HGO4011 - Philosophy and methodology of human geography

Exam Autumn 2018

The exam is a one-week home exam. The maximum length of the home exam is 6000 words (excluding references).

The text should be well written, using and citing sources in agreement with standard rules for academic writing.

The exam questions are given in English. You may submit your response in Norwegian, Swedish, Danish or English.

You submit your assignment in the digital examination system Inspera. The answer to the exam question must be submitted by 12.00 PM (noon) on the deadline date.

Answer one of the following questions:

QUESTION 1
Norman Blaikie identifies six pairs of ontological and epistemological positions. Three of these are especially relevant for contemporary human geography: (1) cautious realist/falsificationism; (2) depth realist/neo-realism; and, (3) idealist/constructionism. Choose one of these three positions and provide a descriptive account of its understanding of ontology and epistemology. Discuss how the chosen position has been the basis for knowledge production in Human Geography. Finally, provide a critical discussion of the limitations of the chosen position, for example by contrasting it to one or both of the other positions.

QUESTION 2
Human geography has a strong tradition for case studies ("qualitative research" in Ragin and Amoroso's terminology), but case studies can be conducted in different ways. Discuss what it means to do a case study and what the key questions are when designing such a study. Provide a critical discussion of the strengths and limitations of case studies, for example by comparing it with comparative research and quantitative research.