

PECOS 4025 **Evaluation Form**

Course Convener 2022: Prof Jana Krause

Course Convener's Evaluation of the Course

This course was newly created by Prof Målfrid Braut-Hegghammer and Prof Jana Krause in 2021 in the context of the department's methods reform for MA programs. It is the first course that PECOS students take at the beginning of the semester.

The class examines fundamental principles of research methods and design in political science as applied to the field of peace and conflict research. We cover logics of inference; research ethics in peace and conflict research; concepts, working with theory, and case selection; and various ways of tackling challenges to inference. The course prepares students to design and conduct an independent research project of their own and to assess the validity and reliability of published research. Teaching includes 10 lectures but no seminars. In addition to my own four lectures, several lectures were covered by James Cameron, Imrana Buba and Leonor Toscano, Jacob Nyrup, and Målfrid Braut-Hegghammer.

Assessment is based on the final term paper. The final paper focuses on challenges to inference on a topic of choice in the field of peace and conflict studies (3000-4000, words excluding references). Students receive written instructions for writing the term paper in the form of a one-page guideline detailing what the paper needs to cover and how to structure the paper. These instructions were discussed with students during the last three sessions of the course.

Overall, the course seemed to have worked well. I received no complaints throughout the course. Student feedback during the course focused on the difficulties of some of the assigned readings, and I will update the reading list before the course will be offered again.

Grading was done by Melanie Sauter, Imrana Buba and Leonor Toscano. They received some complaints from students who received C's and D's on their paper. Overall, C was the most common grade, but we also had 1 A and 6 Bs. The grading team offered detailed feedback sessions to all students to explain the grades and how to improve performance in the future.

Some students suggested that this course should be supported by seminars to discuss draft term papers. This could be particularly helpful for students who did not complete an undergraduate political science degree at UiO. In addition, students should be informed about the various academic writing support programs at UiO. Other students voiced disappointment because their grades did not correspond to their expectations for PECOS students. Students thanked the grading team for the feedback sessions on the grades and expressed appreciation for the learning opportunity.

Student Feedback

The student representative for this course reported no major complaints about this course. She noted that many students did not fully understand the workload of the final paper and started working on it too late, and therefore received relatively low grades. The course convener will discuss the expected workload of the final paper in more detail during the next course to ensure that students do not misjudge the task.

The student representative further stated that students liked the lectures because they provided a good introduction to the topics of the course.