Course evaluation report for SOSANT2530 – Anthropology of Development

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This is a very large course with many students participating and many choosing it from across different departments, and particularly Development Studies. This already is a challenge, as communicating anthropological critical thinking to Development students is not always easy. The student evaluation attests to this: the vast majority of the comments we got were not positive, and at times were outright negative, focusing on the course's workload and difficulty. Specifically, many students found the course overwhelming, especially the first weeks, with some indeed reporting that reading for it took up most of their semester's work.

Several students pointed out that they struggled finding relevance for many of the readings and an absolute majority of students thought that the first 4-5 weeks of the course were overdemanding, laden with too many readings which at times students found too much too bear. Most of the students thought the seminars were helpful and this has been my experience, too, as we managed to tackle some difficult readings and develop a firmer relation with the curriculum.

Half the course was reshaped in terms of its curriculum and scope last year, with the latter part of the course focusing on post and anti-colonial thinkers and scholars, in the general aim to decolonize our curriculum and participate in current debates and pedagogical concerns to decolonize the academy. I believe this change, which was an overhaul of half the course, worked well and students enjoyed it. However, it left the first part of the course intact, with students often having to read four difficult papers per week, in a discipline they know little about. I believe further changes need to be done in that first part of the course, in order to facilitate a more smooth and less demanding familiarization of the students with anthropology and indeed anthropological debates on development. In shaping these changes and bolstering the course's potential, some practical matters to take into account include:

- The time of the lectures and number of seminars: students and lecturers found the time of the lecture totally unproductive. For a demanding, theory-heavy, and at times overwhelming course, arranging it for 8am in the morning resulted in very low attendance in lectures. On the other hand, seminars were well attended, but students thought there were too few of them and too scattered across the semester.

- Communicating the *seminarleder* to the *emnansvarlig* lecturer(s). As lecturers, Karin and I found out Athithan Jayapalan would do half the seminar groups at the last minute, in February, and thus we almost did not get the chance to meet our main seminar leader ahead of lectures. I think the course responsible should know who seminar leaders are and this should be arranged way in advance.

- Also, I would suggest seminars are split between *seminarleder* and lecturer in ways that accommodate the times of both, as well as and particular needs of the course. This might mean that seminars should start later in the semester. It might also mean that seminar leaders do not do "groups" but weeks, i.e. say one does 2-3 seminar meetings on all seminar groups in the first part of the course and another 2-3 seminar meetings on all seminar groups in the second part of the course. This would also mean that the lecturer has a better grasp of what's going on in seminars and vice versa, supporting the material they just taught. There was lots of discrepancy re this issue last year and lots of extra effort on my part to work on the material someone else was teaching.

- A final general comment from Karin and I would be the following: the course is way too focused on the foundation of anthropology of development and internal debates within the field in the beginning of the course. The students are not ready for that type of literature at that point. First they have to understand what AoD is, by reading some good ethnography. Towards the end of the class, they might understand critical interdisciplinary foundational texts and have the necessarily background to assess such arguments (like Mosse), although that only applies to anthropology students.

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Emneansvarlig for SOSANT2530