

SK2013 (International Politics, VT 2025, Halmstad, V1049, X1118)

Number of possible respondents: 57

Answers: 19

Response rate: 33,33 %

Study pace: 100 %

Examiner's course analysis

Based on the course evaluation result - which are the strengths of the course?

Based on the survey participation—19 out of 57—it is impossible to accurately evaluate this survey, given that the results do not represent the population. Moreover, there are no demographic or other population-based questions that could make an attrition analysis possible. For any significant future analyses, the survey administrators must make survey participation mandatory for students to receive their grades.

However, people with relatively extreme or magnified opinions on the outer scales seem to have participated in the survey. Why do I draw this conclusion? Well, the question "I am overall satisfied with the course" has a flat distribution shape—not a normal distribution bell curve shape: "0 = 3 responses, 1 = 3 responses, 2 = 2 responses, 3 = 4 responses, 4 = 3 responses, 5 = 3 responses, no opinion = 1 response." Likewise, "How much time" spent on studying has a relatively flat curve: Less time than the course study pace: 5; corresponding time: 9; more time: 5. It is, however, difficult to know whether the responses are extremely dispersed across responses or whether the actual student cohort has considerably different experiences of the course. None can be taken for granted.

Yet, it is noticeable that the "course satisfaction index" is pretty good, even within this apparently variable sample: 62%. Hence, the number of students who are either excellently satisfied (5), very satisfied (5), or who believe the course is acceptable though not very satisfied (3) is greater than that of those who are less satisfied (10 vs. 8).

Second, 70% of the students participating in the evaluation were satisfied with the course's ability to provide an opportunity to show the achievement of learning outcomes in the syllabus, with a significantly high number of 6 (32%) responding the course offered an excellent opportunity (5) to showcase the learning outcomes, a high number 4 (21%) responding a very good opportunity and a modest number 3 (16%) having no opinion.

Third, 79% of the responding students experience a good social study environment during the course.

In the individual responses, students stressed that the examinations were well-construed, which made it possible for them to use their acquired skills during the course. The use of seminars to exchange opinions and knowledge was appreciated, as well as the opportunity to write and present your own work. Some students also said the lectures were inspirational.

Given the positive outcomes cited above, it is fair to say that the course fits many students, with possibly half of the absolute number of this cohort being satisfied, very satisfied, or excellently satisfied with key elements of the course.

Based on the course evaluation result - which are the weaknesses of the course?

Based on the survey participation—19 out of 57—it is impossible to accurately evaluate this survey,

given that the results do not represent the population. Moreover, there are no demographic or other population-based questions that could make an attrition analysis possible. For any significant future analyses, the survey administrators must make survey participation mandatory for students to receive their grades.

However, people with relatively extreme or magnified opinions on the outer scales seem to have participated in the survey. Why do I draw this conclusion? Well, the question "I am overall satisfied with the course" has a flat distribution shape—not a normal distribution bell curve shape: "0 = 3 responses, 1 = 3 responses, 2 = 2 responses, 3 = 4 responses, 4 = 3 responses, 5 = 3 responses, no opinion = 1 response." Likewise, "How much time" spent on studying has a relatively flat curve: Less time than the course study pace: 5; corresponding time: 9; more time: 5. It is, however, difficult to know whether the responses are extremely dispersed across responses or whether the actual student cohort has considerably different experiences of the course. None can be taken for granted.

For less than 40% of the sample population, this course has, to varying degrees, not been to their satisfaction. I view this moment to comment on the survey as part of the learning element of the course.

Some believe the "design of the course" was not "well adjusted" to help them achieve the learning outcomes: 3 persons (16%) did "definitely not agree" it did, 2 (11%) persons did not agree it did, and 3 persons were not very satisfied (16%). One conclusion, based on these responses as well as my perception when asking a few students about their thoughts after my lectures ended, is that the academic level of this course is slightly higher than other courses in the program, which these students do not appreciate. For example, the students I talked with about it said the pace of the lectures was high, the use of "difficult words" in English was high (the large majority are non-native English speakers), or that the written assignments were demanding.

That said, I had explicitly been asked by the other teachers in our program to use several written assignments in this course so that the students could prepare themselves to deliver a junior term thesis further on in the program, then a senior term thesis in the last year of the program. Almost no other courses during the first year in the program offered the students to write take-home essays or shorter assignments, except as part of a group. Note, also, that Halmstad University is an institution of higher learning. As such, our purpose is not to make some students feel satisfied and provide easily digestible content for those students.

In the open responses, some students also wrote that it was a difficult course and that they had preferred a less difficult course. However, more than half of the students in this cohort, among those responding to the survey, were satisfied with the course, and particularly with the fact that it offered opportunities to show the ability to have learned the outcomes of the syllabus. Reading and grading the final exam, it was also clear that many students had excelled in reaching the learning outcomes. A significant number of other students did not exactly excel, however. A number of those latter students (unclear how many) appeared to have relied on artificial intelligence in informing them how to respond to the take-home essay, if not having actually had an AI directly write the responses. The reason why I can say this about AIs is that those responses were stereotypical, often providing a straw-man characterization of key theories in international relations while focusing on the most conventional theory, the so-called "realism" of international relations. However, if one asks ChatGPT, it will admit that it is over-representing realism in its responses because it is largely trained on American scholarship, where realism is the dominant theory (here, ChatGPT is correct). That said, it is difficult to draw any conclusion about whether students dissatisfied with the course due to its perceived difficulty are the same who did not exactly excel, since often many students think they didn't meet the learning outcomes, only to surprisingly receive a high grade on the exam. Again, the question is whether Halmstad University should succumb to the current trend of learning institutions having become "providers" and students "consumers" on a market where survey satisfaction is an arbiter of success, rather than meeting learning outcomes being an arbiter of success. Learning outcomes are assessed by the exams.

Another student appears to have expected a cookbook recipe of "what we are actually going to learn, what we should know, and to focus on," and not include as many "assignments," but a

"greater focus on the take-home exam." However, this course is about learning and not about "focusing on the take-home exam" per se. The course presents a number of key theories in international relations, a number of key international organizations of global governance, and a number of critical issues in international politics—all of which are controversial, political, and subject to highly diverse opinions among experts on international politics. To assume that knowledge about these theories, entities, and issues in international politics can be taught and neatly packaged without critically and with appropriate scrutiny evaluating the contested content of the subject is naïve. The assignments and the take-home exam have all been designed to nurture the students' ability to independently evaluate international politics—and to provoke their own thinking so that they are not taking for granted the opinions of others in lieu of critically examining what is evidence, what is contested information, and what is a matter of opinion, even ideology, in this complicated but crucial area of the discipline.

One student claims that the assignment instructions were "vague or incomplete," and suggests they had sent emails to "get basic clarification." First, only one student made this claim in this survey. Second, whenever I was sent emails with questions about the assignments or the take-home exam during this course, the students had failed to read the instructions in virtually all cases. Not reading written instructions, then sending emails asking for "clarification," is extremely irritating. For that reason, I have amended my instructions every year I held the course so that by now, it includes virtually every answer to every reasonable request for clarification. This effort entails that the instructions are not at all vague or incomplete; instead, they are long, detailed, and even taxing to read. Still, this situation is much preferable to having students ask for clarification multiple times during the course. In earnest, there were not many such emails this semester, for the reasons stated.

Comments about the collaboration with the course ambassadors

The course ambassador, Yazan Abushammala, did an excellent job considering the circumstances during the course. We had a dialogue, among other things, especially considering that many students selected not to attend the non-mandatory lectures. The reasons for their absence are not clear, but the course ambassador believed some reasons could explain it: for example, by the end of the semester students are tired after intensive study periods, thus chose to read the course literature and prepare their seminar presentations instead of going to the University twice or three times per week. Others might also simply want to stay outside to experience the nice weather in May. I also talked continuously with individual students who attended the lectures, which, understandably, mostly were students who were satisfied and felt the lectures contributed to their learning. Those students said the course was one of the most interesting experiences they had at the University, not least given that the topics of the lectures about international politics were highly relevant in our environment. There was, however, a minority—also reflected in the course survey—who believed the lectures were too complicated to follow, and thus selected not to attend.

Conclusion and suggestions for course development or already made decisions

Due to the inventions of artificial intelligence such as ChatGPT and Bing, our ability to offer written assignments in this course was severely hampered this semester. Far too much time had to be assigned to unproductive feedback and grading about page pinpoint citation requirements, so much that this course will eliminate all written essays and assignments for the next semester and only have one, five-hour in-class exam. That said, I was surprised how easily I could suspect a given take-home essay (i.e., the last written assignment that the final grade was primarily dependent on) had likely been assisted by AI. As I mentioned above, those responses were stereotypical. Although they were written in the students' own language, likely due to my meticulous requirement of pinpoint page citations to the course literature (not too many external sources) that made most students afraid of using AI as an actual writing tool, their straw-men characterization of several critical theories except the most conventional among US-scholarship made me suspicious. Whether or not AI was actually used in these assignments, my own testing and re-testing of the most recent, updated versions of ChatGPT and Bing suggest that it will become almost impossible to "prove" unacknowledged use of AI, even plagiarism, in the near future. Now, students can upload PDFs of the books and articles and have the AI locate the pinpoint page for quotations and citations with about 65% accuracy while writing a complete essay response for the students. When not accurate



HÖGSKOLAN
I HALMSTAD

(35%), the students can still complement the AI's erroneous quotations by using Control + F, figure out the pinpoint citations themselves, and then fit that page into the AI-generated essay response. Because of this unfortunate nascent development, I have had to change the examinations to oral and in-class exams in the future. As teachers, we hope that Halmstad University will try to influence legislators and learning associations to their utmost to quell the access to AI:s in the context of learning, lest a massive part of our future generation will lose a significant ability to write clearly, convincingly, and persuasively instead of being cripplingly dependent on a patently fallible machine (as a large portion of my essays this year suggest will happen).

Other comments

-

I am overall satisfied with the course.

	Number of responses	Distribution (%)	Index (%) I am overall satisfied with the course	51
0 = I definitely do not agree	3	16%		
1	3	16%		
2	2	11%		
3	4	21%		
4	3	16%		
5 = I definitely agree	3	16%		
No opinion	1	5%		
Total	19	100%		

How much time have you spent on the course in relation to the course's study pace?

	Number of responses	Distribution (%)
Less time than the course study pace	5	26%
Corresponding to the course study pace	9	47%
More time than the course study pace	5	26%
Total	19	100%

The design of the course (teaching methods, literature, pedagogy, etc.) has been well adjusted to help me achieve the learning outcomes in the syllabus.

	Number of responses	Distribution (%)
0 = I definitely do not agree	3	16%
1	2	11%
2	3	16%
3	5	26%
4	0	0%
5 = I definitely agree	4	21%
No opinion	2	11%
Total	19	100%

Index (%) The design of the course (teaching methods, literature, pedagogy, etc.) has been well adjusted to help me achieve the learning outcomes in the syllabus.

51

During the course examinations, I have had the opportunity to show that I have achieved the learning outcomes in the syllabus.

	Number of responses	Distribution (%)
0 = I definitely do not agree	1	5%
1	0	0%
2	5	26%
3	0	0%
4	4	21%
5 = I definitely agree	6	32%
No opinion	3	16%
Total	19	100%

Index (%) During the course examinations, I have had the opportunity to show that I have achieved the learning outcomes in the syllabus.

70

I have experienced the social study environment as good during the course.

	Number of responses	Distribution (%)	Index (%) I have experienced the social study environment as good during the course.	
0 = I definitely do not agree	1	5%	79	
1	1	5%		
2	0	0%		
3	3	16%		
4	3	16%		
5 = I definitely agree	9	47%		
No opinion	2	11%		
Total	19	100%		

Course satisfaction index

Satisfaction index % (summary of all statements)	62
--	----