

HGO4011 – Philosophy and methodology of human geography

Course content

This course is a compulsory component of the master's degree in human geography. The purpose is to provide you with an overview of the philosophical foundations of human geography, and how these have been translated into geographic research. Emphasis is placed on making you practically engage with the philosophy of science, enabling you to develop, refine, and apply your own epistemological and ontological commitments in the design and conduct of your research.

The course starts by discussing how geographers construct scientific knowledge. We then introduce the core concepts of space, place, scale and territory, tracing their conceptual histories throughout the discipline's recent history. The remaining lectures are focused on individual researchers, how they conduct their research and present their knowledge claims. A common theme of borders ties the lectures together.

The course activities provide the preparatory groundwork for your own master's thesis research project. The seminars are focused on novel academic practices such as reading together, role play, research topic development and preparing an academic presentation. An important learning tool in the course is a reflective journal that will help you relate your own reflections to the course texts and the learning activities of the course.

Learning outcome

Knowledge

Throughout this course, you will understand

- core theoretical concepts in geography, how they have evolved over time and how they are applied to research across the discipline
- how researcher in the discipline of human geography construct knowledge and defend their knowledge claims

Skills

Throughout this course, you will learn how to

- apply selected core concepts and theoretical frameworks in human geography with a high degree of understanding and reflection
- understand how to relate an individual research project to the wider knowledge production of an academic discipline
- evaluate how different theoretical frameworks, methodological choices and research questions relate to each other across the discipline
- develop analytical writing, reading and conversational skills at a high academic standard
- prepare and give an academic presentation to a small group
- develop a research topic and ask analytical questions about that topic

General competence

This course will enable you to

- critically analyse research practices and strategies for constructing geographic knowledge
- differentiate between relevant theoretical and methodological choices, in order make these choices in your own master's thesis project

Admission to the course

Students who are admitted to study programmes at UiO must each semester register which courses and exams they wish to sign up for in Studentweb.

If you are not already enrolled as a student at UiO, please see our information about admission requirements and procedures.

Admission to the course is dependent on admission to the master's degree programme in Human Geography.

Overlapping courses

- 10 credits overlap with SGO4011 – Tenkning og metodologi i samfunnsgeografi (continued).

Teaching

Course tuition consists of a combination of lectures and seminars, including a seminar on master thesis topic development.

Compulsory instruction and coursework

~~Participation in at least 80% of the lectures and seminars is mandatory.~~

Students must submit at least two reflection notes and a draft presentation in order to take the exam.

Completed and approved compulsory course work is valid as long as the course is offered. Students who have failed to complete the compulsory attendance cannot take the exam.

Absence from compulsory tuition activities

If you are ill or have another valid reason for being absent from compulsory tuition activities, your absence may be approved or the compulsory activity may be postponed.

- Report absence from or the need for a postponed deadline on a compulsory tuition activity

Access to teaching

A student who has completed compulsory instruction and coursework and has had these approved, is not entitled to repeat that instruction and coursework. A student who has been admitted to a course, but who has not completed compulsory instruction and coursework or had these approved, is entitled to repeat that instruction and coursework, depending on available capacity.

Examination

The exam is an individual oral examination in a group setting of 5-6 students. The students will give short individual presentations on a predetermined topic, followed by a conversation.

~~The exam is a one-week home exam. The maximum length of the home exam is 3000 words (excluding references).~~

~~The exam question will be available from 10.00 am on the day of the exam and must be submitted at 12.00 PM, 7 days later.~~

~~Previous exams and examiner guidelines~~

~~You submit your assignment in the digital examination system Inspera. Read about how to submit your assignment.~~

It is possible to take the exam up to 3 times. If you withdraw from the exam after the deadline or during the exam, this will be counted as an examination attempt.

Examination support material

Students are allowed to bring written notes and use powerpoint slides for the presentation and the following conversation.

When using AI in the preparation of your presentation, you must explain and be transparent about its use: read more about the guidelines for AI and exams at [How to use AI as a student - University of Oslo](#)

~~All exam support materials are allowed during this exam. Generating all or part of the exam answer using AI tools such as Chat GPT or similar is not allowed.~~

Language of examination

The predetermined topic text is given in English. The presentation and the following conversation is held in English or Norwegian.

Grading scale

Grades are awarded on a scale from A to F, where A is the best grade and F is a fail. Read more about [the grading system](#).

Resit an examination

If you are sick or have another valid reason for not attending the regular exam, we offer a [postponed exam](#) later in the same semester. See also our information about [resitting an exam](#).

More about examinations at UiO

- [Use of sources and citations](#)
- [How to use AI as a student](#)
- [Special exam arrangements due to individual needs](#)
- [Withdrawal from an exam](#)
- [Illness at exams / postponed exams](#)
- [Explanation of grades and appeals](#)
- [Resitting an exam](#)

- Cheating/attempted cheating

You will find further guides and resources at the web page on examinations at UiO.