

Emneevaluering / course evaluation ISV

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Navn / name *

Navn til emneansvarlig

Pål Røren

Semester

Våren 2025

Velg kursnivå *

Masterkurs

*

Bolk 1

Emnekode / course code *

STV4255

Emnenavn / Course title

Fighting for Status in International Politics

This course evaluation report is based on feedback collected from students during a progress meeting and an end-of-term meeting. The evaluation also considers insights gained from the grading process and observations made throughout the semester.

2. General feedback

Overall, students responded positively to the course, appreciating both the relevance of the topic and the structure of the lectures. The course was seen as engaging, covering a relatively niche but significant area within international politics. The inclusion of contemporary academic works was especially valued, as it contrasted with more traditional courses relying on longstanding syllabi.

Students found the interactive nature of the course beneficial, particularly in fostering participation and discussion. They found the lectures to be well-structured. And the students said my individual engagement was highlighted as a key strength. The accessibility of course materials and the use of Canvas were also well received, with students particularly appreciating the videos provided as supplementary learning tools.

3. Strengths

The course effectively introduced students to research on status in international politics. The mix of foundational and newly published literature kept the curriculum up to date, and the interactive approach encouraged active student participation.

The term paper format was particularly appreciated for its flexibility, allowing students to explore topics of their interest. In line with the initial intention of the course, many students found the course to be a useful steppingstone for their master's theses.

The students said I demonstrated strong engagement and in-depth knowledge of the material. Lectures were structured to facilitate discussion and critical thinking, and case studies and examples were well integrated, making the course material more relevant to contemporary international politics.

Students reported no major issues regarding access to readings or course materials. Universal design principles were generally well implemented, ensuring accessibility for all students.

4. Areas for improvement

Some students found the reading load extensive and suggested reducing the number of required texts per lecture. Others noted that the relatively narrow focus of the course posed challenges for those without a strong background in international relations. Some suggested that a longer and broader introductory session(s) at the beginning of the semester could provide a stronger foundation before moving to more advanced discussions.

While many students appreciated the flexibility in choosing a term paper topic, some found it difficult to decide on a topic within the given timeframe. Some said introducing potential term paper themes earlier in the semester could help alleviate this issue.

Students expressed interest in more structured workshops and peer collaboration. A dedicated workshop on formulating research questions and applying methodologies could be beneficial. Some students also suggested forming study groups or incorporating peer-feedback sessions, which are common in other courses. An informal group presentation could encourage collaboration and provide a platform for discussing key themes.

5. Overall assessment and further development

This was the first iteration of this course held at UiO, even though I have held a similar course at the University of Cambridge. The intention of the course was always to have the students be able to write an academic article as practice for their upcoming master thesis. The feedback indicates that STV4255 Fighting for Status in International Politics was well-received. But the course feedback also points to concrete ways that could further improve the student experience. These recommendations will be considered for future iterations of the course to enhance learning outcomes while maintaining the course's strengths.

First, dedicating more time in the first few lectures to a broad overview of key themes in status research I believe could help students better grasp foundational concepts.

Second, students in this course came from a diverse background. And many did not have any direct experience in identifying research gaps, using theory, applying methods, and analyzing topics. I uploaded a 45-minute lecture on Canvas at the start of the course on how to craft a term paper. But the students wanted even more of this. Thus, for the next iterations of the course I will have a session early in the course that explains and details how they can craft a term paper.

Third, the students expressed a wish to identify their term paper topics sooner. I had already uploaded a 'cheat sheet' on Canvas which contained possible topics and research questions that were based on knowledge gaps in the literature. However, in addition to this I am for the next iteration of the course considering recording a brief 20-minute video for each lecture and upload them at the start of the semester to ensure that students could identify and explore their research topics earlier in the course.

Fourth, as a mandatory task, the students were to upload an audio abstract of their term paper on Canvas. I do not think this was the best solution as it did not really help the students with their term papers. For the next iterations of the course, I am considering combining office hours with student presentations where students get to present their tentative topic and get feedback directly from me.

Fifth, incorporating a term paper workshop focused on structuring arguments and applying research methods I agree would provide additional support. I am also very much in favor of facilitating peer feedback on research ideas, as well as the establishment of study groups. I think this could further enhance collaborative learning.

Emneevalueringen bør inneholde:

1. Vurdering av emnet
 - Læringsutbytte i emnet
 - Undervisningsformer og organisering
 - Andre relevante temaer som læringsmiljø, studentenes arbeidsinnsats og eventuelt vurderingsformer
2. Studentens tilbakemelding
 - Oppsummering av studentenes viktigste tilbakemeldinger
3. Helhetlig vurdering og videreutvikling
 - En samlet vurdering av kvaliteten på emnet
 - Justeringer som er foretatt som følge av evalueringen.
 - Muligheter for videreutvikling av emnet

The course evaluation should include:

1. Assessment of the course
 - Learning outcomes in the course
 - Teaching methods and organization
 - Other relevant topics such as the learning environment, students' effort and possibly forms of assessment
2. Student's feedback
 - Summary of students' most important feedback
3. Overall assessment and further development
 - An overall assessment of the quality of the course
 - Adjustments made as a result of the evaluation.
 - Opportunities for further development of the course