

SVF-3024 Student Evaluation Report, Spring 2006

The student evaluation of SVF-3024 Conflict Resolution and Conflict Transformation was performed through a) three rounds of questionnaires answered by students electronically in QuestBack and b) the Student Staff Liaison. A final evaluation meeting of the subject was planned for April 24th, 2006. The following report sums up the most important results from such student assessments and points to conclusions that are to be taken in consideration in the subsequent phases of the MPCT evaluation period 2005-06.

I. QuestBack Evaluation of SVF-3024

1. Explanation

The students registered in SVF-3024 anonymously filled out electronically QuestBack forms in three rounds. The first one had a deadline on February 24th, 2006. The second one had a deadline March 21st, 2006. Finally the third QuestBack evaluation was handed in May 5th, 2006. The following forms were used in each of the evaluations:

Scale : Excellent (All) = 5, Very Good (Most) = 4, Good (About half) = 3 ,
Average (Less than half) = 2, Bad (Few) = 1

First and second rounds of evaluations. Form A.

<i>General Questions</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. How many lectures have you followed?					
2. In the beginning, my motivation to follow the lectures was					
3. The teacher's knowledge of the subject matter being taught is					
4. The clarity and organisation of the lectures is					
5. I would rate the student-teacher communication as					
6. The amount of lectures on the topic have been					
7. The amount of reading-material in the topic has been					
8. I believe that the relation of the lectures to Peace Studies is					
9. I think that the cumulative progression of the specific lectures given by this teacher is					
10. How effectively did the lectures build on the material in the required readings?					
11. What is your overall assessment of teaching in this series of lectures?					
12. After the lectures, the improvement in my motivation towards the topic was					

Third round of evaluation. Form B.

<i>General Questions about the exam form</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. How would you rate the exam questions in relation to the content of the subject?					
2. How do you think the questions adapted to the length of the essay you were to write?					
3. How satisfied are you with the feedback you got from the examiners?					
4. How satisfied are you with the grade you received?					
<i>General Questions about the subject as a whole</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. How satisfied are you with the content in SVF-3024 as a whole?					
2. How satisfied are you with the structure of the content in SVF-3024 as a whole?					
3. How helpful has SVF-3024 been in your way to developing a thesis project?					
4. How helpful was the subject in developing your understanding of Peace Studies?					

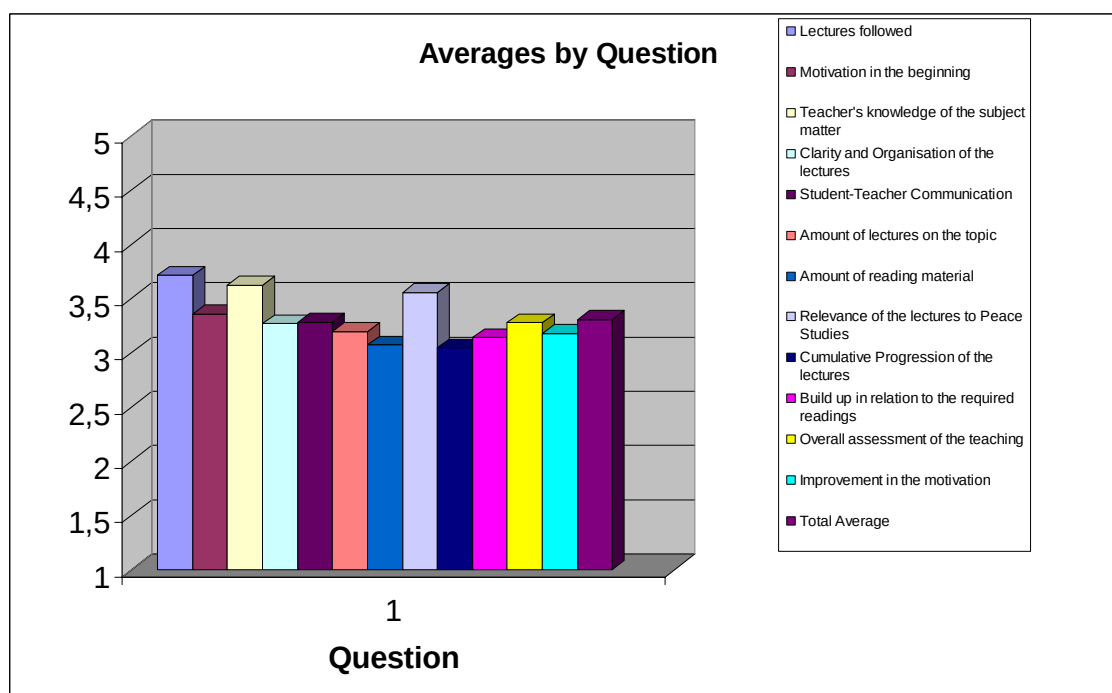
In the three occasions the forms included a space where students could make comments on how they had experienced the subject.

2. Form-Evaluation Results

2.1. Lectures

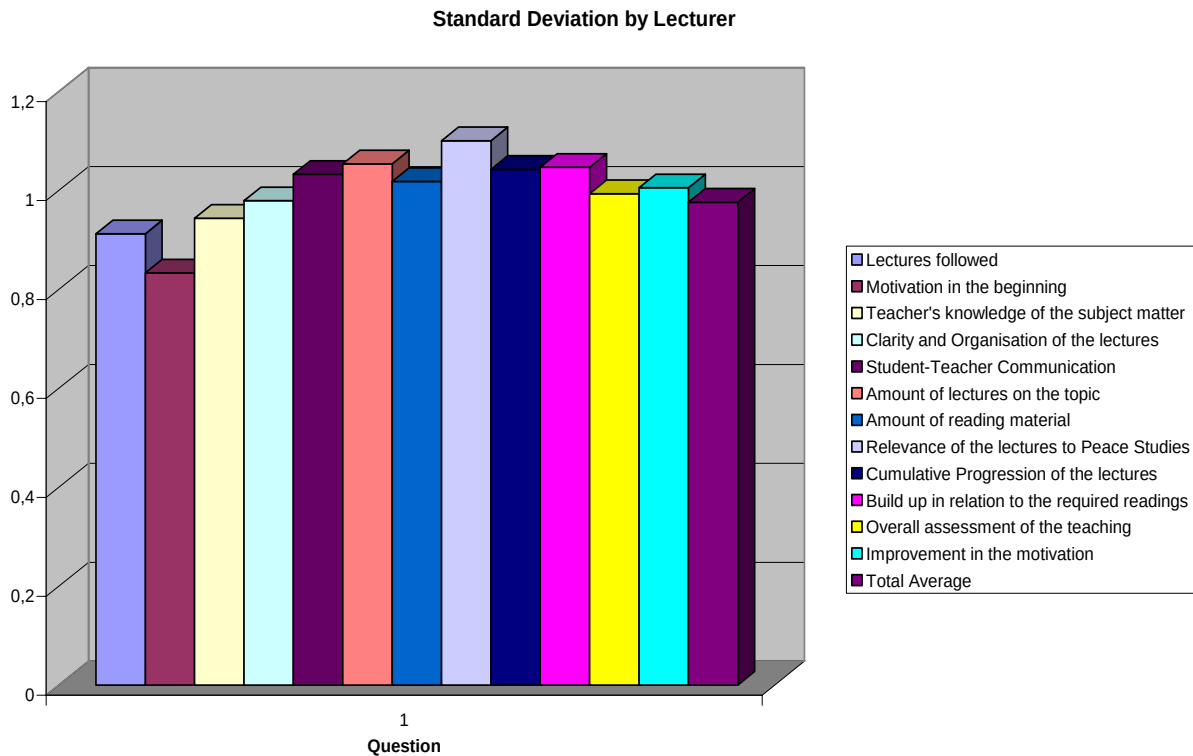
A total of 8 students of 21 answered the first electronic QuestBack questionnaire on the lecturers. A total of 11 students of 21 delivered filled out forms in the second round of evaluation on the lecturers. Students gave lecturers in SVF-3024 an overall average grade of 3,31, in a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is bad and 5 is excellent. This is the overall average of the specific grade averages each student assigned to the 12 issues raised by form A for each lecturer. The standard deviation of averages by question is 0,07 and 0,98 for averages by lecturer. Figure 1 presents a summary of the results.

Figure 1



In order to present a measurement of the variance in student opinion (disagreement) regarding each of the questions on lecturer performance, Figure 2 presents the standard deviations of student answers to each question in Form A.

Figure 2.



2.1.1. Interpretation of the Results of the Lecturer Evaluation

According to the scale and criteria employed, the general opinion of students is that the quality of lectures in SVF-3024 approximates to *good*, with an overall average score of 3,31 and a standard deviation of the averages by question of 0,07. This information can be used to verify hypotheses on students' opinions about the course:

Table 1. Verification of Hypotheses on Students' Opinions on SVF-3024

Ho: The lectures are bad	FALSE
Ho: The lectures are average	FALSE
Ho: The lectures are good	True
Ho: The lectures are very good	FALSE
Ho: The lectures are excellent	FALSE
Confidence Interval	95%

The student answers to the forms also serve to identify strengths and weaknesses in the content, structure and presentation of the subject by each lecturer. Those elements with a grade higher than the *average* are regarded as strengths and those with a grade lower than the average are considered weaknesses.

Strengths of the lectures: It must be pointed out that even the *weaknesses* in the subject receive high marks, with an average of 3,18 ($\sigma=0,09$), which is approximately *good* according to the grading scale. At a confidence interval of 95% the weaknesses of SVF-3024 still receive a little better than *good* grade by the students. This should be regarded as a *strength* of SVF-3024. The other strengths are Attendance ($\mu = 3,37$ and $\sigma = 0,91$); Motivation in the beginning ($\mu = 3,36$ and $\sigma = 0,83$); teacher's knowledge of the subject matter ($\mu = 3,63$ and $\sigma = 0,94$); relevance of the lectures to Peace Studies ($\mu = 3,56$ and $\sigma = 1,1$). It should be an aim to preserve these aspects of SVF-3024.

Weaknesses of the lectures: According to the results, the series of lectures in SVF-3024 have to improve *primarily* in the clarity and organisation of the lecture ($\mu = 3,27$ and $\sigma = 0,97$); student-teacher communication ($\mu=3,28$ and $\sigma = 1,03$); overall assessment of the teaching ($\mu = 3,28$ and $\sigma = 0,99$); amount of reading material ($\mu = 3,07$ and $\sigma = 1,01$); amount of lectures on the topic ($\mu = 3,19$ and $\sigma = 1,05$); cumulative progression of the lectures ($\mu = 3,04$ $\sigma = 1,04$); build up in relation to the required readings ($\mu = 3,14$ and $\sigma = 1,04$); and finally, improvement in the motivation, which the students think dropped from 3,36 to 3,18 as the semester was underway ($\sigma = 1$). However, this drop was really small (0,18) considering that for example in SVF-3021 when in the autumn semester this drop was five times bigger (0,9).

The lowest score was given to the cumulative progression of the lectures. However by performing a T-test on this issue we find that the students still think that the cumulative progression of the lectures is good.

2.2 Exam

A total of 12 of 21 answered the electronic QuestBack questionnaire on the exam. The students consider that the quality of the exam approximates to *good*, with a score of 3,41 and a standard deviation of 0,08 of the average responses for each question. Table 2 verifies hypothesis on the subject SVF-3024:

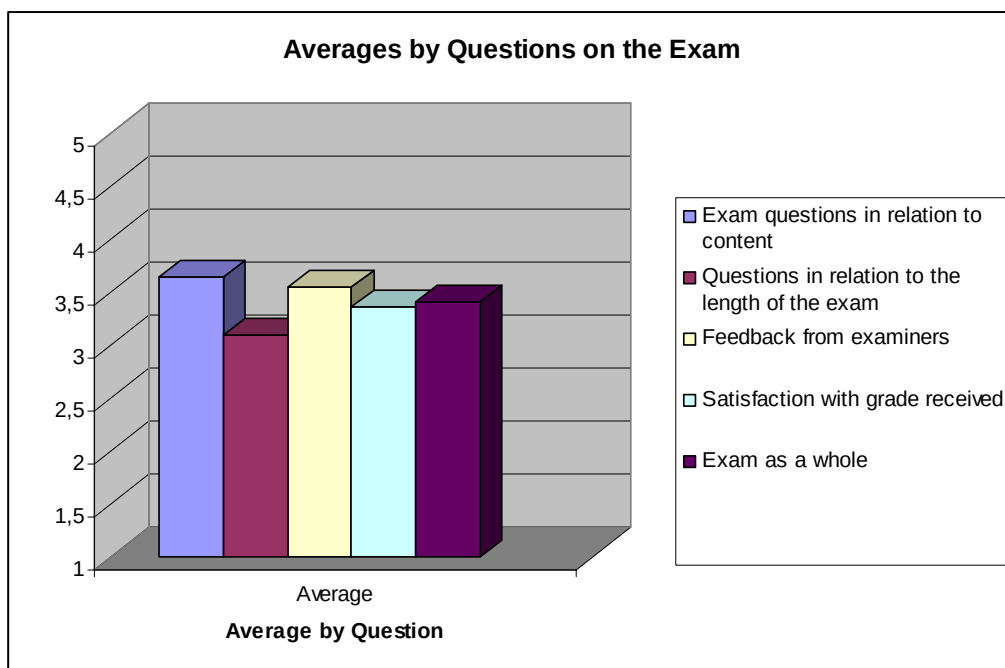
Table 2. Verification of Hypotheses on student opinion for SVF-3024

Ho: Bad Exam	FALSE
Ho: Average Exam	FALSE
Ho: Good Exam	FALSE
Ho: Between Good and Very Good	True
Ho: Very Good Exam	FALSE
Ho: Excellent Exam	FALSE
Confidence Interval	95%

Which means that in general, data shows significantly that students think that the exam was *between good and very good*. Scores above the average are considered strengths and scores below the average mark are considered weaknesses. Such an

interpretation helps the academic coordinator establish priorities of action regarding the changes to consider in the exam form. The results are summed up in Figure 3.

Figure 3



Strengths of the exam: The exam questions and their relation to the subject ($\mu = 3,64$ and $\sigma = 1,30$) feedback they received in their oral exam ($\mu = 3,55$ and $\sigma = 1,29$).

Weaknesses of the exam: The results point out that the students are less satisfied with the grade they received ($\mu = 3,36$ and $\sigma = 1,38$) and even less with the adaptation of the questions to the length of the essay they were to write ($\mu = 3,09$ and $\sigma = 1,19$). However, even the weaknesses of the exam get a grade above *good*, with an overall average of 3,22, just 0,2 points under the overall average for the exam form.

2.2 Subject as a whole

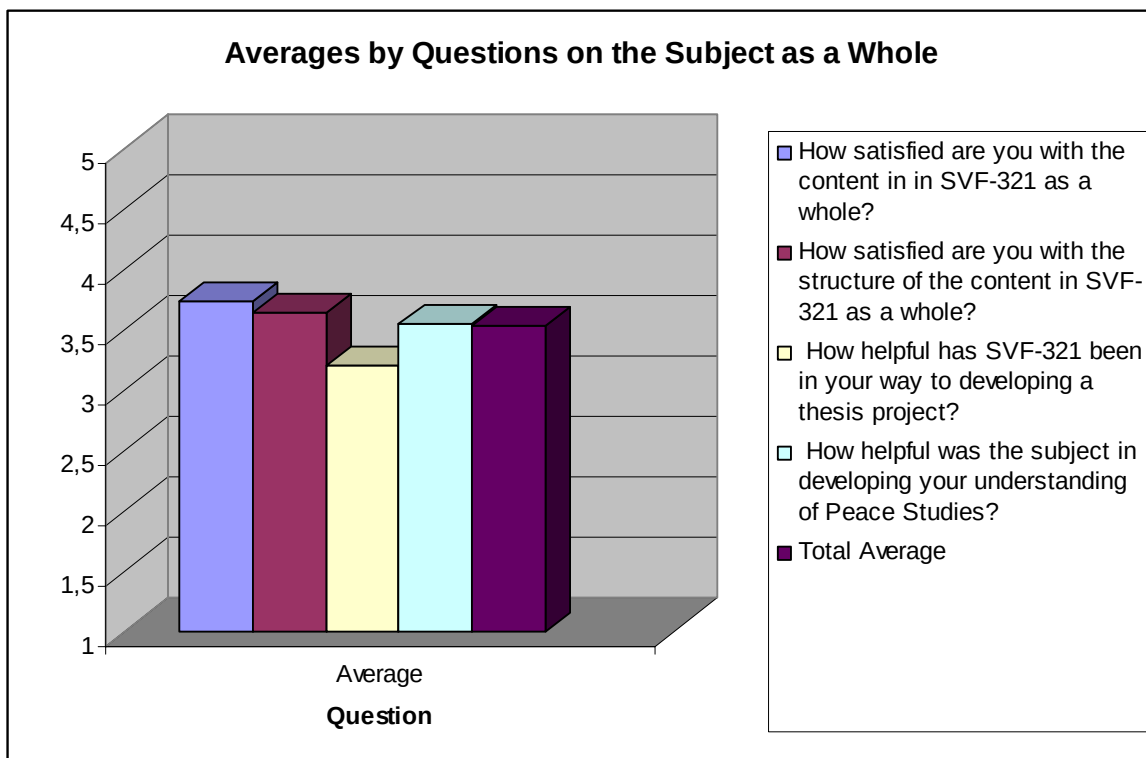
Of 20 students, 11 answered the electronic QuestBack questionnaire on the subject as a whole: lectures and exam. The average grade the students gave to the lectures and exams in SVF-3024 was 3,52, a grade that suggests that the students think that the quality of SVF-3024 was *above good*. The standard deviation in the questions answered on the subject as a whole was 0,14. Table 3 shows the verification of hypotheses on SVF-3024 as a whole:

Table 3. Verification of hypotheses on SVF-3024 as a whole

Ho: Bad Subject as a whole	FALSE
Ho: Average Subject as a whole	FALSE
Ho: Good Subject	FALSE
Ho: Between Good and Very Good	True
Ho: Very Good Subject	FALSE
Ho: Excellent Subject	FALSE
Significance 95%	95%

Figure 4 sums up the results:

Figure 4

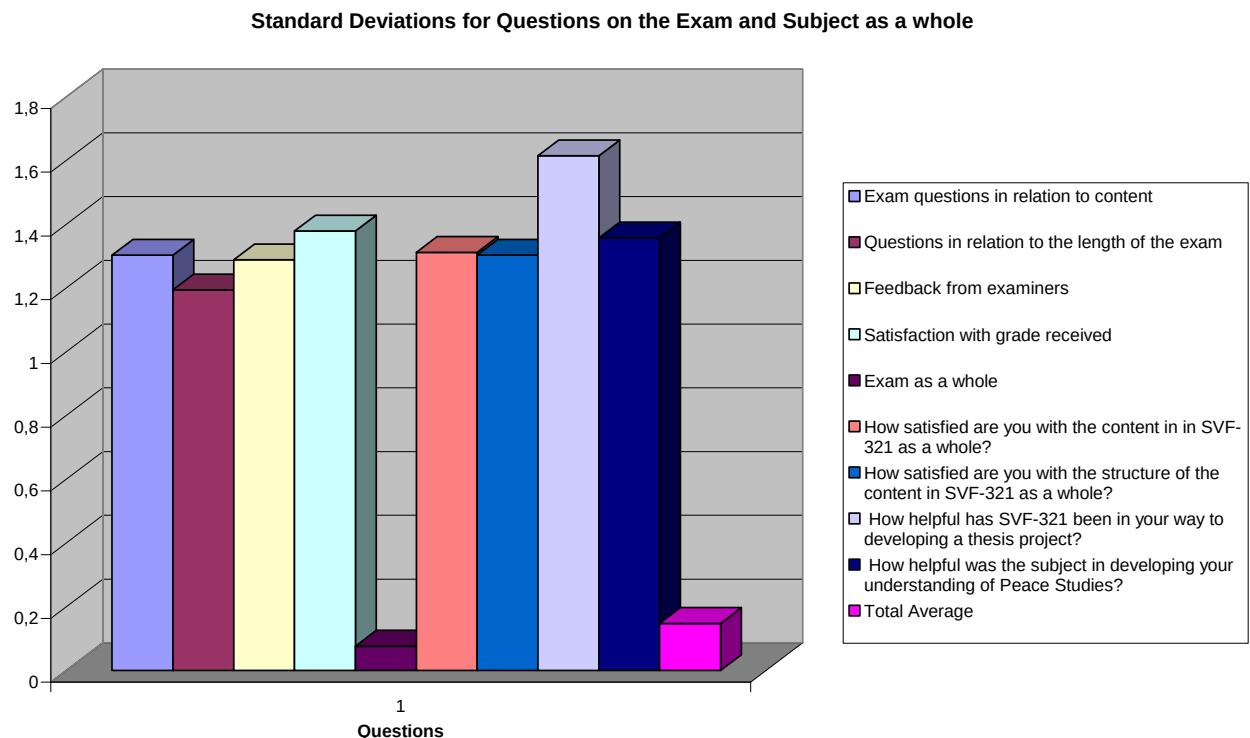


Strengths of the subject as a whole: The subject scored higher in satisfaction with the content ($\mu=3,73$ and $\sigma =1,71$); structure ($\mu=3,64$ and $\sigma =1,30$) and helping students develop their understanding of Peace Studies ($\mu=3,55$ and $\sigma =1,36$).

Weaknesses of the subject as a whole: The subject scored lower in being helpful to develop a thesis project ($\mu=3,2$ and $\sigma =1,61$), which is still above *good* and just 0,3 under the average for the subject as a whole.

Figure 5 presents the standard deviations for the questions answered by students on the exam form and the subject as a whole. They can be used to measure disagreement in the class on each issue.

Figure 5.
Standard Deviations for Questions on the Exam and Subject as a Whole



2.3 Student Comments

This section presents the student comments handed in with the QuestBack forms that were delivered electronically in three occasions, February 24th, March 21st and May 2nd, 2006.

SVF 3024 was a good course. Generally speaking, we had good lectures, interesting reading material, and we had more discussion. I have mentioned these things already in the previous feedbacks, so I won't add anymore. The exam questions were ok. In a few cases, the question was perhaps too specific - it had already been answered in the required reading so we had to try to either disagree with it, or explain why we agreed with it, which doesn't inspire a lot of creativity and new thinking. The required reading for the children's questions was not particularly academic - brochures and hand-outs - which made it difficult to answer the questions on a very theoretical level. As far as the oral exam was concerned, I felt like the censors were not prepared with any questions for me. I was in the room for nine minutes. I think the point of the oral exam should be to clarify any questions the censors had about what we had written, but instead of asking me to clarify the parts they didn't understand, they just told me they didn't get it after I came back into the room. Instead of letting me out after nine minutes, they should have used the allotted time to have me explain certain parts of the paper. I was given two questions and was not given a chance to clarify or defend my essays - I can't talk about or defend something if I am not told that the censors have an issue with it. We could have used the other 11 minutes to discuss the unclear parts - if I had known they were unclear. What is the point of an oral exam if the censors don't have questions for you and are unable to articulate what was specifically lacking in the papers, and if your grade is decided before you walk in the door?

I question what use the oral exam really has. It seems to have little or no effect on the grade. For instance if you do a good oral it still doesn't seem to benefit you much if at all. My main point is that an oral is an extremely stressing situation for us students and I'd rather not have it if it means so little. I can see that it might be thought to prepare us for the thesis oral but there are other more helpful ways to

help us develop our skills for that. For instance having smaller less formal oral presentations in class along the way in the subjects where you can get constructive feedback from your teachers and peers. When that is said I would like to add that this oral for 3024 was a much better experience then the last oral. It was more of a relaxed conversation, with more opens to find out what you knew in general and not detailed questions to "get" you. When it comes to the questions on this exam I generally thought they were good. Maybe a bit repetitive in the two parts however. Also the questions on the 2500 essay were hard to cut down to that size, cause one could have answered them with so much.

I want to say that I have enjoyed this semester, and it met my expectations of the program a lot better than the first semester. I think the themes we have had this year have been more useful towards future jobs, thesis etc. I think we should have more time to prepare for thesis, though, not necessarily in the 3024-couse, but maybe have a different course more focused on thesis planning. One question in this feed-back was how relevant this course has been in planning the thesis or coming up with a question, and I think it has been useful for that, but the ideas have come to late because we should already have decided on a topic at the beginning of this course. And when it comes to ideas for thesis, I found that this course was better for this than 3021. When it comes to exams, I think a different model than the current written + oral should be considered. First off all, I think there is too little time to have two pretty big essays in two weeks, because I feel that we don't get enough time to really go into what we are writing. it is difficult to start the second one after spending so much time thinking about the first, without a break in between, and also feel that I wanted to go deeper into the issues on the first one, but couldn't. Then I don't really see the point of the oral, because it feels like the grade is practically decided before we go in there. But I would also like to point out that I like this oral exam better than the one for 3021.

I liked 3024 because I could understand it (thanks to good lectures and articles) and they all were connected somehow

Have not participated in the lectures

There is no need to have Roy Bhaskar again. The use of teachers who have real world experience was great. Salomon was a great professor and was great at interacting and discussing with the students. The oral exam was not a positive experience for everyone, and I still find it very troubling that the final exam is the only basis for the grade in the course. I know that some of the students who received low grades for 3024 are also the students who came to all the lectures and read all the literature, and some of the students who receive high marks did not attend class at all. It kills all motivation and desire to come to lecture and participate when the only thing that counts is how you write on one exam, and I believe that participation and discussion are the things that can be most improved in 3024 and the program in general. Current issues, examples, and experiences deserve more focus and use in the course.

SVF-3024 was far, far better than 3021 (which I would characterize as a catastrophe in terms of both content and structure). Much more relevant topics and more up-to-date, more inspiring, many thanks for that! It could still be improved however. Some concrete suggestions:

- Leave out the 'children and peace'-stuff altogether, or find a lecturer that can say things that are not self-evident nonsense. I think this section was definitely the weakest part of 3024.
- Leave out critical realism
- Include more contemporary conflicts and political events in the curriculum – for example have a session each week in which recent events are discussed and made relevant in relation to our curriculum, find some good lecturer who can do this and who is able to make us reflect critically upon issues in the media.

Examples from this spring that I would love to see included in the lectures: the caricature debate, the Iran-issue, the Palestinian elections of Hamas and the international world's reactions, Israeli politics (Sharon's disappearance from politics and the election), the elections in Belarus, what's going on in Iraq, etc. Actually I find it straight out ridiculous that as peace and conflict transformation program does not consider current issues like these as one of the most important parts of the curriculum. We need to learn to reflect and think critically about what's going on in the world, and relate it to the theory that we learn. The assignment we got about war economies is a good example of how things should be done all the time, what better way is it to learn about a theory than go out there and find empirical information about current events and relate it to the text books? If I could decide the whole MPCT

programme would be structured like this, with lots of small assignments, workshops and discussion groups, all the time focussing on critical thinking and linking the real world to theory. The absolute weakest part of the MPCT program in general is that it is not connected to the real world - contemporary issues should be put in the front seat instead of being completely left out, the latter being the case as it is now. After all, peace studies should be anchored in reality, not in philosophical pros and cons that lie far outside current events. Foster reflection and critical thinking instead of meaningless and uncritical '... - and peace'-sessions.

SVF 3024 is a very good course in relation to conflict transformation, the only problem was that it was too broad and a little bit confusing when reading.

II. Student Staff Liaison (SSL)

There were four SSL meetings in the course of the Spring Semester 2006. The first one was on January 25th, 2006. The following meetings took place on February 23rd, March 23rd and May 24th, 2006. The results of the meetings are summed up in the minutes (DocuLive saksnr. 2006 01506).

The comments and measures on SVF-3021 Culture Conflict and Society taken up in the SSL meetings are:

Students have been in the first lectures of SVF-3024 Conflict Resolution and Conflict Transformation, and everyone seems to be pleased with them. The lecturer has taken in consideration the student comments on using slides as an aid for presentations and on stimulating discussion in class. The students enjoyed having the assignment that stimulated participation in class.

People in the first year class have been complaining that they do not see the relevance of Critical Realism and think other things should be on the curriculum. It has also been noted that the CPS should either say that they are a centre of critical realism or have alternatives. The Student Representative from the second year noted that philosophy of science is important, so it should not be completely taken out but at least supplemented with other theories. The discussion of the students will be taken into consideration. The second year representatives noted that it is important that philosophy is a part of the program. A hermeneutical approach would be a good complement to critical realism and is present here at the university and a balance between methods is important. Some from the first year feel that the teaching especially in the fall failed to engage the students.

III. General Evaluation Meeting

Unfortunately there was no formal "General Evaluation Meeting" due to lack of student attendance. The CPS staff regards this as unfortunate.