REPORT FOR FIL2209 HØST 2020

Contents of the periodic course report
The report shall contain the course coordinator's assessments and comments based on the basic material. The report shall address the following points as far as appropriate:

1. Give an assessment of:
Syllabus (content, scope).

Syllabus was split in two main topics with 6 weeks on each topic. 1. Epistemology of Perception, 2. Scientific Realism. This used two different textbooks (one book on each), with roughly one chapter each week, plus selected journal articles and other material each week. The seminars matched with the book chapters, and in this order, which covered a different philosophical position each week, and built on one another. This choice worked well, so that students were able to learn about two different subjects in sufficient depth. Overall, students enjoyed the topics, and the textbooks.

Teaching (teaching methods, number of hours, spread over the semester, compulsory activities, qualification assignments).

Teaching was a 2-hour seminar each week. This was split with the first half as a lecture, and the second half as a discussion. This was done "live" on Zoom each week. There were 13-16 students attending live each week. The first half (lecture) was recorded and made available on Canvas, and the Semester pages (forelesningsopptak), so students did not need to attend "live", but could watch it later.

The lecture slides and discussion questions were also made available on Canvas for students who did not attend "live", and for all students to use in studying -- i.e., the students could take the course synchronously ("live" on zoom each week) or asynchronously (just watching the lecture recordings and writing in the discussion board on canvas at a later time). The students appreciated the lectures and slides, which I tried to make very colourful and lively. The students also appreciated the Canvas material, which also included links to online articles, YouTube videos, and other resources to assist them in the course.

The students who did attend the live Zoom classes were generally very positive and talkative in discussing the material. I enjoyed the discussions with them each week, and hearing the students develop their ideas with each other! We used break-out rooms in Zoom to discuss (3-4 students each). This was difficult, however, as I had to move through each room, and sometimes would run out of time to spend with each group of students (5-8 minutes per group). This is a challenge of the digital teaching situation. It felt like the time in class discussions went very quickly (maybe this is a positive thing, though --the time never "dragged on", because we were always having interesting discussions). Another challenge was some students not having a suitable location or technology to join in the discussions -- e.g., they were in the library or cafe with other people around, and so could not talk on the microphone, but had to write their comments/questions in text instead.

Compulsory activity was a short weekly writing task, where students would write a brief response to the discussion questions from that week's seminar (notes of ideas that they had to the questions discussed in the class, and to post these responses on Canvas). While there were 10 of these tasks, students only needed to submit 6 of them. This confused the students, however, with some students thinking they needed to submit all 10. The idea was to submit one each week, i.e., by the time of the next class, so that the students "kept up" with the class, and would not be left behind with the readings. Because there is no longer compulsory attendance, however (due to corona restrictions, many students wanted to take the class "asynchronously", by watching the recordings rather than

joining in the Zoom lectures each week), I chose to not put a deadline on the weekly writing tasks -- they only had to be done before the exam date. This defeated the purpose, of course, with most students then submitting them only at the end of the course all at once, rather than spacing them out throughout the semester. Next time I will change it to again be a weekly task, and will consider whether it will be 6 or 10 to submit.

Resources and infrastructure (teaching rooms, audiovisual aids, library resources, etc.).

See above.

Examination (examination system, form of assessment).

Portfolio exam of two essays -- one for each topic, of 5-6 pages each. For each essay, students could choose between two different question options, or to develop their own question (in consultation with me so that I could determine its suitability).

The first essay draft was due mid-semester as a mandatory submission. I gave all students detailed individual comments on these via email so that they could fix their drafts to re-submit for the exam. I also offered students the opportunity to email me drafts of the second essay if they wanted some comments before the exam submission. Around 3 students took this opportunity for feedback. I believe this worked well. Students expressed their appreciation of the feedback, and thought the portfolio exam format was appropriate for developing their philosophical views in response to the course topics. I was satisfied with the quality of the exams.

2. Do the learning outcome formulations in the course description give a good description of what the students should be able to do after passing the exam?

Yes.

3. Does the course description work satisfactorily? Check the following:
Statistics on grades, dropouts and complaints.
Feedback to teachers and administration.
Feedback on the information / guidance the students receive about the course.
How the course works in the course groups it is part of.
Whether the course is correctly placed with regard to level / recommended semester.
Whether the course is correctly defined with regard to recommended / required prior knowledge.

I think this is all totally OK.

4. Have you made any changes since the last periodic evaluation? Which ones?

5. Suggestions for improvements.

I expect things will be easier next semester when students are more used to online courses. I will fix a couple of things in regards to particular lectures, based on student feedback. I will re-consider the mandatory writing activity implementation (as described above).