

Course Evaluation 2530

«Development» (course code 2530) was evaluated by the students after spring 2019. The number of students who replied to the questionnaire was fairly low – 27 students out of the ca. 90 students who registered for the course replied, and the majority of answers (63%) was provided by students with a background in Utviklingsstudier (the remaining answers were made up of 25,9% anthropology students, and 11% students from other programmes / exchange students). In the dataset provided, a clear trend could be made out: students in anthropology were generally more satisfied than students in Development studies, who on the whole answered that they were only partially satisfied with the course. Feedback to individual lecturers (e.g. about usage of powerpoints or other teaching style issues) notwithstanding, there is room to improve the overall outline of the course that has not been addressed as of yet, perhaps also due to the frequent change in course instructors over the last few years.

One explanation for this imbalance in the evaluation of the course depending on the students' background may have to do with the fact that the “heyday” of Development Studies in Anthropology took place in the 1990s and 2000s, and many of these readings seem to repeat a similar perspective, and a wider variety of perspectives would be useful. Anthropology students clearly have an advantage when it comes to placing poststructuralist development debates in the larger framework of anthropological knowledge – many of the key texts on the reading list are rather theoretical in nature, and generally focus on critiquing the development industry that many of the utviklingsstudier-students actually want to later seek employment in. Clearly, more needs to be done to make the usefulness of an anthropological approach to development clearer to students with no prior knowledge in anthropology, and a wider range of perspectives to complement poststructuralist readings of the Ferguson and Escobar type could be beneficial in this regard.

In redesigning the course, future instructors could place the focus instead on more cutting-edge debates in anthropology (even if they may not strictly engage with “development” and the development sector in practice). Issues such as climate change, environmental degradation, global inequality and poverty, together with a more case-studies focused approach, should be brought to the forefront. Also, the usage of monographs should be reconsidered: While designing the course-outline (for which the course outlines of the last few years served as a general template), in addition to a number of articles and book chapters, three monographs were also assigned, as this had been practice in the course over the last few years. But it has to be noted that students who are not within anthropology find reading them particularly challenging – which is important feedback to take on board.

Another issue that quite a few students flagged up in their reviews is the balance and relation between lectures and seminars: quite a few students reported that they found the seminars useful, but that there were too few of them. At the same time, over 70% of those questioned answered that they felt they were not sufficiently prepared for the seminars (i.e. had not done the readings), which the seminar leader also pointed out to lecturers as a problem during the semester. More needs to be done to encourage students to attend lectures and seminars regularly and well-prepared. The course was assigned a Monday morning lecture slot, which may have been a factor in attendance being generally poor during the lectures, while some students reported that they after a while no longer attended the seminars because they had not done the readings. One option to improve this situation would be, for instance, to have obligatory assignments during the seminars to ensure that students come prepared, or to try out having students read only after the lectures, which would then have to be reflected in the way lecturers approach their sessions – and which is being tried out with quite a bit of success in SOSANT100 and SOSANT2000. Some students also noted that the lecturers could have

done a better job “flipping the classroom” – i.e. incorporating seminar style elements into their teaching. The size of the class and established division of labour between seminars and lectures is certainly an obstacle to this at the moment, but perhaps reverting to a 3-hour model (with instructors shifting between seminar style and mini-lectures, and also drawing on online tools to create a more interactive classroom) could be a way forward.