UV9412 Political Philosophy of Education

The PhD students' evaluation of the course. Autumn 2023

This course is a biannual intensive two-days course on political philosophy of education. The course is taught as a research seminar. The aims are

- give the PhD students experience on the systematic ways of working in a collaborative research seminar
- make the PhD students learn how to explore some of today's most pressing social and ethical-political issues in light of contemporary and classical philosophical texts
- provide that the PhD students acquire skills of how to write a philosophical essay at high international standards

To prepare for the course, the PhD candidates wrote philosophical essays that explored topics relevant to political philosophy of education and made use of selected parts of the course literature. The essays were submitted before the course. Next, they were distributed in the group and presented and discussed during the seminar.

Seven PhD candidates attended the course. Three attendees answered the online evaluation form.

Feedback on the course content and learning activities

This year's course offered literature, lectures and in-depth discussion on three topics; 1) Resistance and civil disobedience, 2) (Dis)ability, and 3) Educative justice. Moreover, as the course was taught as a collaborative research seminar, the PhD students' active engagement with the literature and in the seminar was a vital part of the course content.

The three PhD students responding to the evaluation, say that they experienced the course very relevant to their PhD project and research training. "I found the course to be extremely inspiring. I enjoyed the readings, the lectures were thought-provoking, and the structure allowed us to exchange ideas, comment on each other's texts in depth".

A PhD student responds: "I think it was very positive to have a lot of student participation and to have lectures from the course teachers as well". Another says: "I am very happy to have attended the course and as I said very inspired. I am very thankful for the thoughtful and deep feedback we got from the teachers, and for the facilitation for such great conversations".

Not surprising, the PhD students reported that they were well prepared for the course. However, they would have liked to extend the course with one more day "to have more time to discuss the course syllabus in addition to discussing each paper".

General evaluation

Overall, the students report that their expectations for the course were met. They found the course very relevant to their research activities and were well prepared for the course. They read each other's philosophical essays beforehand, and provided fruitful comments on their fellow students' papers: "I experienced a great respect for the PhD's contributions because in all program points there were a lot of space for our thoughts and inputs". The PhD students also report that they liked to have three teachers with different background.

To improve the quality of the course, one PhD student suggest to have a zoom meeting to prepare for the course: "… maybe just to introduce one another, so that we have a context in mind as we progress with our readings".

On the question on how to improve the course, another PhD student responds: "This depends a lot on what the goals for the course are. But I would think that focusing less on publication-potential of the papers and more on discussing the course literature would have also been interesting. In that way, we could have gained a deeper understanding of a new body of literature instead of discussing what each student have already been working on".

Overall, the format of the course seems to work well. Both in terms of relevance to the PhD students' project, their motivation for attending the course, their engagement with the course literature and for their writing skills. However, for the next course we may consider to spend less time on each PhD student's paper, so that we have more time for in-depth reading on the texts on the reading list.