

Introduction

This course was last evaluated 3 years ago (Spring 2008), and the present course leader was also the course leader at that time, except during the Spring semester of 2009, when the present course leader was on sabbatical. The period before my sabbatical (in Spring 2009), the course consisted of 20 hours of lectures (spread over 5 days, 4-hours each day). Students had to submit written essay (of ca 8 – 10 pages long) on assigned topic for course assessment. Each student could choose a topic out of 4 essay topics, and they had two weeks to work on the essay. During my sabbatical, when someone else took over the course (i.e., 3 PhD students), some major changes were made. The 20 hours of lectures were reduced to 12 hours. Instead of individually assessed essays, students had to do oral presentation in groups of 2 – 4, on topics of their own choice. This is how the course has been run since Autumn 2009. The main difference between what the 3 PhD students introduced, and what is done presently is that over the last three semesters, the students have received instructions on what needs to be included in their presentation so as not to deviate from the main objectives of the course.

This evaluation is based on how the course has been run during the last 5 semesters, even if the collected data is based on 29 students who took the course during the Autumn of 2011. Each semester, on the last day of the oral presentations when I have all the students present (except the international students), I have done informal evaluation of the course.

About the course and its organization

PSYK 354 is designed as an English language course at the 5th semester of the professional psychology program. Over the past 5 semesters, the course attracts on the average 50 students, of which approximately a third of the class are international students (mainly Erasmus-program students, and during the Spring semester, Australian students as well). Half of the Norwegian students are either 3rd or 4th semester who want to take the course before they spend a semester abroad), and the rest are 5th semester psychology students.

The course leader recommends one main textbook, which can be bought at “Studia”, together with a number of other textbooks, which can be found in the library. In addition, a number of free online textbook are made known to the students. These recommended readings are revised constantly, such that the current recommended textbook is from 2011.

It is important to note that neither the current 12 nor the previously 20 hours of lectures are compulsory. The time for the oral presentation – i.e., 8 hours (2 days), however, has been compulsory, and students have to be present on both days. The International students are exempted from the Norwegian presentation, as this is done in Norwegian.

As an English language course, where about two-thirds of the class is made up of Norwegians, some concessions are made for the Norwegians, where they can choose to present their work in Norwegian. This is often the case, although a couple of Norwegians choose to present in English, or team up with International students and present in English. It is thus obvious that Norwegians and International students most often form separate groups, resulting in groups of only international students and only Norwegian students.

Student statistics

As pointed out the course attracts about 50 students each semester, and the number seem to be going up, where there were 63 students enrolled for the Autumn 2011 class. The course leader has been discussing with different people ways and means of reducing the number of students without creating unnecessary impediments for students.

Since the course is assessed as “Pass” vs. “Fail”, and it involves group presentation, no one ever fails. For most International students, the use of “Pass/Fail” is not fully accepted at their home university. For this reason, the course leader issues individual documentation indicating that the named student has followed the course (PSYK 354), a brief description of the course contents; what the student evaluation entailed, and the grade the student received. In this case, a mark (in percentage) is given together with a grade (A – F), and a description of the grade (Excellent, Very good etc). Most of the international students obtain a grade of B (Very good).

On some rare occasions, a student or two are allowed to write an essay, where the essay topic is assigned by the course leader. Here the student has a choice of 1 essay out of 4 different questions, and the essay has to be submitted within 2 weeks and should be approximately 8 – 10 pages long. The few students who have been given this option are those who for reasons beyond their means are not in the position to follow the course.

Student evaluation of course

This evaluation was done online by the student office, and a copy of this evaluation is included as an appendix.

The students seem satisfied with the course as a whole, with the presentation of material, the level of difficulty, the speed at which the course is ran etc. Not a single student expressed complete dissatisfaction with the course. As a summary to the students' overall satisfaction I refer to the responses to a couple of questions: To the question – *“the extent to which the lecturer conveys the topic clearly”*. Here, nearly 90% of the respondents either completely agreed or partly agreed that this was clearly done. The remaining 10% were neutral to this question. Nearly 2 out of 3 students

reported that *they were inspired and motivated by the lecturer*, although 1 in 3 was either neutral, or was not inspired and motivated. See the appendix for detailed description.

Some students wished that they could write an essay, instead of doing an oral presentation. In brief discussions with the students after the course (semester after semester) my impression is that the majority of the students are satisfied with (i) the oral presentation, and (ii) that they can freely choose their own topic, rather than a topic assigned to them. The students who would prefer an essay are mostly active students in the class, who somehow feel that their hard efforts are not rewarded in a group oral presentation. Some other students who would prefer essay are those who rather be somewhere else, not attend any lectures, choose their own essay topic, and not to be bothered by anyone.

Course leader's evaluation

The course on the whole goes on smoothly. The biggest challenge is the non-obligatory lectures. This makes it difficult to know how many students will be present for each class. On the average, only about 20% of the enrolled students regularly attend the 12 hours of lectures. The fact that many of the students found the lectures engaging suggests that poor attendance is not due to poor lectures, but the students have different priorities.

The class includes a lot of international students, and their working knowledge in English is sometimes poor. This also makes it difficult to run seminars.

The present 12 hours of lectures are, in my opinion too few. The 8 hours of oral presentations (15 minutes per student group, and 5 minutes for questions/discussions) are also challenging. Part of the challenge is to organize the 2-day oral presentations when there are so many students. The Autumn 2011 semester on which this evaluation is based had over 60 students enrolled. With so many students present, it was difficult to have the typical 15 minutes break every hour. The question is whether the course should be limited to only 5th semester and international students. One argument is that 3rd and 4th semester students have not taken enough basic psychology courses to appreciate the broad scope of the course. And because 3rd, 4th and 5th the lectures are not coordinated, it is easier for the 3rd and 4th semester students to stay away when there is crash between lectures.

Students do not want more than the 12 hours of lectures, and they wish that they would not have to attend more than 4 hours of oral presentation. The rationale for making the 8 hours of presentation compulsory is to expose the students to the broad field of the course. It is nevertheless important to note that this course is 3 ECTS, where about 75 hours of work load is expected of a student. As long as lectures are not compulsory, the preparation, presentation and participation in oral work (need to be compulsory), and this possibly brings the workload to just about 60 hours.

Concluding comments

Many of the comments from the students are understandable, but very few of them can be implemented. As a 3 ECTS course, the number of hours of work cannot be less than what we currently have. As a matter of fact, more should be demanded from the students, and below are three possible approaches.

1. 12 hours of compulsory lectures together with only 4 hours of compulsory presence for the oral presentation.
2. 16 – 20 hours of hours of lectures (not compulsory), but written essay of given topic. The reason for assigning essay topics is to avoid people choosing narrowly defined essay topics.
3. 4 hours of compulsory lectures, together with 8 – 12 hours of compulsory seminars/presentations. The need to expand the presentation to 12 hours is because of the increasing number of students enrolled for the course.

These three approaches will be tried out in the coming semesters to see how effective/practical they are. The course leader will also discuss the different approaches with the students.

As a course interested in multiculturalism, Norwegian students will be encouraged to interact as much as possible with the international students. As part of this, and as much as possible, (i) no group will be allowed to be made up of only Norwegian students, and no group will be made up of entirely international students; (ii) all the presentations will be in English and (iii) all students will be present at all times.

Appendix: Students' evaluation

The lecturer:

- The lecturer conveys the topic clearly

	Respondents	Percent
Completely disagree	0	0.0%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Not either	3	10.3%
Agree	22	75.9%
Completely agree	4	13.8%
Total	29	100.0%

The lecturer:

- The lecturer inspires and motivates

	Respondents	Percent
Completely disagree	0	0.0%
Disagree	3	10.3%
Not either	8	27.6%
Agree	12	41.4%
Completely agree	6	20.7%
Total	29	100.0%

The lecturer:

- The lecturer detects contributions and questions from the students

	Respondents	Percent
Completely disagree	0	0.0%
Disagree	1	3.4%
Not either	4	13.8%
Agree	16	55.2%
Completely agree	8	27.6%
Total	29	100.0%

	Respondents	Percent
What was good/useful with the lectures, and what can be improved in the future? (please write in English or Norwegian)		
Especially real-life examples of cross-cultural ways of thinking/behaving were interesting.		
more days and less hours		
Forelesningene var oversiktelige, men han kunne med fordel ha snakket litt høyere og tydeligere.		
I think the lectures were interesting and promoted reflection around the subject		
Jeg hadde ikke anledning til å delta på alle forelesningene, men der jeg var til stede var det informativt, interessant, og jeg opplevde at foreleser hadde mye kunnskap å dele av.		
The slides were good!		
The lectures were informative and centered on interesting aspects relating to the course material. The lecturer handled feed-back from the class well, and went into detail when necessary.		
There was a lot of practical examples and it was very useful		
The topic of the lecture was interesting but I didn't felt involved. I would be nicer when there would be some discussion in a smaler group. Especially with international and Norwegian students together, this course is made for bringing cultures together!		
lecturer was open to ideas and encouraged to thinking		
The course was interesting, we had good interactions between the teacher and the students. The fact we were an international group add a lot to our discussions. just a pittty that the "norwegian student" had to present their ppt in Norwegian, international students couldn't attend to their presentation. The fact that we had 4 hours, from 12 to 16pm was a little bite long I was happy to followed this course.		
The lectures were good and informative.		
The lecturer could talk louder.		

The topics in the lectures are in accordance with recommended literature

	Respondents	Percent
Completely disagree	0	0.0%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Not either	8	28.6%
Agree	17	60.7%
Completely agree	3	10.7%
Total	28	100.0%

The lectures inspires to further reflection and contribution

	Respondents	Percent
Completely disagree	0	0.0%
Disagree	1	3.6%
Not either	3	10.7%
Agree	17	60.7%
Completely agree	7	25.0%
Total	28	100.0%

The complete course:
How do you view the progression of teaching?

	Respondents	Percent
Too slow	0	0.0%
A little too slow	7	25.9%
Just right	16	59.3%
A little too fast	4	14.8%
Too fast	0	0.0%
Total	27	100.0%

The complete course:
How demanding was the course compared to the level of study?

	Respondents	Percent
Very demanding	0	0.0%
Demanding	1	3.4%
Not either	18	62.1%
Easy	10	34.5%
Very easy	0	0.0%
Total	29	100.0%

THE COURSE IN GENERAL

How satisfied have you been with... - The professional outcome and value of the course

	Respondents	Percent
Very dissatisfied	0	0.0%
Dissatisfied	2	6.9%
Not either	8	27.6%
Satisfied	17	58.6%
Very satisfied	2	6.9%
Total	29	100.0%

THE COURSE IN GENERAL

How satisfied have you been with... - The quality of the course compared to other courses that you have participated in so far in your study

	Respondents	Percent
Very dissatisfied	0	0.0%
Dissatisfied	4	13.8%
Not either	10	34.5%
Satisfied	12	41.4%
Very satisfied	3	10.3%
Total	29	100.0%

THE COURSE IN GENERAL

How satisfied have you been with... - The course in general

	Respondents	Percent
Very dissatisfied	0	0.0%
Dissatisfied	1	3.4%
Not either	10	34.5%
Satisfied	17	58.6%
Very satisfied	1	3.4%
Total	29	100.0%

If you have any other comments or suggestions please write it in the box below (write in English or Norwegian)

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Very good that it ended in a presentation. That motivated us to go deeper into a topic of choice, and we could focus on the issue itself rather than on how to write it up (if there also had been a written paper).

Writing assignment instead of presentation.

Istedenfor at presentasjonsdagen var obligatorisk kunne heller forelesningene være obligatoriske (med 80% oppmøte), og at det kun var obligatorisk å ha sin egen presentasjon. Da får studentene kanskje en bredere kunnskap, for de må være på forelesningene, i tillegg til å arbeide selvstendig med et annet tema og øve seg på å presentere.

The system this year, with all students (except international students) attending both presentation days worked ok. It was tiring, but ok. However, if even more students attend the course then something must be changed. If all students must attend all presentations, then probably it must be divided in to three sessions. If this is not possible, then I think either two courses must be held simultaneously (expand) or some students must wait for the next semester.

I think it is unfair to say that norwegian and international students shouldnt group together, and to say that only norwegians had to attend two full days of presentations due to the fact that norwegian students previously have attended less lectures than international students. I mean seriously, if this course is to promote cultural understanding, what's the deal with promoting segregation of international and norwegian students? Internationals and norwegians should rather be made to cooperate, so that no one would benefit from their nationality. Seriously stupid!

Som nevnt, endre presentasjonstidene. Burde ha vært tidligere på dagen.

I think the topic of the presentation should be better defined.

more interaction with students so that I will actually remember what the teacher have said.

thanks!

The exam form was demanding. Perhaps there could be two groups and necessary to hear only presentations from the one group. Or perhaps writing an essay.