

Sensurveiledning

The Norwegian Society SOS2501 in general:

This is a one semester 15 points course. The students are mainly exchange students from foreign universities visiting Norway for a shorter period of time. They have had several lecturers during this course and the curriculum covers a wide field (both sociology and political science with a focus on Norway). During the course each student has written one paper (with the portion between topics from political science and sociology). The students are to answer to their best ability with the readings and lectures in mind.

Define these terms (maximum half a page):

1) The Sami assembly

The assembly first gathered in 1989. It does not have a lot of power, but its symbolic and political meaning is of great importance, especially when one considers the bad treatment of the Sami people and other ethnic groups by the Norwegian state. There are 39 representatives in the Assembly, and it is led by a board and a president elected by the assembly. The assembly does not have the power to make any decisions binding Norwegian citizens or authorities, it can only advise matters it considers relevant to the Sami population. The election of the of the assembly takes place jointly with parliamentary elections, and the voters must be registered in a Sami census compiled on a self-reported ethnic basis. If the student can mention debates/struggles that contributed to raising the "Sami question" and therefore initiating the Sami assembly, should be awarded.

2) National identity

It is expected that the student understands that the concept of national identity is a socially constructed idea that concerns a national and its people. A nation is not just a political unit, but a symbolic community in which the civilians are participation in. The student needs to understand what function the concept of identity has in creating solidarity – for instance, in terms of the nation building of Norway – and, in terms of a common felt threat from outside – i.e. the EU. Here, it is expected that the student can elaborate on the main characteristics of the Norwegian national identity.

3) Parliamentarism

Means that the government must have the confidence of the parliament to be in power.

4) The collaborative experiments (de norske samarbeidsforsøkene)

The «Human Relations» school of work structure thinking comes to Norway. Instead of Tayloristic command lines, experiments with worker empowerment, collaboration between workers and management, both at local levels (firm, shop floor) and nationally (LO and NAF).

Experiments in the Norwegian industry in the 60's. Its aim was to increase industrial production by empowering the workers. The student is expected to know some of the measures that were taken – increased participation of the workers and more collaboration between worker and employer – both on local and national level. The student should also mention that these ideas manifested in the Work Environment Law of 1977, and that several ideas are still important in today's working life.

5) Norway's foreign policy concerns

The student will have to identify Norwegian foreign policy concerns along the lines of *security*, *welfare*, *autonomy*, and *prestige*. Security refers to a state's ability to defend its territory and survive as a unit in the international community of states. This is often referred to as a country's "defense policy" or "security policy". Virtually all states maintain military forces and commit some proportion of their national wealth to maintain internal and external security forces. Welfare refers to a state's ability to take care of its citizens – to provide employment and a sound economic base for the nation. Autonomy refers to a state's ability to shape its own destiny – to freely formulate its own political goals and define political priorities. Prestige refers to the state's international reputation.

Choose **two** out of the following five assignments, and write a longer essay on each:

1)

Account for the Norwegian parental leave, and explain the objectives of the fathers' quota. Discuss whether this welfare right may have an impact on gender equality.

Parental leave, with a special quota for fathers, is a welfare state contribution in Norway, which reserves a certain part of the parental leave for the father only and cannot be transferred to mothers. If it is not used by the father it is lost. The official reason for introducing the father's quota was to encourage gender equality in work and care. Norway was the first of the Nordic welfare states to introduce a non-transferable quota for fathers as part of the parental leave system. The Norwegian father's quota is currently 10 weeks. The architecture of the leave system has been changed from a fairly rigid provision to a flexible policy, so that the current design of the father's quota offers a menu of choices when it comes to the use of leave. Parental leave for fathers on a take it or leave it basis is a welfare state instrument meant to create caring fathers. The explicit intention of the father's quota is to strengthen the father-child relationship and contribute to gender equality in both family and working life. The length of the father's quota is 10 weeks of a total parental leave period of 49 weeks with 100 per cent wage compensation up to a ceiling. Most of the parental leave weeks are available to both mothers and fathers. Almost all eligible fathers (over 90%) take all or part of the father's quota. The part of the parental leave that may be shared between parents is mostly taken by mothers.

When the father's quota was first introduced, it provided for four weeks that had to be taken continuously within the child's first year. Since then, choice and flexibility have increasingly been promoted and in 2007 the father's quota was made more flexible. One type of flexibility is part-time leave combined with part-time work, which means that the leave weeks can be distributed over a longer period of time until the child is three years old. The second form of flexibility is 'deferred' leave, which means that all or part of the father's quota may be split into separate blocks of time.

These two types may be combined. Research tend to regard flexibility in leave arrangements in a positive way, viewing the opportunity mothers and fathers have to control the timing of their leave taking as having the potential to increase the use of leave, particularly by fathers. Top students are expected to draw on the articles by Brandt and Kvande and lecture by Kvande. Discussing gender equality, migrant perspectives, and compare this system with other countries.

2)

Present the Norwegian healthcare model, and define its most important characteristics and ideological foundation. Discuss how and why there has been pressure to reform and change the system.

Characterized by tax-funding, decentralized public governance structure (except Norway from 2002), elected local governments that can tax, public ownership (or control) of delivery structure, equity driven – with focus on geographical and social equity, and public participation.

The Nordic healthcare model is characterized by its tax-funded system, decentralized public governance structure (except Norway from 2002), elected local governments that can tax, public ownership (or control) of delivery structure, focus on geographical and social equity, and public participation. Moreover, the Norwegian model is characterized by its collective solutions and responsibility. It is financed through taxes, with some out-of-pocket payments. A needs-based geographic allocation of resources. It has a provider payment based on a combination of bloc grant and activity-based financing. Throughout the years the Norwegian model is characterized by an increasingly stronger centralization, although a long tradition of decentralization.

Since the end of the 1980s, Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Finland have all implemented major changes in their health systems. This development has been paralleled by the market-oriented reform wave known as ‘new public management’ (NPM) (“let leaders lead”), which emphasizes the need to rethink how the public sector organizes and manages itself. In the Nordic countries particularly, the challenges related to cost increases and insufficient ability of hospitals to absorb patient inflows have led to the introduction of quasi-market mechanisms, such as waiting lists guarantees, patient rights to free choice of hospitals and activity-based funding schemes. These elements have been supplemented with other NPM-inspired reforms, as well as increased focus on patient pathways, integrated care, prevention and health promotion in coordination between different public authorities.

Current health reforms may be explained by: Fiscal sustainability under pressure (increasing financial burden of governments combined with a desire to improve resource allocation has put pressure on the public health sector); Ideological change (market-oriented reform wave labelled under the term New Public Management, which emphasizes the need to rethink how the public sector organizes and manages itself; employs private sector principles on public sector activities); pharmaceutical and technological development (changes both in the possibilities for providing treatment and in the way patients are actually treated. This often implies both the use of more expensive equipment and/or medications as well as expanding “the market for treatment” by offering treatment to patients that were previously excluded.) Changing patient demands (introduction of new medical technology and therapies; concerns over the access to and quality of health care; patients are now better informed about their own illnesses). Efficiency concerns (little evidence of significant improvement in health outcomes despite increasing health spending; the challenge of combining equity with both medical and economic scale efficiencies). Demographic changes (ageing population; changing composition of population health; life style changes)

3)

Give a presentation of the main Norwegian political institutions. Compare the Norwegian political system (similarities and differences) with other countries.

The institutions can be found at four different levels:

- International level: international cooperation, agreements and organizations
- National level: the Constitution, Parliament, Government and Central Administration
- Regional level: county government
- Local level: local government

The Constitution: Plays little role in real day-to-day politics: first of all, the introduction of enabling acts has delegated much discretionary power over the economy to the government and the central bureaucracy, and secondly, the special Norwegian system of corporatism has developed by itself without any constitutional change.

The Storting: The legislative body of Norway, elected every 4th year. The principle of parliamentarism means that the government must have the confidence of the parliament to be in power. This means that the Storting can vote, at any time and for any reason, the current government out of office by expressing "no confidence". Main tasks: to make laws, to decide the state's budget, to control the government, and to ratify international treaties. The two most important internal structures in the parliament are the committees and the party groups. The Storting is a so-called working parliament, meaning that it not only says yes or no to government proposals, but also allows the opposition a chance to criticize and present alternative policies; the MPs actively research the subject matter in committees to prepare the issue for the Storting at large. Often government proposals are reworked to fit the opinions of the parliamentary majority.

The Government: The number of ministers and departments tend to change with the government in position. There are mainly two aspects of the government's work that makes it the central locus of power and attention in Norwegian politics. The first is its strong control over the political initiative: the government is made the active party in the constitution; it presents the budget to parliament every fall, it prepares proposals for new laws whenever deemed necessary, it has the power to appoint top personnel in the civil service and to set up state commissions to evaluate and propose action in any field of society. This right to initiate is not interfered with by the Storting, which can only "control" in hindsight. The second point is of course related to its position as the head of the civil service: the department bureaucrats are highly skilled experts who can assist the ministers in preparing their policy initiatives and manage the flow of information in ways beneficial for the government. The foreign policy prerogative also gives the government a special position in directing foreign policy issues.

The top civil service: The role of the public administration is to prepare issues for discussion in political bodies, and to implement the policy that are decided. Obviously, this role holds a great

potential for influencing the political process: first, the civil service may itself take initiatives and place issues on the agenda, and this role of course implies a lot of power, secondly, the civil service may decide itself which alternatives that are to be researched and reviewed, and which are not, in different political issues, thirdly, the civil service interprets and reports back the experiences with public policies.

The really good candidates will also discuss the role of local and regional government, as well as the international cooperation and agreements.

4)

Present the Norwegian energy structure. Explain why an abundance of resources is also known as a resource curse. Why has there not been a Norwegian “resource curse”? Are there any dangers that there will be a Norwegian resource curse in the future?

Norway is one of the world’s biggest hydro producers – 96-98% of the electricity comes from hydropower (no mid-sized industrial state is even close). It is the 6th largest hydropower production in the world. But wind power is less than 2% of electricity – despite its massive power potential. Solar power is close to nothing. Compared to other countries, Germany gets 12-13% electricity from solar and wind, Denmark gets 39% from wind. Norway is the third largest energy exporter in the world (after Saudi Arabia and Russia). Exports 8 times more than we consumes. In 2009, the petroleum industry – 26% of investments, 22% of GDP, 47% of exports – a major petroleum exporter (95% of gas is being exported and 80% oil). Norway is one of the most energy-secure countries in the world.

Norway is one of the world’s biggest hydro producers, has one of the world’s highest renewable shares when hydro is included, one of the world’s biggest petroleum exporters. Has very little renewable energy except for hydro. Unlike most other countries, coal unimportant. Deriving almost all of the electricity from renewable and using electricity to far greater extent than most countries.

Plus, Norway is part of the EEA, and thus has to adhere to EU regulations. Increase renewable share of energy production from 58% (2005) to 67,5% (2020).

Norway as a green battery? – Idea, on days with little wind and sun, Norway export electricity to Europa – on days with surplus wind and sun, Europe export back to Norway, Norway store the surplus energy.

Natural resources have in many cases been a curse rather than a blessing, as the economic performance of the resource rich countries have struggled to handle this. In countries with good institutions, such as good protection of property rights and little corruption, natural resources seem to contribute to growth. Where this is not the case, where there are dysfunctional institutions, more natural resources may stimulate predation, rentseeking and other destructive or non-productive activities, in turn creating negative externalities for the rest of the economy (+ Dutch disease). If the students are able to mention specific reasons for how Norway avoided the resource curse, they should be awarded: early industrialization with a long and stable democratic rule, and a late oil discovery.

What do Norway do differently? – Knowledge accumulation (“Potato chips vs. micro ship”), Institutionalization (Social cohesion, legitimacy, spreading the wealth), Monoindustrialism (vested

interests, rigid economy) – one industrial sector with more economic and political influence than other sector.

5)

In the 1980s The International Whaling Commission (IWC) adopted a “moratorium” on all commercial whaling. In 1993 Norway resumed its commercial whaling. A controversial decision in which Norway has been criticized for. Explain why this decision is seen as controversial. What are the main arguments given by Norway for resuming commercial whaling?

The International Whaling Commission adopted what it calls a “moratorium” on all commercial whaling in 1982. It took effect in 1986. By the terms of this moratorium, all members of the IWC were to stop taking all whales for commercial purposes unless they formally objected to this measure. (Technically, the quotas for all whales were set at “zero”. This did not include whales taken by aboriginal peoples and “scientific whaling”). Norway, along with four other countries, did make a formal objection. Norway, however, temporarily and voluntarily, halted its commercial whaling and conducted research (which involved taking whales for research purposes) until it was satisfied that there was sufficient basis for establishing that the stock of Minke whales that Norwegian whalers were taking could tolerate the practice. Norway resumed commercial whaling in 1993. This is controversial because Norway is taking whales without a quota from the IWC, which is the organization that has been given international authority to manage whales and whaling. Many object that this action is against the spirit of the IWC, that it weakens the organization, that whaling is never sustainable in the long run, that there are real problems in controlling whaling at the international level, that whaling is inherently cruel, that whale watching is increasingly important (and thus a way for coastal communities to use their resources without killing), that whaling is not necessary and that whales should not be taken because they are under pressure for other reasons (environmental) and can't tolerate it. Norway counters with the following: it's position is legal under international law because Norway is acting in accordance with the terms of the IWC convention, that the minke whale stock from which it is taking whales is large and in absolutely no danger of being over-exploited, that the moratorium was in any case not necessary since many safeguards were already in place by 1982, that a total moratorium was unscientific because it did not take into consideration the condition of the various whale stocks, that international management norms had already developed to control whaling (and other marine resources), Norwegian whaling is very different than the type of whaling most people have in mind (because it is carried out by small boats relatively close to Norway and the product is meat rather than whale oil), that the Norwegian whaling is not cruel (and is more humane than other meat industries and types of whaling), and that the IWC has lost legitimacy as the international organization with the right to manage whaling because it is no longer being run for the benefit of the whaling industry and on scientific principles, because whaling is an important economic activity in Northern areas, and finally, that whales constitute an important resource that should be – and can be – used responsibly.