

Periodic course evaluation of SOS4510 Cultural and Political Participation Spring semester 2018

Course responsible: Bjørn Schiermer Andersen

[SOS4510 Cultural and Political Participation](#) is a new specialization course at the 4000-level in the Master's degree programme in sociology, starting spring 2018. The course is taught in English. The course is organized as 12 seminars including lectures and discussions. The exam consist of a short [term paper](#) (4000 words) and 1-hour written school exam. The short term paper counts 2/3 of the final grade whilst the written school exam counts 1/3. Both term paper and written school exam must be passed the same semester in order to receive a valid final grade.


Student evaluation of the course:

The students answered a questionnaire about the course on their mobile phones in the last lecture.

Number of students who answered the questionnaire: 10 (response rate: 66,7%)

1. Information

Was the information you received about the course sufficient? *

Svar	Antall	Prosent
1. Yes	10	100 % 
2. No	0	0 %

2. Syllabus

A. To what extent have you read the course texts in parallel with the lectures? *

Svar	Antall	Prosent
1. To a great extent	3	30 % 
2. For the most part	3	30 % 
3. Passably	3	30 % 
4. Not very much	1	10 % 
5. Not at all	0	0 %
6. No response	0	0 %

B. What do you think about the curriculum of the course?

Eight students answered this question. The overall opinion of the students is that the curriculum of the course was interesting. Some of the students (three) thinks some of the literature was a bit outdated.

C. Were there any publications at the curriculum that you thought were more interesting than others? Why were these more interesting?

Six students answered this question. The students mentioned the following publications as especially interesting: theories on affect, Maffesoli, Alexander, Bjørn Schiermer, Krogstad, Kjølsvold, Hebdige, the texts from the culture and ritual participation-seminar, bodily participation and bodily politics, and Susan Sontag's text "notes on camp".

D. Were there any publications at the curriculum that you thought were uninteresting? Why do you think these were not interesting?




Five students answered this question. Two of the students think the theories on social movements and Frankfurt school were a bit outdated. One student mentioned Gorgoroth as being less interesting and another student thinks Maffesoli was too difficult.

3. The lectures






A. How many of the lectures have you attended? *

Svar	Antall	Prosent
1. All	4	40 % 
2. Most	5	50 % 
3. About half	0	0 %
4. Fewer than half	0	0 %
5. Very few	1	10 % 
6. No response	0	0 %

B. How easy or difficult do you think the lecture series was? *

Svar	Antall	Prosent
1. Very easy	0	0 %
2. Easy	3	30 % 
3. Neither easy nor difficult	4	40 % 
4. Difficult	3	30 % 
5. Very difficult	0	0 %
6. No response	0	0 %




C. How satisfied are you with the lecture series as a whole? *

Svar	Antall	Prosent
1. Very satisfied	2	20 % 
2. Satisfied	4	40 % 
3. Neutral	2	20 % 
4. Unsatisfied	1	10 % 
5. Very unsatisfied	0	0 %
6. No response	1	10 % 

D. How easy has it been to ask the lecturer questions during/after the lecture? *

Svar	Antall	Prosent
1. Very easy	4	40 % 
2. Easy	6	60 % 
3. Neither easy nor difficult	0	0 %
4. Difficult	0	0 %
5. Very difficult	0	0 %
6. No response	0	0 %

E. How clearly has the lecturer presented the course content? *

Svar	Antall	Prosent
1. Very clearly	3	30 % 
2. Quite clearly	4	40 % 
3. Neutral	3	30 % 
4. Unclearly	0	0 %
5. Very unclearly	0	0 %
6. No response	0	0 %

F. What is your view on how the classes have been organized (interaction teacher / student participation)?




Five students answered this question. The overall opinion of the students is that the classes have been organized very well with a good balance of lectures and class discussions.

G. What do you think about the scope of the course?

Five students answered this question. Three of the students think the scope of the course has been good. Two of the students think the scope was very wide with little time to immerse themselves in the curriculum. The two students suggest that course length should be extended.

4. Overall impression:

A. All in all - how did you like the course? *

Svar	Antall	Prosent
1. Very satisfied	3	30 % 
2. Satisfied	3	30 % 
3. Netrual	4	40 % 
4. Unsatisfied	0	0 %
5. Very unsatisfied	0	0 %
6. No response	0	0 %

B. What was good?

Seven students answered this question. Quotes from the students:


- I feel like the curriculum have a 'red thread', which makes the course easier to understand and to follow.
- All; the curriculum, the lectures, the teaching.
- Some lectures were well done with good presentations and examples.
- The examples from our daily life, when the curriculum was used to describe things we know well.
- The themes, curriculum, lectures, pictures, music, movies.
- The topics covered for the lectures
- Interesting theories/perspectives and for the most part up to date examples.

C. What worked less well?

Four students answered this question. Three of the students think that the lecture period should have been more than two months. One student thinks that the teacher did not give enough input to topic selection for the term paper.

5. About you:

A. Which kind of bachelor degree do you have? *

Svar	Antall	Prosent
Sociology from the University of Oslo	3	30 % 
Sociology from another university	2	20 % 
Interdisciplinary degree	3	30 % 
Teacher education programme	2	20 % 

B. How will you evaluate your own performance in the course?

Six students answered this question. Most of the students think that they have made a good effort in the course. Some of the students answered in the evaluation that they could have participated and read more during the course.

6. Other comments:

Do you have any other feedback?

Four students answered this question. Three of the students say that they are very pleased with the course. One student writes in the evaluation that there should have been more time between the exam and term paper. One student wants more discussions about social media in the course, e.g. Twitter and the online comments sections in connection to political participation.

Concluding comments from course responsible:

Assessing the evaluation data on an overall level, it can be concluded that the course participants are more than satisfied with the course. Most importantly, questions C and E – measuring, respectively, the satisfaction with the "course as a whole" and the "clarity" of presentation of the teacher – only express ratings from "neutral" to "very satisfied" except for a single student who is "unsatisfied" with the course as a whole. My feeling is that the students had a good time and that the atmosphere was good. The grades given mirror this overall assessment.

Yet there is of course room for improvement. The ideas of the students point in many directions, yet two (three) points of critique seems to be, if not general, then at least shared by a minority among the students: The feeling that the texts on social movements and the Frankfurt school were outdated and the lack of texts on social media.

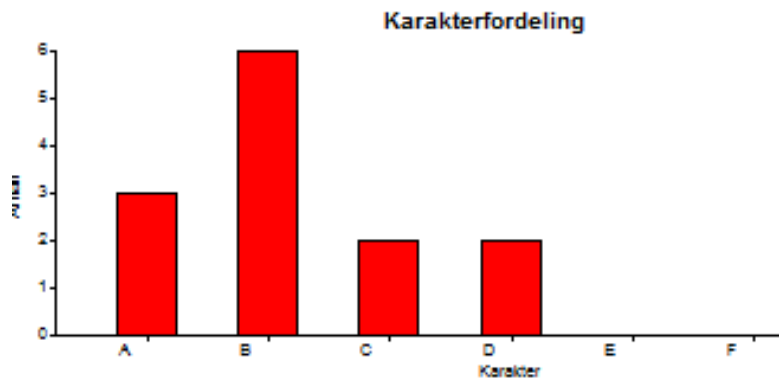
I think these critical suggestions are justified – albeit in different degrees. In the hope of positive addressing this critique, I propose the following initiatives:

Regarding the texts on social movements, I wholeheartedly agree with the critique. New texts are needed, not least texts which draw in the use of social media and the new forms of organization they make possible in social movements. In next year's curriculum I have addressed this lacuna.

Also regarding social media, I have – as intimated just above – included several new texts. This goes, however, not only for the lecture on social movements but also for the lecture on (mediated) ritual and on subculture.

Regarding the early Frankfurt School, it is my feeling that another group of students value these texts. For the time being, I wish to retain them as classic – and obligatory – in a course on cultural participation and cultural sociology. However, henceforward, I shall seek to make sure that these classical texts are better actualized and made relevant to the students in a present context.

Grade distribution of exam papers from written exam and term paper in SOS4510 Spring 2018:



14 students were registered for the course. 13 students took the exam.