SGO2250 – midterm evaluation spring 2025

Sverre J. Herstad

About the course

The objective of this course is to provide students with a critical understanding of concepts and theories related to sustainability transitions, innovation, social and geographical change. It covers challenges and opportunities associated with sustainable development, the drivers of such transitions in the context of global environmental challenges, and features/characteristics of both technological, social and sustainable innovation.

About the evaluation

32 students were registered to the course in Canvas, from which 11 responses (34 per cent) were received on the survey asking participants to describe three positive and three negative sides of the course.

Positive

Overall, the course is described as interesting and relevant. The structure with three-hour sessions and specific topic for each is noted by some a positive, as is the class discussions. The lectures are good as they connect to and cover the reading list. The opportunity given to develop own term paper topics and work collaboratively facilitates learning and has an additional social effect. This and the class discussions makes people get to know each other. The course does link to other topics, however, the focus on innovation makes it stand out. The topics/material/readings covered are broad and complex; however, it works given the teaching format. How the course focuses on the good sides, the darker sides and the in-betweens is appreciated, as it gives a more realistic picture of what is at hand and real-life issues related to it, while at the same time being quite deep-ploughing and emphasizing the complexity of transitions

Negative

On the negative side, the respondents note that lectures should stay within the intended 45 minutes and be clearer on what objectives are. Some of the lectures are very long, and heavy on theory; more practical examples and more plenary discussions would have benefitted the students. All (not only some) teaching sessions should have tasks/questions to activate students. The topics covered are extremely broad, the teaching should be redesign to better ‘orient’ the students in this vast range of topics and literature. Some of state they are not, due to this complexity, fans of the 3-hour format and would instead have wanted regular two-hour lectures with parallel seminars. More time could early in the course be spent on the concept of ‘innovation’ itself, as students have not necessarily encountered it before/have prior courses on the topic. The reading list is long, much of the literature is difficult, and some of it outdated. Clean-up and updating is necessary - as is clearer guidelines for the term papers. The lecturer could preferably be more enthusiastic/engaged with less monotonous presentations, and less personal/pessimistic reflections.