



Sustainable Forestry and Land-use Management in the Tropics SG0258, 20100.2021

15 Hp

Pace of study = 100%

Education cycle = Advanced

Course leader = Rosa Goodman

Evaluation report

Evaluation period: 2021-01-12 - 2021-01-31

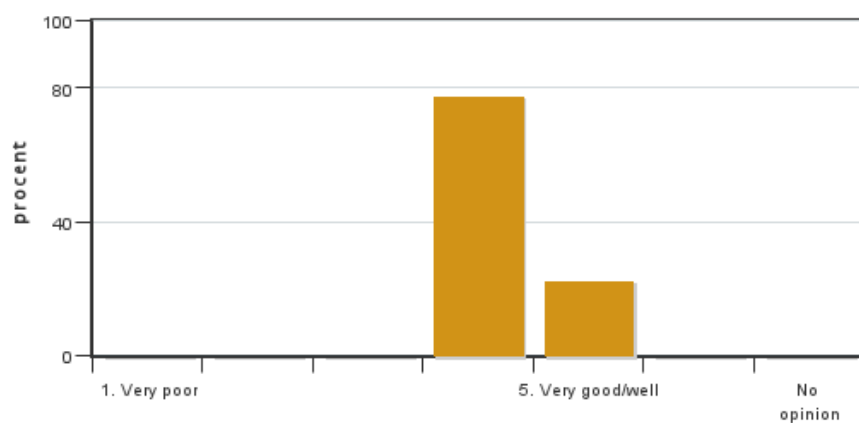
Answers 9

Number of students 12

Answer frequency 75 %

Mandatory standard questions

1. My overall impression of the course is:

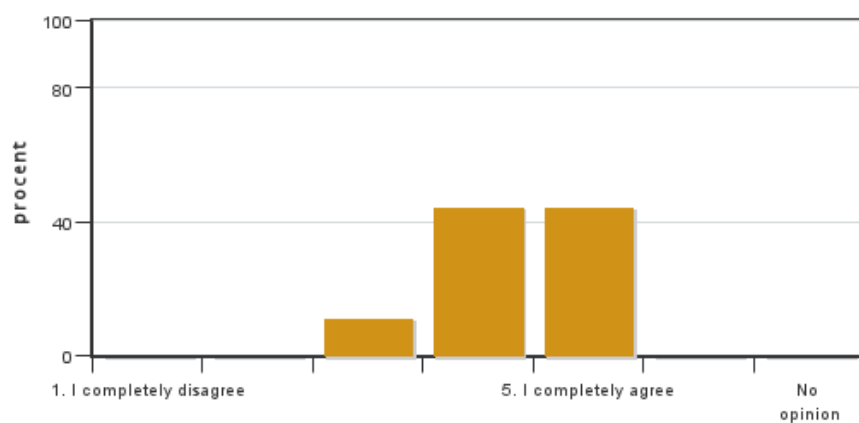


Answers: 9
Medel: 4,2
Median: 4

1: 0
2: 0
3: 0
4: 7
5: 2

No opinion: 0

2. I found the course content to have clear links to the learning objectives of the course.

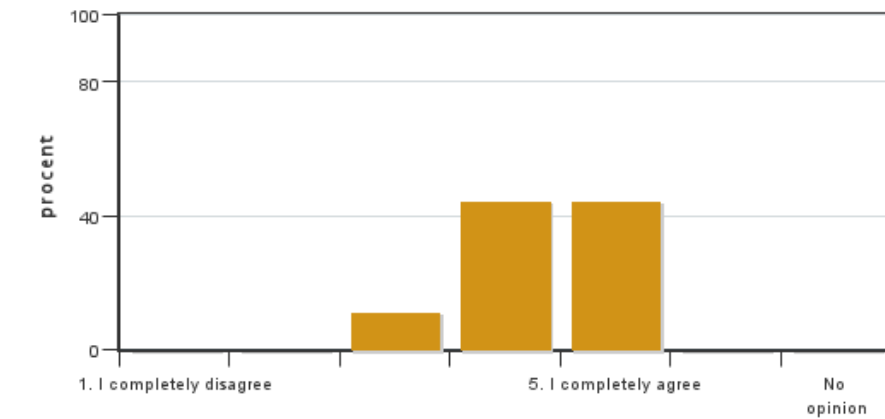


Answers: 9
Medel: 4,3
Median: 4

1: 0
2: 0
3: 1
4: 4
5: 4

No opinion: 0

3. My prior knowledge was sufficient for me to benefit from the course.

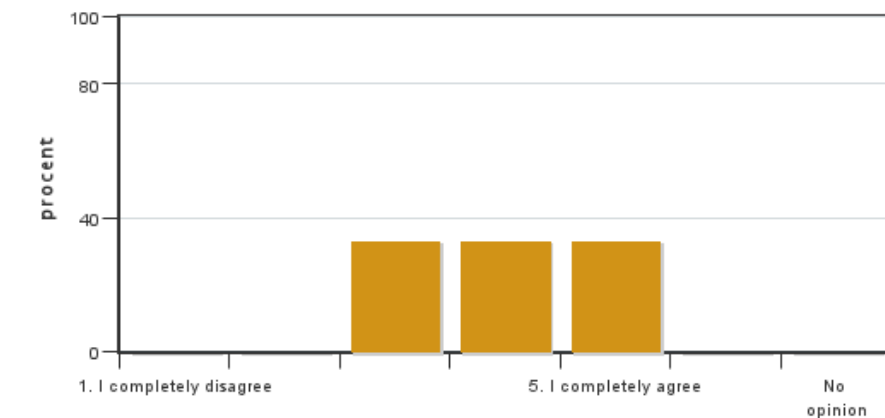


Answers: 9
Medel: 4,3
Median: 4

1: 0
2: 0
3: 1
4: 4
5: 4

No opinion: 0

4. The information about the course was easily accessible.

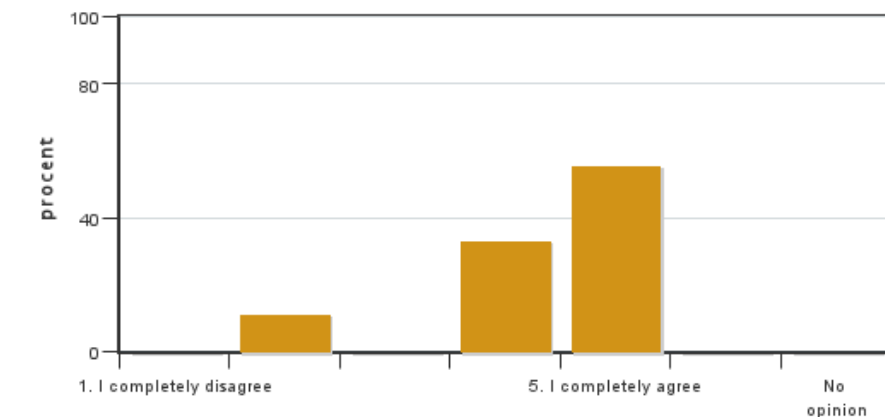


Answers: 9
Medel: 4,0
Median: 4

1: 0
2: 0
3: 3
4: 3
5: 3

No opinion: 0

5. The various course components (lectures, course literature, exercises etc.) have supported my learning.

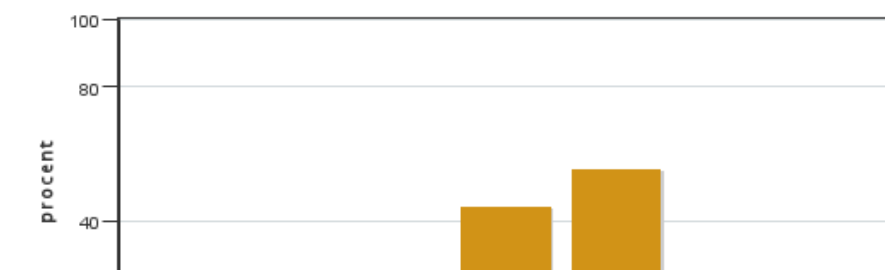


Answers: 9
Medel: 4,3
Median: 5

1: 0
2: 1
3: 0
4: 3
5: 5

No opinion: 0

6. The social learning environment has been inclusive, respecting differences of opinion.



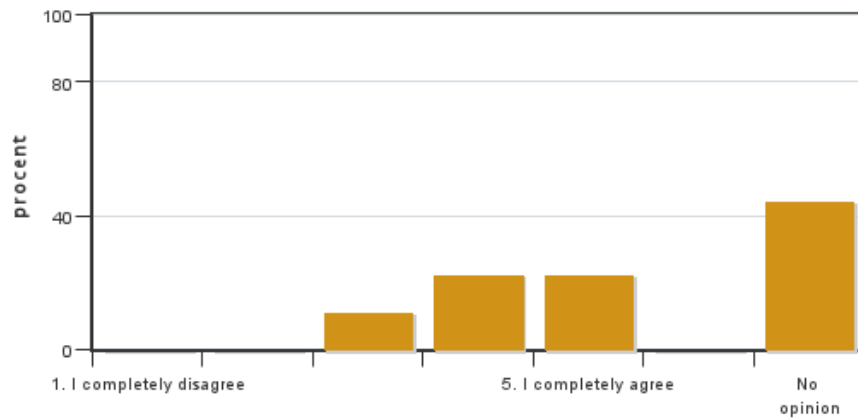
Answers: 9
Medel: 4,6
Median: 5

1: 0
2: 0
3: 0
4: 4
5: 5



No opinion: 0

7. The physical learning environment (facilities, equipment etc.) has been satisfactory.



Answers: 9

Medel: 4,2

Median: 4

1: 0

2: 0

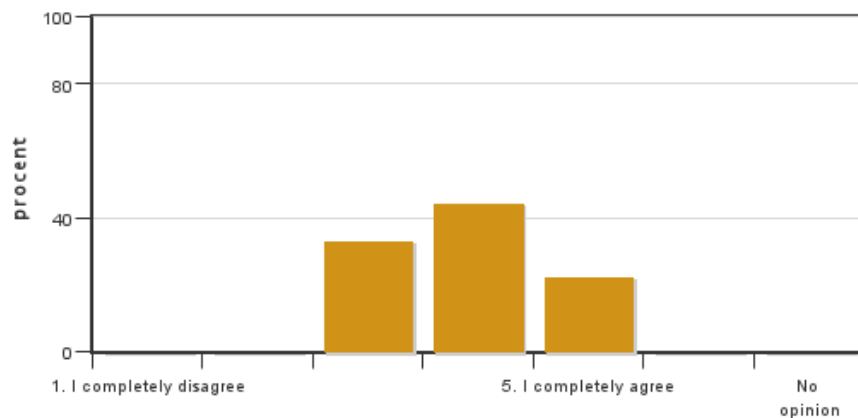
3: 1

4: 2

5: 2

No opinion: 4

8. The examination(s) provided opportunity to demonstrate what I had learnt during the course (see the learning objectives).



Answers: 9

Medel: 3,9

Median: 4

1: 0

2: 0

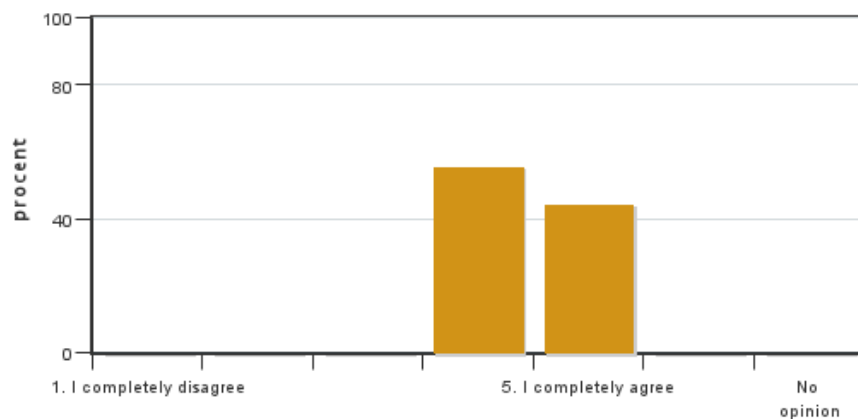
3: 3

4: 4

5: 2

No opinion: 0

9. The course covered the sustainable development aspect (environmental, social and/or financial sustainability).



Answers: 9

Medel: 4,4

Median: 4

1: 0

2: 0

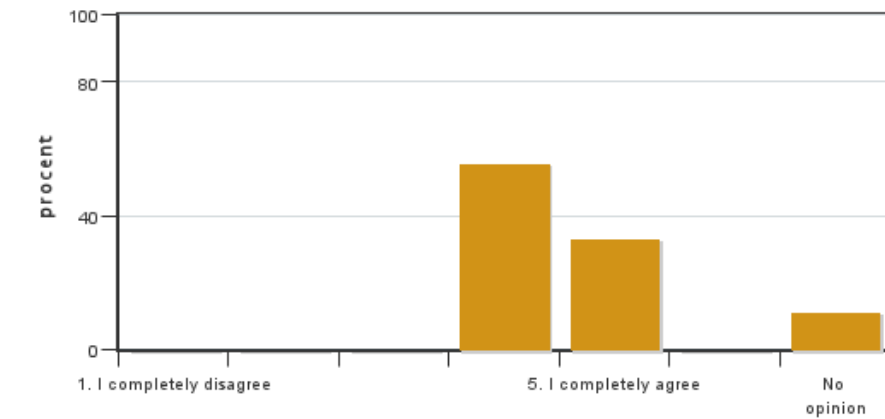
3: 0

4: 5

5: 4

No opinion: 0

10. I believe the course has included a gender and equality aspect, regarding content as well as teaching practices (e.g. perspective on the subject, reading list, allocation of speaking time and the use of master suppression techniques).

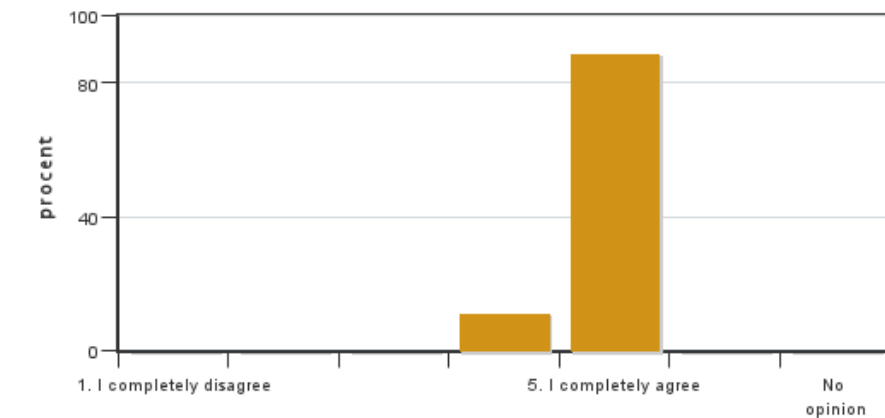


Answers: 9
Medel: 4,4
Median: 4

1: 0
2: 0
3: 0
4: 5
5: 3

No opinion: 1

11. The course covered international perspectives.

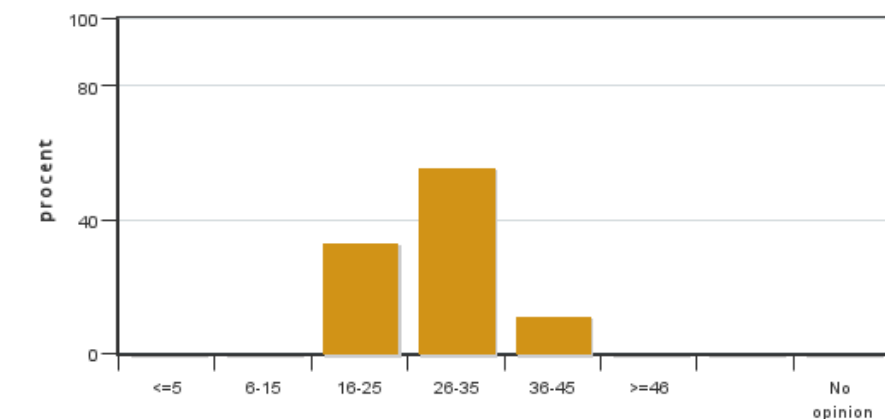


Answers: 9
Medel: 4,9
Median: 5

1: 0
2: 0
3: 0
4: 1
5: 8

No opinion: 0

12. On average, I have spent ... hours/week on the course (including timetabled hours).

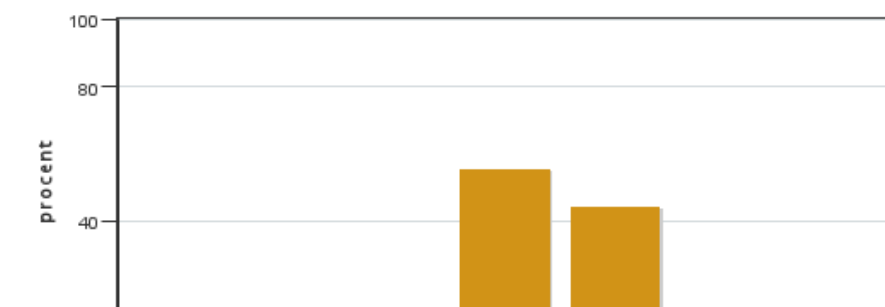


Answers: 9
Medel: 27,8
Median: 26-35

≤5: 0
6-15: 0
16-25: 3
26-35: 5
36-45: 1
≥46: 0

No opinion: 0

13. If relevant, what is your overall experience of participating in all or part of your course online?



Answers: 9
Medel: 4,4
Median: 4

1: 0
2: 0
3: 0
4: 5
5: 4

No opinion: 0



14. If relevant, please share what worked well when participating in teaching on distance

15. If relevant, please share what worked less well when participating in teaching on distance

Additional own questions

16. Please list your favorite components of the course (ie, an assignment, a particular exercise or lecture, a week-long topic). Optional: Share what you liked about them.

16. Please share any part of the course you did not like, why, and what could be improved.

16. What is your top take-away from this course?

16. Did you learn anything that really changed your perspective? If so, what?

16. Do you have more compassion or cynicism about forest and land-use management in the tropics than before taking this course? Please explain.

Course leaders comments

No comments from the teacher

Student representatives comments

Comments by the student representative Lukáš Vaníček, in Semily, Czech Republic, February 28, 2021

Introduction

The course Sustainable Forestry and Land Use Management in the Tropics, taking place 2.11.2020 – 17.1.2021, organized by SLU Umea, was a 15 credits independent course designed for master students, who are aiming to obtain higher education in science. The course was open for SLU forestry students (who formed the majority of the group), students from different faculties and universities in Sweden obtaining for master diploma and exchange students. In total, 12 participants coming from Czech Republic, Estonia, India, The Netherlands and Sweden took part in and completed the course. However, few students didn't realized this course is full-time course where active participation is expected and decided to leave the course in the very beginning – these students are not included in the number above.

This year of Tropical forestry course was bit specific, since covid-19 situation didn't enabled to organize normal on-campus teaching. The whole course had been conducted online. Even though the learning environment was an unique and all studying facilities had been substituted into online format, the course had shown great quality; if not even better than in case of on-campus format. Online format facilitated opportunities to meet international guests from abroad, even from the souther hemisphere, who might otherwise face certain peculiarities when travelling to give us on-campus lecture. As it will be later discussed concerning evaluation by students, most of the students took the course seriously, spent dozens of hours of work weekly and had been well prepared for most of the lectures or discussion meetings.

Course structure

The course had been structured into weekly blocks, where both teachers and guest lecturers and students themselves played unmissable role in the course enrichment. Weekly highlights are described below.

Course introduction and tropical ecology.

Ecosystem services

Agroforestry, plantations, and multi-functional landscapes

Natural forest management

Forest and landscape restoration

Factfulness reading (book by Hans Rosling)

Final project

Final project- presentations, pitch, peer view; reflections

Online learning

Most common way of learning on distance was Zoom meetings. Compared to other online courses I have participated in this case it was easily accessible to join the meeting since all the meetings had been available to join by clicking on the same zoom link. Sessions had been written down on list of lectures, which had usually been updated about one or two weeks in advance – the list had been actualized regularly, so students did have fresh information about next meeting in fair advance. During every zoom lecture, there had always been extra time for discussions, questions or follow-up sessions. Some of the lectures of higher importance had always been noticed – however, we have usually met as a group of full attendance. Next, huge amount of articles had been available on canvas for each of the study week/ block.

Usually, each educational block was arranged as a block of several lectures, given by SLU teachers, researchers, and international guest lecturers, who are masters of their field. To catch up with individual days and weeks (especially for students who did not experienced any tropical courses before), it was expected to read comprehensive literature, watch youtube videos, and to study the parts that we are interested in and that we would like to focus on in our future job. I would say about 40% of the learning was based on online meetings and about 60% had been based on own preparation and assignments performance. During the course, we did have many small tasks to prepare, to write or to prepare for discussions; few bigger assignments, where we have used the knowledge gained by studying and our own creativity, and one big final project, which we had been working on for about a month. Some of the assignments should have been submitted individually, whereas few bigger assignments and final project had been conducted in pairs or in groups of 3 students. This year, corona situation didn't enabled us to join an international study trip to African tropical countries – but we did have an opportunity to meet specialist from these countries via zoom; moreover, some students decided to write their final thesis based on a research in these countries.

In the end of the course, students had a chance to give a feedback to the teachers during last zoom meeting and after by filling a questionnaire. Students and teachers used to give feedback regularly during the course as well. Last zoom meeting didn't met the assumption of full participation – some students didn't show up. As for final course evaluation, even though it has been announced in advance and later during the evaluation period, only 9 out of 12 students decided to commit the questionnaire. It has been conducted electronically, online, via SLU Evald webpages: students ranked their satisfaction on the course or shown their compliance of various tasks. In the end of the questionnaire, few open-ended questions had been provided.

Here comes my comments to the results of the student evaluation questionnaire:

It is possible to clearly see, that students, who decided to answer, did ranked most of the questions with high score of satisfaction. Mostly, mean score of individual questions overlapped number 4 out of 5. Students praised well-structured course, including various course components that have supported their learning. Students did like the breakout rooms for group discussions – the groups had usually been divided randomly, which made the opportunity to share students' ideas in between all of us – it was nice to communicate always with someone else and to inspire each other. Physical environment of our class had been inclusive, since many national Swedish students were mingled with international students from both European and non-European countries; it was nice to look forward to the next online meeting – it was not only about learning from the lectures provided by teachers, but everyone equally participated and enriched our class by being a part of the group. Students reported mean participation load of 28 hours per week; 5 students reported their study load of 26 – 35 hours/week and 1 student reported 36 – 45 hours per week. It was obvious who did properly prepare for the next meeting, because these students were able to discuss about the topic and were able to give a counterargument for the problematics on daily basis. I believe this is rather specialized course, where only students with deep motivation and focus participated this year (students with low motivation dropped out of the course in the very beginning of the course during first weeks). We are all different, but thanks to energetic Rosa, even less talkative people got rid of shyness and were happy to share their ideas. The group was very friendly, no one felt any signs of superiority – we didn't felt any differences between teachers and students, we felt being on the same level.

What worked less?

One student expressed, that „This course seemed more centered around application of knowledge already obtained, rather than on learning.“ It is true, that this course has deep specialization for tropical forestry and land use

management, and might be expected, that students are interested in this field of study. However, lectures were organized in a way, that after lectures, readings, and supplementary videos, we were able to elaborate more and to be creative when doing the assignments, where the knowledge was applied. One student confided difficulty to discuss in the beginning of the course, but as the course was going on, he/she found it much easier during the course, since we practiced discussing mostly every lecture. Few students reported their confusion when using Slack application (probably because fresh information about next meetings or other course information used to be posted in more places – e.g., on multiple threads on Slack, sometimes via e-mail and on canvas – different teachers used different method, moreover, not all teachers joined slack etc...) - but all in all, as the course was going on, everything seemed to be united and easy to use. Some students would rather prefer on-campus format, but it is non reasonable nowadays, moreover, we are glad that online format brought the same quality.

For following open-ending questions, I decided to copy the original answers from students:

Favorite course components:

"

- Gerts parts were the most interesting.
- Hans Rosling assignment for a refreshing view on the world
- the management and silviculture, agroforestry parts
- I liked the introduction to tropical forests, soils and so and different conditions. The assignments was good but did not gave as much
- The factfulness assignment, where it really catch my attention and interest. i will even read it again to discover parts i might have mist.
- Assignment 1: Field brief. - Nice to discover the world soil map and that it felt as a "real world" assignment
Infographic: - Fun to practice how to deliver facts in a creative way. Also good to have discussion on mural.
week 47: agroforestry, plantations etc - Good lectures and interesting examples. All of the guest lecturers were inspiring! Factfulness
- -----
- The soil assignment was cleverly designed and nicely integrated soil science with social aspects (but the instructions were somewhat scarce).
- I like the structure of the course. First, we had an opportunity to learn a lot during the lectures, later on, we applied our knowledge to our own research and we have provided our creativity connected to the knowledge in written assignments. I believe i liked the Factfulness week the most. And even though i am slow reader, this book has absorbed my mind in a way, that it was even easy to read it. "

What did you not like?

"

- Did not like that for example the project was so strict with different parts and plenty of questions. Would be more interesting to write a regular report.
- I hoped it would be more on tropical forestry systems and value-chains, and less on social development
- We spent much of the course on sustainability of different aspects which were nice but I had also hoped to have learned more silvicultural practices such as site preparation and scarification methods in ferralsols, agrisols, or other tropic soils for instance. And it would of course have been fun to go on a trip but that is unreasonable to ask for in these times.
- The schedule was not the best and the instructions was not the best
- last assignment, might have been i took an not so interesting (or overwhelming) project, which made the pitch not as fun even though i usually love that kind of stuff (presentation/roleplay)
- -----
- There seemed to be a general "lack of teaching" of the knowledge required to complete the assignments (and the self-study material provided didn't always suffice). I might also have appreciated learning more about the details of tropical soil science, agroforestry and silviculture.
- It always takes quite long time (even few weeks up to 1 - 2 months) to get feedback for our written assignments. Final grade is not available yet. But i understand you are fully employed teachers and researchers doing multiple tasks on daily basis. Well I didn't like the infographics collage that we had to create

in the computer program. It took us much more time to create it in the program rather than to summarize our thoughts in our brain. This is exactly the assignment, that would have been much better to do using colored highlighters (markers, fixa), and big paper and present it at school in the classroom. "

Did you learn anything that changed your mind?

"

- Matthias Pechels lecture was really interesting, and gave new surprising perspectives of climate change that I did not know.
- Yeah everything Hans Rosling said.
- I did not realize before taking this course that tropical forestry experiments for management are quite scarce, and that there are many other aspects to consider aside from forestry such as social values and stability. This is definitely something which other forestry courses do not bring up as they always assume boreal conditions. Very interesting
- Yes, Africa and countries on other countries that we consider hopeless and "forever poor" does have potential
- yes, from the factfulness I learned that the world is better than I expected and we still improve.
- The gap between industrial and developing countries is gone.
- -----
- The complexity of climatology (it's not just about GHG:s!). Factfulness.
- Factfulness book, dollar street and income levels "

Summary

Students reported that study objectives had been fulfilled. In my opinion, this course is not only about tropical forestry, agroforestry and land use management, this course will open your mind – you will learn, what nobody said you so far. You will create your own opinion and if being really interested, you will gain a lot of contacts to people, who are experts on land use management in the tropics and who can support your ideas and move towards to make your ideas come true. Group of highly performed teachers, researchers and people who have life experiences from the study countries had offered us unique course, which had been ranked very well by the students. Thank you for being with us!