam and exam results</i>	6
APPENDIX: ANSWERS TO OPEN QUESTIONS	8

MEVIT4800 is a 10 credits course, and it is mandatory for master's students at the department (both media studies, Nordic media and journalism). This means that students come to the course with very various levels of knowledge of methods beforehand.

The student evaluations in this report are from two iterations:

- A mid-term evaluation was conducted towards the end of the lecture on 10th of October, and included closed and open questions on how satisfied students were with the lectures, seminars and the curriculum. 33 students answered the survey (via nettskjema).
- A final evaluation was conducted after the students had their written exam in December 2017. This evaluation included questions on their overall assessment of the course, their own effort and to what extent they found the written exam aligned with the course objectives. The students received an e-mail with a link to the survey (nettskjema). 22 students answered the survey.

Course content and learning outcomes

MEVIT4800 is presented as follows in the course description:

Course content: This course presents methods that are central to empirical research in media and communication research and in journalism research.

These methods include research interviews, document-analysis, content-analysis, surveys and introductory statistics. A central aim is to increase students' understanding of the choices involved throughout a research process, including assessing what methods are appropriate for different research purposes.

Learning outcome: Students will

- be able to critically evaluate and assess existing empirical research
- be able to design and conduct their own scientific investigations within media and journalism research
- be able to discuss methodological issues critically
- be able to analyse different types of data
- enhance their understanding of the scientific process, including the relation between theory and empirical evidence

Teaching: lectures, seminars and mandatory SPSS seminar

Since the last periodic evaluation in 2013, MEVIT4800 has been redesigned with a clearer focus on methods rather than perspectives in media research. The course has also strengthened its focus on quantitative methods and statistics.

Teaching was organized in three parts: lectures, seminars and an SPSS course. This structure was introduced by the previous course-responsible Audun Beyer.

Lectures and seminars were given by Archetti (three lectures, two seminars), and Lüders (four lectures, four seminars, and two weeks of SPSS-seminar). Archetti covered qualitative methods and Lüders quantitative methods (see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1: Overview of lectures

MEVIT4800 autumn 2017 - Lectures		
29/8	Introductory lecture – Theory/methods/data	Marika Lüders
5/9	Research basics and document analysis	Cristina Archetti
19/9	Interviews	Cristina Archetti
26/9	Doing research in practice	Cristina Archetti
03/10	Survey design and statistics #1	Marika Lüders

10/10	Content analysis	Marika Lüders
31/10	Statistics #2:	Marika Lüders

Table 2: Overview of seminars.

MEVIT4800 autumn 2017 - Seminars		
30/8	Seminar – Theory/methods/data	Marika Lüders
6/9	Seminar – Document analysis	Cristina Archetti
27/9	Seminar - Doing research in practice	Cristina Archetti
04/10	Seminar – Survey design and statistics #1	Marika Lüders
11/10	Seminar - Content analysis	Marika Lüders
01/11	Seminar - Statistics #2:	Marika Lüders
Week 45	SPSS-seminar*	Marika Lüders
Week 46	SPSS-seminar*	Marika Lüders

*For the SPSS-seminar, students were grouped in five, and each group participated for two full days (one day in week 45 and one day in week 46).

Students' evaluation of the course

Most students report to be satisfied or very satisfied with the lectures and seminars, yet with a sizeable number of students who report to be neither dissatisfied nor satisfied (see Table 3).

Table 3: From mid-term evaluation, conducted when 6 out of 7 lectures had been given. N=33

	Very dissatis.	Dissatisfied	Neither/nor	Satisfied	Very satisfied
How satisfied how you been with Cristina Archetti's lectures?	0 0%	3 9,1%	12 36,4%	13 39,4%	5 15,2%
How satisfied how you been with Cristina Archetti's seminars?	1 3%	5 15,2%	10 30,3%	11 33,3%	6 18,2%
How satisfied how you been with Marika Lüders' lectures?	0 0%	4 12,5%	8 25%	15 46,9%	5 15,6%
How satisfied how you been with Marika Lüders' seminars?	0 0%	3 9,1%	9 27,3%	17 51,5%	4 12,1%

The students' answers to the open questions are included in the Appendix. Critical comments and suggestions for improvement primarily concern time and scope issues. The course covers a lot of ground, and several students comment that lectures and seminars include too much, are too heavy and can be experienced as too rushed. This is a valid point, and there is a need for one more lecture and seminar in the course.

The students who completed the final evaluation were however more critical, particularly in terms of how well the teaching covered the course content, and how well the exam was aligned with major course objectives (see Table 4).

Table 4: From final evaluation, completed after all teaching and after written exam. N=22

	Compl. disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Compl. agree
The course has clearly stated learning objectives	3 13,6%	4 18,2%	2 9,1%	11 50%	2 9,1%
The teaching covered the course content in a good way	1 4,8%	5 23,8%	9 42,9%	5 23,8%	1 4,8%
I put much effort into this course	1 4,5%	0 0%	7 31,8%	8 36,4%	6 27,3%
The exam was well aligned with the major course objectives	3 13,6%	7 31,8%	5 22,7%	6 27,3%	1 4,5%

Dissatisfaction with the exam relates partly to students being informed that research ethics would not be included in the exam (as it was included in MEVIT/JOUR4000 instead). One of the tasks given on the exam concerned conducting research interviews with children, minorities and elites, and refers to the first few pages of chapter eight in Brinkman and Kvale. Whereas research ethics is relevant, it is not the primary focus when Brinkman and Kvale discuss issues pertaining to these types of interview subjects. Although many students were not happy with the exam, most students did well on the exam (see Figure 1, page 7).

The SPSS-seminar is a very useful addition to MEVIT4800. The students worked with a real data set (in 2017 with a data-set from PEW Research Centre), and completed basic statistics tasks using SPSS. The report was submitted as a mandatory activity, that they needed to pass to take the final written exam.

The main benefit in terms of learning outcomes is how working with a set of tasks and SPSS provides students with both a better understanding of statistics concepts (e.g. variables, measurement levels, central tendencies, correlation coefficients), how to present and make sense of data using appropriate frequency tables and graphs, and learning the very basics of SPSS.

Most students found the SPSS-seminar useful (see Table 5).

Table 5: From final evaluation, completed after all teaching and after written exam. N=22

	Compl. disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Compl. agree
The SPSS seminar was well planned	1 4,5%	1 4,5%	0 0%	13 59,1%	7 31,8%

The SPSS seminar gave me a better understanding of statistics	1 4,5%	1 4,5%	5 22,7%	10 45,5%	6 27,3%
The SPSS seminar is a necessary part of MEVIT4800	1 4,5%	5 22,7%	2 9,1%	7 31,8%	8 36,4%

Syllabus

The syllabus included three text-books covering basic statistics (Foster et al., 2015), research interviews (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2009) and quantitative content analysis (Neuendorf, 2009) in addition to extracts, chapters and articles (see <http://www.uio.no/studier/emner/hf/imk/MEVIT4800/h17/pensumliste/index.html>).

Foster, Liam, Ian Diamond and Julie Jefferies (2015) *Beginning statistics. An introduction for social scientists*. Sage: London. This is a good introduction to statistics for students with little or no knowledge of statistics before the course, and is also relevant for students with pre-knowledge. The book includes practice questions which have been used in the seminars. Recommended as included for forthcoming courses.

Kvale, Steinar and Svend Brinkmann (2009) *Interviews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Sage. Chs. 6-12, 15-16. A very thorough book covering research interviews from planning, designing, conducting and analysing interviews. Points to the importance of ensuring quality and a scientific approach to interviews. Recommended as included for forthcoming courses.

Neuendorf, K. A. (2016). *The content analysis guidebook*. Sage. Again, a very thorough book that explains key concepts, and that introduces students to quantitative content analysis as a deductive and scientific method. Excellent on the initial phases of planning and designing a content analysis. Recommended as included for following courses.

Book chapters included in compendium

- Field, Andy (2009) Chapter 1-3 in *Discovering statistics using SPSS* (Sage), 86 pp.
- Hayes, Andrew F. (2005) Chapter 1-4 in *Statistical methods for communication science* (LEA Publishers), 81 pp.
- Fink, Arlene (2013) Chapter 1 and 2 in *How to conduct surveys. A step-by-step guide* (5th ed.) Sage
- Karppinen, K. & Moe, H. (2012). What we talk about when we talk about document analysis. In N. Just, N. & M. Puppis (Eds.), *Trends in Communication Policy Research: New Theories, Methods and Subjects*. Bristol UK / Chicago, USA: Intellect. 20 pp.

The extracts from **Field and Hayes** are excellent (both should be updated to the newest version of the books). The complete books are too extensive for the course content and learning outcomes, yet selected introductory chapters should remain part of the compendium.

Fink is satisfactory as a guide for how to design survey-studies, yet it might be worth-while to look for other resources.

The chapter by **Karppinen and Moe** is the only text on the syllabus that covers document analysis.

Most students reported to be relatively satisfied with the syllabus (see Table 6). The answers to the open questions suggest that some students found the literature “dense and complex” or difficult (see Appendix), which again point to how many students prefer the lectures and seminars to keep close to the syllabus, and to cover the topics on the syllabus in a slower pace.

Table 6: From mid-term evaluation, conducted when 6 out of 7 lectures had been given. N=33

	Very dissatis.	Dissatisfied	Neither/nor	Satisfied	Very satisfied
How satisfied are you with the syllabus?	0 0%	5 15,5%	11 34,4%	13 40,6%	3 9,4%

Exam and exam results

The exam was given as a four-hour written exam (Inspera) and included eight tasks covering qualitative research, content analysis and key concepts in statistics.

The exam was graded by Arne Holm (NIBR) and Marika Lüders. Karoline Ihlebæk served as “bedømmersensor” and received all exams assessed as F or E, as well as examples of exams assessed as A, B, C and D.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of grades on the exam. Of 55 students who took the exam, two students failed. Most students did very well on the exam.



UiO-Avdeling for fagstøtte (IFE)

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Side 1 av 1

FS580.001 Resultatfordeling

Eksamen: MEVIT4800 1 S 2017 HØST

Perspectives and methods in media research - Skriftlig eksamen

10,0sp

Karakterregel: Beste: A, Bestått: E, Dårligste: F

	Totalt
Antall kandidater (oppmeldt):	60
Antall møtt til eksamen:	55
Antall bestått (B):	53
Antall stryk (S):	2
Antall avbrutt (A):	0 4%
Gjennomsnittskarakter:	C
Antall med legeattest (L):	3
Antall trekk før eksamen (T):	0

Karakter	Antall
E	0
D	12
C	16
B	16
A	9

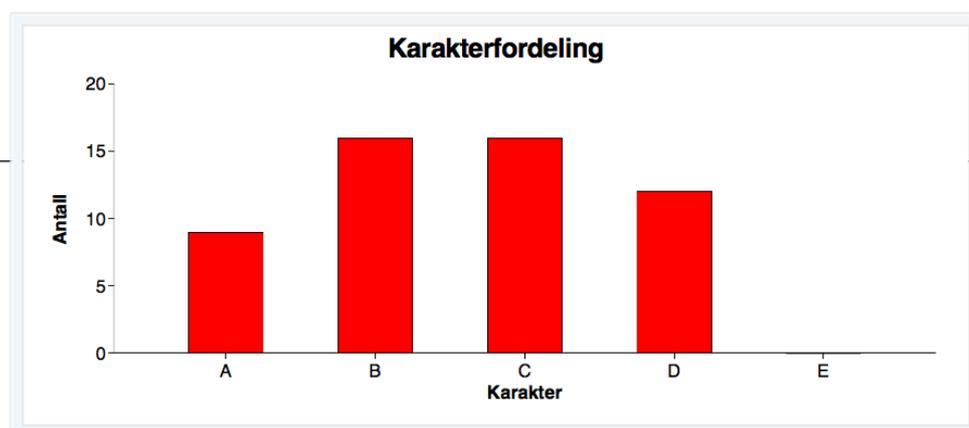


Figure 1: Results from the written exam

APPENDIX: ANSWERS TO OPEN QUESTIONS

What, if anything, do you think has worked well for the course this semester?

Consider for instance the curriculum, the teaching during lectures, the teaching during seminars.

Comments given about the seminars

- the seminars have worked well. It's easier to get an understanding of the topics when we are in smaller groups, and the lecturers seem to be more confident
- The seminars have helped in understanding the concepts
- The seminars are good to work in the topics
- It is good to do practical work in groups at the seminars
- The seminars are really helpful to consolidate the knowledge
- The seminars give a good way of practicing theory
- Open discussions in seminars are useful
- The seminars have been very useful, especially when working with different examples and work with the methods. And in the lectures it's good that you have a mix of theory and examples.

Comments given about the lectures

- more to the point contents in lectures
- You have both given a lot of examples, which helps us putting concepts into "real life context".
- The summarizing from the syllabus is very helpful, and lectures are always open to clarify concepts we might have trouble understanding.
- Good use of explanations during lectures
- learning about the practical work needed for a research paper
- Kahoot is fun. What about having one before break or right after the break, instead of at the end.
- The curriculum and the seminar about our assignment
- I think the lectures have been very useful, because of the use of examples

Other comments:

- The books have given enough information to allow us to accrue knowledge on the subjects.
- The curriculum
- Marika er flink til å fange opp signaler fra elevene om hva som er vanskelig og bør vies oppmerksomhet.

What do you think we could have done differently or better so far during the course?

Consider for instance the curriculum, the teaching during lectures, the teaching during seminars.

Time and scope issues

- Too little time to finish the actually tasks in the seminar. Curriculum feels to wide for the course

- My biggest complaint would be that we have so much material to cover during one lecture/seminar that everything seems a bit rushed. We do not have enough times to take down notes and write commentary/have discussion because we need to cover more material.
- Way too much to learn very often. If you try to teach us way too many things at once, we don't learn much. If you slow down the tempo, don't rush and maybe alternate your teaching methods we will hopefully learn more and more easily.
- I think some of the lectures has been a bit heavy, with a lot of information that the lecturer has struggled with communicate what they really want us to do
- It is hard to follow the lectures because you spend little time on each topic

Lecture issues

- The lectures need to reflect the reading. We've mostly had quite a lot of dense and complex literature to read, but most of the lectures have been superficial and not reflected the complexity of the reading.
- I don't like when the lectures become seminars in terms of style.
- More interaction in class. Lectures tend to take long. And please fix the clock, it will prevent a lot of people looking on their phones
- Way too much to learn very often. If you try to teach us way too many things at once, we don't learn much. If you slow down the tempo, don't rush and maybe alternate your teaching methods we will hopefully learn more and more easily
- Litt mye tekst på powerpointene og mye å lese i forelesningene. Det kan bli vanskelig å henge med
- a more pedagogical approach, more pedagogical slides, the students are new to the courses - keep that in mind!
- You shouldn't move so fast with the powerpoint! And less text on the slides.

Other comments

- Vi kunne med fordel ha jobbet mer praktisk med pensum
- Gjør pensum til et kompendium. Kjøp at bare bruddstykker fra hver bok er interessant. Gjør studiet mer interaktivt, med f. eks. ukentlige seminaroppgaver.
- Maybe merge MEVIT4800 and MEVIT4000 as one class it would tie together nicely
- specific topic discussion in more clear way
- give more examples when clarity defines
- The work we did in summegrupper i thought could have been done easier, so that we could spend more time actually doing the tasks and less time understanding the task (especially on the interview lecture).
- Used more in depth examples, and just generally more explanations or application to real life
- Seminar activities in Cristina's seminars could be clearer (what is expected of us to do etc.)
- Use less time on interview questions. It's very basic..

Is there anything else you would like to mention about the course so far?

Maybe you have something on your mind that didn't fit the questions above? Now's your chance!

- It's was interesting
- Course has been very informative
- the setup doesn't work well. Would have been better to have methods and theory courses early in the semester, and the use what we've learned in master thesis class later in the semester.
- The books are crazy expensive for this course and the interview book is very similar to other interview books on BA level.
- not getting proper idea of class content on assignment
- I have rarely experienced a worse approach to teaching methods. I'm really disappointed.

From final evaluation: If you have any other comments, do let us know:

- Utrolig unødvendig med 'lurespørsmål' på en sånn type eksamen. Dere hadde vel greid å skille klinten fra hveten på en annen måte.
- Vanskelig pensum som blir enda vanskeligere fordi der læres kun på engelsk.
- Det var noen uklarheter for viktig dokumentanalyse og andre temaer i emnet faktisk var, samt resulterte dette i at enkelte forelesninger ikke dekker emnet så godt som jeg hadde ønsket. Særlig med tanke på intervjuer som forskningsmetode, der boken ga et mye bredere spekter av mye som aldri ble navnet i forelesningen. Ellers var det veldig lærerikt og bra!
- I think the course was great, there was never boring moment during the lectures or seminars (for me). The only thing I disliked is the exam; I don't think the type of exam we had is the best way for students to present their knowledge. It's almost like a Who's-Got-The-Best-Memory test, and it doesn't encourage learning. If we had a semester report, I think it would have been better. This way, the students would have to read and understand terms and concepts throughout the semester (maybe in the form of minor tasks, like the SPSS assignment) instead of trying to learn all the concepts 3 days before the exam. I think most people would get a better understanding of the methods this way.
- Not all exam topics was covered in lectures. Some exam questions were very unspecific
- We were told we wouldn't get any questions concerning ethics on the exam, but the first one could to some degree be an ethics-question. But overall, good course!
- I think both the lectures and the seminars were rushed. Many concepts were hurriedly accounted for and it was often not easy to grasp all the concepts. In many lectures I felt kind of uneasy trying to keep up with the lecturers rapid rate. I also did not see the "bigger picture" and how many of the methods and their concepts are interlinked in class lectures. However I think MEVIT4800 is important for us before we start with our master project.
- Oppgaveteksten på eksamen burde også vært tilgjengelig på norsk
- Quite a complicated course over all. If you haven't had statistics earlier it's very difficult to keep up.
- Ble fortalt i forelesning at det ikke kom noe om etikk på eksamen, hadde ikke forelesning om det engang; også kom det likevel på eksamen. Var også rart at oppgave to og tre overlappet hverandre (validitet, relabilitet osv.). Forelesningene om intervju forberedte oss overhodet ikke til spørsmålene vi

fikk til eksamen og dekket ikke pensumsboka godt (boka sier det er 7 skritt til intervju, mens i forelesningen fikk vi presentert 12.)

- jeg føler dessverre ikke jeg fikk alt for mye ut av undervisningen i 4800. Spsskurset var bra, ellers syns jeg mye av undervisningen var litt hektisk, og jeg satt igjen med like store spørsmålstegn etter forelesning og seminar enn før. til neste år tror jeg det er viktig at foreleserne fokuserer litt på hvorfor vi gjøre som vi gjør i metode, og ikke bare hvordan men gjør det
- Forelesningene har vært av ulik kvalitet. Noen av forelesningene har ikke basert seg på pensum, og det har vært vanskelig å forstå akkurat hva som var meningen med dem. Feks. "research in practice", her fikk vi en oppgave som vi ikke fikk tid til å fullføre, og det var ikke tydelig hva som var hensikten med denne. Videre baserte ikke intervjuforelesningen seg på Brinkmann og Kvale - noe som er rart da nesten hele boken er på pensum. Det har vært nyttig å gjøre oppgaver i seminarene og her har man fått mulighet til å spørre om ting man lurer på, det har vært bra, spesielt når det kom til statistikkdelen. Jeg skulle også ønske at vi hadde lært mer om tekstanalyse, og jeg føler ikke at kapittelet om tekstanalyse er dekkende for de som ønsker å bruke denne metoden i sine oppgaver.

Evaluation report written by: Marika Lüders (course responsible)