

Evaluation of the PhD course “UV9002 – Philosophy of Science” Spring 2026

The course structure was the same as in previous years. It consisted of three meetings (six days):

Two days in April were dedicated to lectures conducted by Professor Tone Kvernbekk.

In May there were two days for all participants: one day was used to read and comment on the first paper draft from the participants (one group led by Kvernbekk and one by Ludvigsen), and the second day was dedicated to lectures connected to the theme; epistemology, categorization and unit of analysis in educational sciences and was given by Sten Ludvigsen, in the May meeting.

The two last days (June) were organized as follows: one day for reading and commenting on the second version of the papers (one group led by Kvernbekk and one by Ludvigsen), and one day for lectures on the theme: Mechanism and causal explanations in educational and learning sciences.

The group of 12 participants was divided into subgroups of six. All the participants read and prepared comments on at least two other papers than their own. The course leader read all papers and commented on both structure and content.

Professor Kvernbekk's lectures gave the participants an excellent view of some selected classical positions in the philosophy of science including issues related to epistemology and ontologies in the natural sciences. The students felt that this part worked very well, though some argued for an increased focus on social/human/educational sciences. However, as long as the lectures clarified the positions chosen, this part of the course worked well and when Ludvigsen's lectures address educational sciences more specifically within the field of philosophy of sciences the relevance is secured. Additional texts were used as extensions and are discussed in groups to create the bridge between the philosophy of sciences and educational research.

My judgement is that the participants need two rounds of writing, reading, and commenting. The second version of the papers was a much higher level than the first version. The reading and commenting also became much more advanced in June. The participants could use each other's papers as “model texts” both related to the genre of writing and the level of content. This was especially the case in the second version. They could see how they had solved the task in different ways, and it became easier to compare and contrast their own paper with those of other participants. The students emphasized that the working with readings and comments in the subgroups was very productive. The participants were enthusiastic about the plenary and group work. Between the three meetings the participants could ask for supervision and receive feedback on drafts of text or questions they had.

The course worked very well with the tight connection between Kvernbekk's more general orientation and treatment of classical themes and Ludvigsen's orientation towards connecting epistemological issues and causal explanation in educational sciences.

The students appreciated the work format and gained increased insight into how their PhD work is connected to basic themes in educational sciences and philosophy.

Administrative issues: In the last three years the PhD student have been able to buy a compendium containing the course literature. This has made it easier for the students to read the most central texts. The distribution of tasks and uploading of paper worked excellently in Canvas, with the guidance given by Olga Mukhina, who provided excellent support in all phases of the work with the course.

On behalf of the course leaders, Sten Ludvigsen