

## **Reflections & Evaluation Erasmus Courses Stockholm University**

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### **Course: Quaternary Environments**

**Course responsible(s):** prof. S. Wastegård (also J. Risberg, F. Preusser)

**Period: Autumn 2013 A (~September)**

This course existed out of three excursions. A first one of 10 days to northern Lapland in Sweden, Finland and Norway. A second one of about 4-5 days in central Sweden and the last one also in central Sweden of 3 days. Every time the glacial and post-glacial history and geomorphology are the major points of interest. The last excursion focuses on coring technique and sampling, these samples will be analyzed in the successive course Palaeocological Research Methods. First two excursions were evaluated on the base of your field notes, for the last one, one has to give a presentation.

This course is absolutely recommendable. The nature is beautiful, the things you see will come back in the rest of your courses and it is an excellent way to get to know other - local and international - students. The theoretical extra information could be more, but the foreseen professor for this year couldn't join – what maybe influenced this aspect. Appropriate for all levels, some physical condition is advisable. One should keep in mind extra costs related to these excursions (+600 euro ?).

### **Course: Palaeocological Research Methods**

**Course responsible(s):** J. Risberg

**Period: Autumn 2013 B (~October)**

The core sample material, acquired in a previous field trip, will be analyzed. One week under supervision of an expert for macrofossils, one week for pollen analysis and one week for diatom analysis. Also some forams, ostracods were investigated as well as methodology to determine carbon content in your samples. The last week is filled with discussion about the results and the writing of a scientific report which serves as evaluation of this course. For every type of analysis the student starts with learning how to subsample, where after the students have to make their own determinations and counts, under supervision. This an intense but very effective way of getting knowledge and experience with these kind of sources of information.

This course is excellent for people in interested in acquiring some practical, lab experience. Every day lab from 09h00 to 16h00. This is maybe the most important potential downside, long days looking through microscopes... Some interest in paleoecology/climatology or something similar can be useful. Good that on the base of our own results we can discuss and reconstruct a part of the post-glacial history of a certain area.

**Course: Isotope Geology****Course responsible(s): prof. C-M. Mörth****Period: Autumn 2013 C (~November)**

This is a course, taught in a more classical way. Most days you have a lecture or an exercise, focusing on theory. Actually, a whole series of isotope systems are discussed by different people working with these particular elements – so for every system you have somebody with relevant experience in the particular field with also attention on the applications. The evaluation is a written exam, existing out of a list (15-20) of smaller questions. A smaller exercise/paper also has to be hand in.

As this course is part of the geology master, focus is more on geology sometimes. After the course one has a good overview on how to use (stable and radiometric) isotopes for different applications. The guided exercise sessions are very good and force you to really understand certain formulas and concepts. The level is not super high but also too easy. Some basic chemistry and interest in isotope systems can be useful.

**Course: Quaternary Climate History****Course responsible(s): prof. S. Wastegård (also F. Preusser)****Period: Autumn 2013 D (~December-January)**

The course contains some general lectures. Furthermore there are two discussion seminars where the students have to present articles (thematical) and discuss about the articles they had to read with each other – some days off to prepare these. Largest part of the course time and proportion of the evaluation goes to an individual project related to Quaternary Climate History, in a relative broad sense. Here for one has to write a paper (+4000 words, literature review) and present the paper at the end of the course.

It is quite a relaxed course, certainly for second masters who successfully ended the course Environmental Change in the first master. Maybe more suitable for bachelor students. Because the topic of the individual assignment is relatively free, one can maybe make it more useful by taking a topic somewhat related to a (potential) bachelor/master thesis.

**In general:**

Geosciences are much bigger (and richer?) at Stockholm University compared to the VUB and the KULeuven. This results in the fact that they have an own building, with a very nice geo-library, good infrastructure and a lot of different teachers and research topics. For physical geography and geology, collaboration with the Museum of Natural Sciences just a few hundred meters further is an asset. In general the (master) courses are 'more relaxed', compared with the first year master at VUB-KUL. Focus is more on skills than knowledge, although this is highly course depended.