

Emneevaluering / course evaluation ISV

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Navn / name *

Navn til emneansvarlig

Jamie Withome

Semester

Våren 2025

Velg kursnivå *

Masterkurs

*

Bolk 2

Emnekode / course code *

STV4252

Emnenavn / Course title

Politics and Strategy in the Nuclear Age

Course-code: STV4252

Course title: Politics and Strategy in the Nuclear Age.

Language: English

Course convener's evaluation of the course:

This fifth iteration of STV4252 went very well. The combination of lectures covering key theories and empirical cases, a simulation exercise, and interactive discussions helped achieve the course's learning objectives, which aimed to improve students' understanding of nuclear politics and develop their analytic perspectives to past and current international issues regarding nuclear weapons.

Each seminar was composed of a lecture session and a discussion session. In a lecture session, students learned about the spread and use of nuclear weapons and studied basic principles of nuclear weapons, nuclear strategy, and nuclear posture in historical and contemporary perspectives. In the discussion session, students were encouraged to apply what they learned from a lecture and reading materials to relevant study questions that the course instructors prepared and disseminated before each class, which covered pure academic questions associated with nuclear proliferation, nuclear taboo, nuclear escalation, extended deterrence, and relevant policy challenges, such as Russia's nuclear blackmail in Europe and North Korea's nuclear provocations in East Asia. Students were also exposed to, and provided resources on, conducting open-source research for academic study of nuclear weapons programs.

The NPT simulation exercise drew students' active participations. All students were well prepared for the simulation exercise. All delegations voluntarily met with their delegation members to strategize and discuss their negotiation tactics. They successfully coordinated their positions with other delegations and passed all agendas under discussion. Despite a slight miscalculation, the group learned a great deal and followed historical precedent relatively well. The students successfully reflected what they learned from the simulation in the post-simulation assignment (1-page policy brief memo).

Summary of feedback from student contact-point:

Overall, the students gave positive feedback on this iteration of STV4252. Most notably, they positively evaluated the NPT simulation exercise. The students thought that the simulation allowed them to learn how the real international negotiation progresses and how to strategize and make a compromise. Some students suggested that it would be better to distribute the teams and policy positions further ahead of the in-class simulation. However, this was difficult to do, and difficult to create teams, as mandatory attendance in all other classes was not a compulsory activity. On the day of the simulation, there were logistics issues as registered students did not show up to attend the mandatory simulation. Students liked that since the post-simulation assignment was a short reflection, they were able to sit and reflect on the lessons learned from the simulation. They said this approach to the pass/fail written submission approach was more useful to them than a traditional, long-style essay that would also be graded pass-fail.

The students also assessed that this course was well-balanced based on lectures, discussions, and a simulation exercise. They particularly liked the new material the first half of the class, and small group to large group discussions for the second half of class. The students also positively assessed about the study/discussion questions for each class. The course instructors/guest lectures prepared 3 to 5 questions and uploaded them on Canvas before class so that students could refer to them while reading assigned materials. The students thought that the study/discussion questions were helpful in preparing for each class.

Importantly, some students suggested that it would be better if a lecture session takes the form of reflection. Because many of the students had taken earlier UiO international security courses, they thought it could be worthwhile to spend time discussing how the materials and lessons compared.

The exam was comprised of choosing six of eight short-IDs, and one of two long essay responses. The students liked the exam structure, though felt a little time pressure. The students found the short IDs to be relevant, and useful to answer as they prompted discussion albeit in a limited context. The students thought the second essay question was unclear and could have been formulated. They stated it was vague and needed further instruction on how to answer.

Suggestions for further development:

Students' suggestions will be taken into consideration for into future iterations of STV4252. The main suggestions for improvement were to provide the simulation materials earlier and teams further in advance, and have clearer exam questions and instructions.

In the future, the course conveners can distribute the generic simulation materials further ahead of time to everyone on Canvas. They could also present and confirm the simulation teams in an earlier lecture so the students could organize the logistics among themselves, including the dissemination of the classified brief materials. Because STV no longer has mandatory attendance requirements for in-class activities, including the first class, it is difficult to overcome any further challenges with logistics of dividing the teams for the simulation ahead of time.

Regarding the suggestion to improve exam specificity, the course conveners agreed future exam questions should be clearer, and directly related to the course subject matter. That is, it should ask a specific, thematic, question that speaks directly to the courses learning objectives. While this iteration's exam questions were topical, they could be further specified to direct the student's responses in a more streamlined manner. Finally, future iterations could clarify how many words an ideal answer would be in the exams for the two separate sections. While a maximum word count was provided, the students wanted a bit more direction on what an "average" or "acceptable" answer length would be, especially for each of the individual short IDs.

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