Course evaluation for SOSGEO2302, spring 2025

Course convenors: Karen O'Brien and Vilde Blix Huseby

This is the first year in about a decade that this course was run as a joint offering by human geography and sociology, with two course convenors. While Karen has held this course for many years, Vilde has come in as a new course convenor and lecturer, representing sociology. The joint course included some changes to the syllabus, as well as a change in the format for student evaluation (from home exam to school exam). The mandatory reflection paper (pass/fail) has been replaced by submission of smaller reflective writing pieces (5 out of 7, pass/ fail).

The course evaluation was completed by 23 students (out of 60). The evaluation shows that students are very satisfied with the course. Both the course in general and the lectures were highly rated, with 69.6% of students rating them as "Very good" and 30.4% as "Good". Most students experience that they have got sufficient follow-up and information, and that the learning outcomes in the course description are covered by the teaching and the syllabus. Two students state this to be their "favorite course", and lectures are described as "high-quality" and "engaging".

The experiences of the seminars are also mostly positive. Two-thirds reported that they found the following activities useful: Micro-writing exercises in seminars, group works on course concepts, exam prep and "shut up and read"-session in class (this last activity was reported to enhance general reading skills of academic literature that could be used also in other courses). The main objections were that some students would have liked more discussions of the curriculum in class. Attendance varied (mandatory to attend 4 out of 8 seminars), with some attending all of them, and others only the mandatory ones.

When it comes to reflective writing assignments, opinions were divided, with 56.5% of students finding them useful and aiding their learning, while 39.1% felt they were okay but that they didn't learn much from writing them. The seminar leaders reported more work on grading these assignments than last year's more extensive mandatory hand-in. At the same time, it gave them a deeper understanding of the level of the students, which aided the facilitation of seminars.

The change from one reflection paper to several smaller reflection writing pieces seems to have de-centered the importance of the cChallenge in the course. The cChallenge (30 days challenge chosen by the students themselves) has been part of the course for several years, and earlier the students have written the reflection paper based on their experience on the cChallenge. While 73,9 percent reported that undertaking the cChallenge aided them in thinking differently about change, almost half thought the cChallenge should have been more closely tied to the lecturers and seminars. The impression from the seminar leaders were that the weekly hand-in of reflection writing pieces also took time and energy away from the cChallenge, and that the students chose less hard challenges for themselves this year and did not put that much energy into it.

As Karen is retiring, the course will see changes next year. Suggestions for improvement include linking seminars more closely to the course curriculum and also to the cChallenge. Reflection writing assignments could either be reduced (into 3 hand-ins for instance) or changed back to one larger reflection paper and at the same time have more in-class writings. As attendance is low in some seminar groups, it could also be possible to allow more students in one seminar group. Overall course attendance was generally low, possibly because lectures were

scheduled on Friday afternoons. Some students felt that there were too many articles to read, and that it was difficult to keep up with the course readings.