

Report - AK2215 - 2022-06-12

Respondents: 1
Answer Count: 1
Answer Frequency: 100.00%

Please note that there is only one respondent to this form: the person that performs the course analysis.

Course analysis carried out by (name, e-mail):

Timos Karpouzoglou, Course Responsible, timothyk@kth.se

DESCRIPTION OF THE COURSE EVALUATION PROCESS

Describe the course evaluation process. Describe how all students have been given the possibility to give their opinions on the course. Describe how aspects regarding gender, and disabled students are investigated.

As part of the course evaluation a LEQ - Survey was performed using the LEQ online survey tool. The course did not receive students with disabilities. Male and female students had same and equal conditions to participate in the course evaluation and put forward their views about the course. Overall the course was perceived as welcoming by the students regardless of gender background.

DESCRIPTION OF MEETINGS WITH STUDENTS

Describe which meetings that has been arranged with students during the course and after its completion. (The outcomes of these meetings should be reported under 7, below.)

Given the relative small size of the course, the course evaluation relied primarily on LEQ - Survey and hence no individual meetings were held with students as part of the course development.

COURSE DESIGN

Briefly describe the course design (learning activities, examinations) and any changes that have been implemented since the last course offering.

The course consisted of seven lectures with compulsory attendance. Students were required to prepare for these lectures by reading the course literature for each lecture occasion and completing a compulsory text assignments (assignments were submitted via Canvas the day before the lecture).

In addition, four seminars were held, with compulsory attendance, to actively discuss and reflect on the content of the course. In addition each seminar was linked to a compulsory assignment (assignments were submitted via Canvas the day before the seminar). The first seminar focused on textual reflections on assigned literature texts. During the second seminar the focus was on developing essay plans and peer-to-peer feedback on essay plans. The third seminar was dedicated to literature source criticism based on assigned group work during the seminar. The fourth seminar was devoted to a discussion of a first essay draft of the final essay using peer to peer feedback as well feedback from seminar leader.

The examination consisted of a long essay assignment (max. 2000 words), (4.0 credits, grading scale: A, B, C, D, E, Fx, F.) as well as completed short assignments (300-600 words) for lectures and seminars (3,5 credits, grading scale: Pass, Fail.)

THE STUDENTS' WORKLOAD

Does the students' workload correspond to the expected level (40 hours/1.5 credits)? If there is a significant deviation from the expected, what can be the reason?

The workload was perceived to be in line with the number of points.

THE STUDENTS' RESULTS

How well have the students succeeded on the course? If there are significant differences compared to previous course offerings, what can be the reason?

As this is an elective course students overall performed well. All students that were registered in the course were able to pass. The grades ranged from A-E. All the students participated in all seminars and lectures without fail. In addition, assignments for lectures and seminars were submitted promptly. All final essays have been received without delays.

STUDENTS' ANSWERS TO OPEN QUESTIONS

What does students say in response to the open questions?

The overall opinion of the students was strongly positive regarding the course and the course leaders for creating a safe learning environment where each student felt comfortable to discuss their views and contribute.

The students stressed that the 'the interaction between the students and the teachers' as well as 'having more of a seminar rather than a regular lecture' format were strong aspects of the course. The course was designed so that there was sufficient space for peer to peer feedback but also discussion with the lecturers and seminar leaders, something which was widely appreciated.

Another student commented that because of 'the wide variety of (student) backgrounds, the course provided for interesting discussion and viewpoints on many water related issues'. Some students would have liked to include additional historical examples of water although the overall historical focus on water was appreciated.

Students found the final assignment (the long essay) engaging in terms of developing writing skills and techniques that they were not familiar with. At the same time the essay posed some challenges for students and some interpreted this task as rather difficult.

A couple of critical points included that the schedule of the course could be earlier in the day and that the instructions for weekly assignments was not always clear.

SUMMARY OF STUDENTS' OPINIONS

Summarize the outcome of the questionnaire, as well as opinions emerging at meetings with students.

The general impression of the course by the students was positive. While there have been some small comments around issues to improve (such as the course schedule and clarity on some assignments), taking these comments into consideration for a new iteration of the course would not pose significant challenges.

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Summarize the teachers' overall impressions of the course offering in relation to students' results and their evaluation of the course, as well as in relation to the changes implemented since last course offering.

This is the first time the course was offered and so the teachers were curious to see how the course will be received. Overall, as teachers we perceive the course to be filling an important gap in second degree cycle courses by bringing a focus on water systems in their societal complexity, including their historical, present and future implications.

The structure of the course has worked well and the core elements of the course (societal perspectives on water; critical reading and writing, peer to peer feedback) have all been appreciated by the student participants.

At the same time it is important to note that this was the first term that the course was taught and student admittance was relatively low. As teachers we had some concern about whether that would affect students impressions of the course in terms of engagement and interest to participate actively throughout the course. However, in practice we found that the smaller number of students did not pose any challenges since with the group of students that we had in the course we were able to conduct all the learning activities envisaged in a fruitful manner. The students also maintained proactive participation throughout the entire course which ensured that the course could work well despite the low number of students.

ANALYSIS

Is it possible to identify stronger and weaker areas in the learning environment based on the information you have gathered during the evaluation and analysis process? What can the reason for these be? Are there significant difference in experience between:

- students identifying as female and male?
 - international and national students?
 - students with or without disabilities?
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The strongest part of the course is that it brings to the foreground new theoretical ideas and empirical examples that places water and society in new light. This is due to the strong social sciences, environmental humanities and environmental history disciplines that inform the design of the course.

At the same time, in the design of the course great care was taken to ensure that students can engage practically with the topic of water and society and as such there were multiple occasions in the course that students could apply their own ideas and skills.

Slightly more focus on history in a societal perspective was noted as desirable by the students, and that is a point that can easily be considered in the next iteration of the course.

The course schedule was considered by some students to be inconvenient due to the late timing of the teaching occasions (normally between 5-7pm). Teachers did at times perceive that students concentration was a bit difficult after some time (this could be attributed to the late hour of the lectures and seminars).

This time schedule was chosen however to ensure that this course (that is an elective course) does not clash with mandatory courses (which tend to be earlier in the day). However, in the next course iteration the time schedule of the course could be redesigned so as to not overburden the students. For example, some earlier time schedules for some of the teaching sessions could be organised.

Many of the course participants were exchange students from other universities. This overall had a very positive effect on the course because it allowed for interesting conversations between students on the topic of water, comparing examples from Sweden and other countries.

PRIORITIZED COURSE DEVELOPMENT

What aspects of the course should be developed primarily? How can these aspects be developed in short and long term?

- The lectures of the course can be expanded to include some more historical lectures and to align with some of the preferences of the students in this case.
 - The time schedule of the course can be revised to include some teaching occasions that are earlier in the day.
 - Some of the preparation for the assignment work was regarded as challenging (that regards the long essay itself but also some of the shorter written assignments). One underlying reason for this is because the approach to writing taught in this course is slightly different perhaps from other courses the students have taken, focusing on critical writing, argumentation and use of theoretical concepts from the social sciences and history. We have seen in other courses that students may struggle with developing these skills and so in future iteration particular emphasis and care on assignment preparation should be placed.
 - The course development could benefit from a larger number of registered students. Some options that will be explored to achieve this is to make the course accessible also to lifelong learning students and/or students in third cycle education.
- This would increase the number of students but also extend also the diversity of discussions during the teaching activities.
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