

Comparative Law (Autumn 2021) Course Evaluation Report

After the delivery of the paper, students were asked to fill out a course evaluation form in Athena. Despite the course evaluation not being scheduled, the answer rate was very good (62%). The course evaluation was carried out anonymously. The course was given during the second half of the semester, which means that it was among the first courses taking place after the most severe Covid-19 restrictions and was therefore supposed to be hybrid. This caused some unique challenges as most class rooms are not well equipped to deal with this type of teaching. My solution was to have my laptop linked to zoom beside me. It was not ideal by any standard, but it worked well enough.

On the first question, "How well do you think the course corresponds with the learning objectives in the course's syllabus?", 90% of students responded "very well" or "well", while 10% responded "reasonably well".

When asked what they liked best with the course, students stressed the quality of the teaching, the diversity of topics discussed in class and the interactive nature of the course. The positive assessments conceal, however, also some critical notes. One student remarked that his/her favorite aspect of the course were "the seminars (which in the end turned out to be very interesting lectures by Filippo)". I have indeed been talking a little too much during the seminars, which has caused me to think of a new approach for the course that will be given in 2022, compelling the students to take a more active role.

When asked, which improvements to the course they would like to see, students pointed out that the seminars could have followed a clearer structure, although the detours taken during the seminars seem to have been appreciated. A problem with the spontaneous changes of direction that took place during the seminars is that the quieter participants probably were less engaged and capable of following the discussion than they may have been with a somewhat more rigid structure. As stated above, I will make some changes in 2022 to help activating the quieter students. Some criticism has concerned some of the guest lecturers and I have therefore made some changes in that regard going forward.

When asked whether the mock negotiation was useful tool to improve their understanding of the course (open question), a majority of students expressed genuine enthusiasm. One of them commented: "Yes it was. It helped working and focusing on a particular legal system while being more on the practical side. We need to begin with theory but it can become confusing. Working on a case and trying to solve it as a jurist from a another legal system helped understanding how the system actually works. Moreover, it was easier to spot the differences between the different systems and then discuss it with the students from this legal system."

When asked whether writing a paper was an adequate way of testing and applying the knowledge acquired during the course, most students reacted in a positive way. One typical comment: "I think so. I would not be completely against another exam but I still think writing a paper is more related to the way we practiced the course during the term. it is also very useful for us as we will need to write paper in the future and the best way to learn is to practice. We get to learn how to write in proper terms and

how to avoid huge mistakes. Methodology is not always the most fun topic. However, it would always be useful.”

When asked if there are areas of the law that they would have liked to explore more deeply, the students came with a variety of interesting suggestions. Some students would have liked a more in-depth look at non-Western legal systems, such as the Chinese legal tradition as well as Sharia. Others pointed out that it would be useful to explore public law more in depth. While it might be difficult for the time being to squeeze in more Chinese and Islamic law in the course, I feel that a larger dose of constitutional and administrative law issues as well as issues connected to the development of the welfare state may be feasible and good idea.

Despite the technical difficulties due to the very last whip lash of the covid-19 pandemic, I am happy to report that the students responded very positively to the question “Would you recommend this course to other students? Why or why not?”. A large majority of participants expressed great interest for the subject and lauded the teaching team, which of course is deeply gratifying.

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Course Director