

AK1213 Swedish Society, Culture and Industry in Historical Perspective, Course analysis VT2022 / Kursanalys VT22

Kursöversikt / Course Overview

Title: Swedish Society, Culture and Industry in Historical Perspective, 7.5

Kurskod /Course code: AK1213

Poäng / Credits : 7,5 hp

Examination:

One final, online, multiple choice exam (TEN1; 3.5hp)

Compulsory participation in exam training activities (ÖVN1; 4.0hp) P/F

Final exam + Course Essay: graded A, B, C, D, E, FX, F

Number of students: 63 registered students

Activities: 7 lectures (online VT22), 3 mandatory seminar activities (on zoom) and excursions carried out and discussed during the seminar activities. Mandatory components of the course (ÖVN1; 4 hp) includes:

- o Attending seminars, active participation at online seminars
- o Submitting written assignments
- o Give feedback and comments on assignments for seminars, as instructed

Course responsible: Katarina Larsen, Div. History of Science, Technology and Environment

Teachers/Lärare: Per Högselius, Otso Kortekangas, Annika K. Nilsson, Ulrika Gunnarson-Östling, Åsa Husberg, Merrick Tabor, Mikael Nilsson, Katarina Larsen and Liuba Timonina.

Examinator: Per Högselius, Avdelningen för historiska studier av teknik, vetenskap och miljö

1. Description of course evaluation process

Course evaluation was carried out using LEQ(12) survey with 16% response rate. The survey is anonymous and men and women had the chance to express their views and give feedback to the course management.

2. Description of meetings with students

This semester, VT22, seminar activities were carried out online but the excursions were carried out on site. This was much appreciated and gave an opportunity to also meet with students in the beginning of the course, which can facilitate feedback and questions from students. The course has a dedicated course e-mail (swesoc) where students can ask practical questions during the course and contact details to a mail for course administrators to the course expedition (kursexp) for questions about registration.

3. Course design

AK1213 is aimed at international exchange students and international master's students at KTH, who wish to broaden their knowledge of Swedish society, politics, city planning, culture, and industry. The course is organized in three course modules, including Sweden and the Arctic, aiming to take a critical look at Swedish history in relation to the Arctic and indigenous cultures and identities in the north in a historical perspective. The second course module, The Swedish History and Politics, gives an overview of different aspects of Swedish history, including lectures about Sweden and the Cold War and the Swedish model and welfare state. The third course module, Swedish City Planning, Urban transformation and Sustainability is centered around the analysis of infrastructure systems and city planning, and urban transformation, particularly from a perspective of social and environmental sustainability, and with a focus on the Stockholm region. In addition to three intended learning outcomes related to course content, the course also entails an intended learning outcome that aims to provide students with tools to "Demonstrate analytical reading and writing, including reflecting, referencing, reasoning and deconstructing analytical questions central to the course content." Seminar activities are designed to address both course content learning and also provide students with opportunities to critically reflect and discuss central themes in the course.

The seminars take the form of supervised discussion of the literature and of student assignments, and provide further opportunity to engage with the course literature and themes. Like the excursions, the seminars are held in smaller groups and students discuss and give peer-feedback to each other's texts and suggestions during seminars. VT22, the seminars were held online and course participants are divided into smaller groups for discussions.

For the course offering VT22, the students were informed in course-PM that lectures and seminars will be held online, and there are no on-campus activities scheduled. The planned excursions will be conducted in line with regulations and recommendations in place in spring 2022. The excursions include guided visits to an open-air museum Skansen, a visit to the area of Gröndal in south of Stockholm, where the art institution Färgfabriken is located, as well as to the museum of Nordic lifestyle and traditions, Nordiska museet.

The final examination at the end of the course consists of two parts: a multiple-choice test which is obligatory for passing the course, and a final course essay which is voluntary but required for a grade higher than D. The students will also have the opportunity to do a Mock-exam (on Canvas) at the end of the course, in order to become familiar with the format of the online multiple-choice exam.

Since last course offering, the course did keep the online format to manage the resources for teaching and pedagogical design of seminar activities developed due to online-format during the pandemic. For course offering VT22, one lecture was removed, first introduced in HT2021, to manage number of lectures and staffing resources. The course offering of VT22 also provided study questions, shared with students before lectures to make students engage with the course reading before lectures. Since lectures are not mandatory, this can both provide incentive and a reminder of the lecture, and from a pedagogical perspective, also make students start reading the required reading early in the course and allow for time to revise texts by using the study questions to prepare for the exam and course essay writing.

4. Students' workload

The survey answers show that students spend 2-6 hours per week (majority 60% of replies 0-2 hours/week). One remark is that level of English varies between students (in writing and spoken in class) so some students with good command in English gave feedback that it was a manageable workload since they have English as a native language. But for others, the reading of longer texts can be more challenging. The course introduction gave contact details to KTH-unit Funka for any students that may need extra resources and there is also some experiences from this (setting up exam with longer time to complete) etc. in the course. Workload seems to be appropriate for the course (“Pretty suitable workload for a 7.5-credic course across two periods”) according to students’ views.

5. Students’ results on the course

In VT22, the course had 63 registered students and 90% of the students completed the course and had grades reported in LADOK. Of these, 17 students submitted the (non-mandatory) course essay. This corresponds to about 30% of students completed the essay. The students were encouraged to write the essay, and develop the texts they worked with during the course seminars. Assessment criteria for grades of the course were provided on Canvas so students could make a self-assessment of their texts, also in relation to intended learning outcomes. The assessment of course essays, indicated that some students showed a good command developing arguments and critical reflection in the course essay. But a concern is that only about 30% of students taking the course wrote the (optional) essay to have the opportunity to improve their grade above D for the course.

6. Students’ answers to open questions

The students expressed that the structure of the course was good, with ”good structure with three modules and free weeks”. Thus, referring to weeks between course modules due to spring breaks (Easter break etc). Course content is also appreciated by the students, stating: “It is a really easy going course with very interesting content”

The students’ viewed the course content interesting and also gave high rating on that the assessment of the course was fair and that they had sufficient background knowledge to follow the course.

Among the course activities, the excursions were rated very highly, by students, but also the seminar activities that allowed for interaction and discussion with other participants.

Examples of best aspects of this course, see below:

- The excursions in order to see the Swedish reality
- The visits to the various museums especially to Skansen
- Good pace, many lecturers to get different perspectives.
- The way the seminars were carried out allowed me to interact with students from various countries, which I enjoyed. I'm also glad to have learnt a lot more on Swedish society and culture, which we would otherwise not be able to know...
- The field trips were also amazing and a rare opportunity, especially the one to Färgfabriken.

7. Summary of students’ opinions

The students' reflections give the overall impression that course content and variety of topics covered is appreciated. Advice from students to someone who would go the course, also referred to attending and learning from the excursions. Since the course seminar were online, some feedback was also given that shows that some students had preference for seminars in person (rather than online). Other suggestions referred to a more administrative questions and feedback (more feedback on written assignments) etc.

8. Overall impression

The overall impression is that students appreciated the format and content of the course and that the workload was suitable for a 7,5 credit course. The question of providing more feedback in the course is recurring and reflects how time allocated to the course needs to be managed – or if more resources should be allocated to have time for individual feedback to about 60 students on three texts each in addition to feedback on course essay. Current solution is to give a collective feedback and provide pedagogical material with writing advice, referencing, how to structure your essay etc. The seminars and excursions were appreciated by the students and also the variety of lecture topics and access to insights about Swedish industrial history, technology and contemporary context of Sweden with particular attention to Stockholm context with experiences from excursions.

9. Analysis

One strength of this course is that it provides to opportunity to discuss key course topics and critically reflect upon city development, industrial history and characteristics of the society, both historically and today, based on traditions from social sciences and humanities.

Online learning feedback: The specific feedback on online teaching format was also addressed in the LEQ-survey (free-text question) and generated some insights about practical aspects students wanted to raise regarding online tools. For example, the tool Nearpod was used for a structured seminar with activities included making group-drawings and plans online. The students expressed that it worked well online where assignment was to give a suggestion to a new area undergoing industrial transformation). While other aspects (of a more generic nature for distance learning) was perceived as less positive (less engaged discussions, lack of direct interaction with other students etc). This gives the conclusion that class-room seminars are appreciated by the students but also confirms that tools and exercises implemented in online teaching (during the Pandemic) was working sufficiently.

10. Prioritized course development

Continued development with updating of course literature to reflect contemporary development and feedback received. In the long-term, prioritized course development also includes considering replacing some of the external lecturers since the hosting division has a strong capacity for teaching. This semester, the design was drawing on experiences and materials developed during the pandemic when course was transformed to an online-format. A challenge, in further development of the course is to keep the components and pedagogical tools (Nearpod etc.) and other approaches (digital quiz-walk for on-site learning etc.) while recognizing that many students that take this course are international exchange students that appreciate the opportunity to meet on-site and discuss. Some students expressed that they would like to have more feedback on writing early in the course. This semester, the course

team had to manage time carefully for staffing reasons so no major changes were carried out for this semester. Future course offerings may consider more substantial change of external lecturers, seminar structure etc. Also consider more extensive peer-feedback between students (written or oral form). This format has been used previously in the course, where students had the task to give feedback on two other texts (that were submitted by their classmates). Experiences from this was positive to give students a chance to learn-by-giving-feedback. But this also requires resources from course team to manage for a course of this (60-80 students) if this should be prioritized as an important learning activity in this course.

The format of smaller groups for discussion provides a chance for peer-feedback between students also in break-out groups, but interaction with seminar leaders can be limiting the perceived feedback from teachers. This is one feedback model that the course has managed by a collective feedback after seminar 2 to students in writing on Canvas and developed some instructions students should keep in mind in preparation for the for the essay writing.

A suggestion for future course offering is to re-organize the responsibility so that one course responsible will have an overall role coordinating and managing course structure on Canvas etc, while specific course activities in the three course modules is managed by a person having the role as “course module responsible”. This can make course planning and pedagogical development more efficient and an attractive course to work with alongside ensuring quality and course development of course modules on specialized themes. Especially, keeping in mind that the course is offered twice a year so preparation of next course offering will have to start before the course is finished for the ongoing semester. It is a popular course among many international students at KTH and attracts many students each semester so this should be considered for upcoming course offering.