

Emneevaluering / course evaluation ISV

Navn / name

Øyvind Stiansen

Emnekode / course code

STV4222

Semester

Spring 2023

Emneevalueringen bør inneholde:

Egenevalueringen emneansvarlig: Evaluer hvordan undervisningsopplegget fungerte. Vær konkret. Gjør spesielt rede for både det som fungerte godt, og det som ikke fungerte like godt.

Oppsummering av studentevaluering: Her fylles hovedpunktene fra tilbakemeling fra emnekontakt inn. Nevn hva som fungerte bra, hva som fungerte mindre bra, og kom gjerne med forslag til forbedringer.

Forslag til forbedringer: Gjør rede for hvordan emnet kan forbedres til neste gang det skal gis. Vurder i hvilken grad det er behov for større endringer.

The course evaluation should include:

Self-evaluation by the course convener: Evaluate how the course worked. Be specific. Describe both what worked well and what didn't work as well.

Summary of student evaluation: Here, the main points from feedback provided by the contact student(s) are included. Mention what worked well, what didn't work as well, and feel free to suggest improvements.

Suggestions for improvements: Explain how the course can be improved for the next time it is offered. Assess the extent to which there is a need for major changes.

Emnerapport / course report

Course-code: STV4222

Course title: International and Comparative Judicial Politics

Language: English

Course convener's evaluation of the course:

Overall, the course worked very well. It seems from the student engagement in the lectures and from their responses to the assignments that we were able to introduce the field of judicial politics in a compelling and comprehensible manner and that we were able both to introduce key concepts and theories of judicial politics and connect them to current examples such as climate litigation, the Fosen-judgment in the Norwegian Supreme Court, attacks on judicial independence in Israel, etc. Most of the students showing up to the first lecture ended up completing the course and there was a reasonably high level of student participation/engagement in most of the lectures. The mix of examples from international and comparative judicial politics also worked well.

Summary of feedback from student contact-point:

- The student liaison was generally very happy about the course. He also noted that he had not received complaints from other students and that his generally impression was that most students were happy with the course. He further noted that there was both high attendance and high engagement during the lectures.
- The student liaison said that he appreciated how both of us (Øyvind and Daniel) were present at all the sessions and participated in the discussions/sometimes interrupted the other instructor's lecture. He said this facilitated participation also from the students and created a good atmosphere.
- The lectures were good with a good balance of theory/concepts, examples, figures and graphs to illustrate trends and patterns. Students appreciated tips on possible topics for MA theses spread out across the different lectures. However, some of the slides were a bit too dense with too many and too long bullet points.
- It would also have been useful to spend more time discussing the learning objectives for the course in the lectures.
- Sometimes the pace was also a bit too quick. It would have been useful to slow down and spend even more time on explaining and illustrating central concepts.
- The readings were good. Very motivating to have a very short reading (three pages) for the first lecture. Got the impression that the readings had been carefully selected.
- The student liaison liked working on the home assignments/portfolio exam. There was lots of variety in both the substance of home assignments and the analytical skills they tested, which was good.
- The home assignments were demanding and required a lot of work. In particular the first home assignment was a bit overwhelming. Most students had never read a judicial decision before and found it challenging. "Very cool to suddenly have to use statistics", but many students also found this very challenging. A possible alternative would be to interpret a regression model without having to estimate it in R?
- Would have been useful to have a minimum word count (in addition to the maximum). Writing 1500 words each week felt like a lot.
- The workload was relatively high, and some students faced a trade-off between working on the home assignments and finding the time to read the assigned literature.
- He definitely prefers a portfolio exam to the traditional school exam. He would recommend keeping this format (and to change it as little as possible to accommodate concerns about ChatGPT etc.).
- Would recommend keeping the first home assignment, but move it later in the course.
- Assignment 3 had a clear connection with STV4021, so maybe put something like this assignment in the first week?
- It worked well with peer feedback on the home assignments.

Suggestions for improvements:

The student liaison reported that many students found the first home assignment (which involved reading segments from two European Court of Human Rights judgments and link the disagreements to theories of judicial decision-making) a bit overwhelming and based on the discussion in the lecture many students shared this view. Similarly, many students found the second home assignment which involved estimating and discussing two linear regression models to be particularly challenging. While many students found both assignments challenging, they both seemed to have high pedagogical value. Having students read segments from judicial decisions made it easier to convey what disagreements between judges are about and how they are reflected in their written opinions. Demonstrating how regression analysis is useful outside the methods courses also seems important. In future iterations of the course, we would therefore want to have similar assignments, but try to improve the instructions and guidance for the students so that they are less overwhelming.

While we generally succeeded in linking theory and concepts with current examples, some of the more theoretical lectures (e.g. on the case-space model and on how the risk of override may constrain courts) were perhaps a bit too abstract and theoretical. We should work more on how we communicate this material for future iterations of the course.

Future iterations of the course would have to comply with the Department's new guidelines for take-home exams. Our preferred approach would be to add an oral component to the portfolio, perhaps by making the last assignment a poster presentation.