

Sensorveiledning HIS2170/4170 Spring 2019

Exam task:

“The final examination is a term paper – based on the obligatory exposé. The length of your paper should be approximately 10 pages. We consider a standard page to be 2300 characters without spacing. Do not write your name in your exam (term paper). Use your candidate number. It is a four digit number which you will find next to your exam registration in StudentWeb. You are given a unique candidate number for each exam. The paper should have a front page stating your candidate number, the course code and name, and the semester and year. The front page, bibliography and footnotes are not included in the page count.”

The pensum contains pertinent case studies on relevant topics such as the Norse Greenland settlements, the global crises of the 17th century, ecological imperialism, the discovery of climate change or the debate on climate determinism. These themes were contextualized and situated with further literature through introductory lectures, student presentations and group work. All students had to provide a one-page expose with relevant literature to identify a relevant, more tightly defined term paper topic as well as a research question and got feedback were necessary.

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An excellent term paper formulates a relevant research question that is developed and motivated by a critical engagement with a substantial body of pertinent research literature. Compiling this body of literature requires the candidate to systematically search and read beyond the list of obligatory course literature (“pensum”). An excellent paper will engage critically both the natural and the societal aspects of climate history. It pursues its research question in a way that is thoroughly reflected in both methodological and theoretical terms and focuses on a relevant, well-defined empirical case. It develops a discernible argument in a logical fashion and presents it lucidly, formulating an independent opinion informed by research debates and literature. An excellent paper focuses on the research question throughout and shows the ability to move confidently between generalisations and detailed analysis. It shows a good command of relevant historical facts. An excellent paper is written in clear prose. It respects the allowed page count and is structured, formatted, and referenced in accordance with the discipline’s standards, as exemplified by historiographical articles published in leading peer-reviewed journals.

Drawing on primary historical or paleo-climatological evidence is not a requirement for a top mark, though identifying, collecting and analysing relevant primary evidence will add to the positive impression of a very good paper and may to a limited degree compensate for shortcomings in other respects. Shortcomings in the engagement with relevant scholarly arguments, in the focus on a motivated research question, in theoretical and methodological reflection, in the coherence and focus of the argument, the presentation of the paper, the formulation of an independent, informed standpoint and the treatment of historical facts are reasons to grade a paper lower than “excellent”. A paper that fails in all these respects is graded as a “fail”.

