

Evaluation SGO3200 «Environment and innovation»

Av Karen O'Brien & Bjørnar Sæther

SGO 3200 Environment and Innovation was an outcome of changes at the 3000-level in human geography 2013/14. Environment and Innovation was by itself an (incremental) innovation. The idea behind the course has since the beginning been to:

- Give students knowledge and skills to understand and analyze the current grand challenges connected to environmental degradation and climate change.
- The human geography perspective offered includes contributions from innovation studies (social and business innovations), environmental studies and environmental sociology (ecological modernization theory)
- Research based contributions on societal transformations towards a more sustainable future is an overarching theme
- Based on this students should be able to continue their careers either as master students or directly in working life with a BA

To organize and offer a high quality course on these complicated issues is by itself a sort of a "grand challenge". This is in no way a mature field of research and teaching, quite the opposite it is a literally enormous and dynamic field of research, knowledge development and teaching possibilities.

Teaching and syllabus have been organized around four modules:

- Module 1 – The sustainability challenge
- Module 2 – Innovation- the basics
- Module 3 – Green innovations and transitions in practice
- Module 4 – Social innovation and transitions to sustainability

In the four years the course has been offered altogether 79 students have passed the exam, that means close to 20 students each year.

We as responsible for the course, and giving about 90% of the teaching, have been relative happy with the course. We believe we have had have a relatively good number of students since this was a new course. The students, at least in some years, seem to have been particularly motivated demonstrating an above average effort during lectures and in the seminars. However, in 2017 we have seen less above average motivation and efforts. As part of this evaluation, we asked the students a few question about how satisfied they were with the lectures, the readings and seminars. Out of 22 students, 10 of them filled in the questionnaire. As usual there are diverse range of feedback, some points are:

- A few students get bored of lecturers keeping mostly to their power points talking about papers on the reading list
- Some students are very thankful for lectures explaining key points in papers on the reading list. Otherwise they would have been “lost”
- Some argue there are too many topics on the reading list and get confused. One student argues the course lacks a “rød tråd”
- Students say they learn a lot from the course which they find very interesting
- Some ask for more structure at the seminars, in particular the student papers

To conclude SGO 3200 seems to function relatively well, but based on 4 years of experience we think the time is right for discussing some changes. Such a discussion should include the structure of the reading list and lectures as well as seminars and the student papers. In planning for the teaching of this course in spring 2018 we have made quite a number of changes in the reading list, with more focus on social innovation. Otherwise, we have decided to keep the basic structure of the course.