



# SOSC 15100 4 - Classics of Social and Political Thought I - Instructor(s): William Levine

Project Title: **College Course Feedback - Autumn 2023**

Number Enrolled: **19**

Number of Responses: **10**

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## Report Comments

Opinions expressed in these evaluations are those of students enrolled in the specific course and do not represent the University.

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Creation Date: **Friday, February 2, 2024**

## What are the most important things that you learned in this course? Please reflect on the knowledge and skills you gained.

Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–Now I understand why Socrates is hated</li> <li>–Philosophy involves a lot of debate, and yet the result may still be an unclear answer</li> <li>–There was historical use but also distrust for philosophers, especially as their thinking can influence politics</li> <li>–Many structures or institutions established today can be traced to discussions in philosophy</li> </ul>
I loved learning Plato and how Socrates viewed the world. The readings can be difficult but the class discussions and lecture allowed the full meaning to be unveiled.
I enhanced my thoughts on politics and philosophy, while improving my ability to read and write about complex passages, considering the books in this course are tough to get through.
The texts (Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli) are some that everyone should read in their lifetime. Prof. Levine is a very relaxed and chill professor who also teaches the texts very well, and really gets you to think critically about the material.
The central themes of philosophical works and their interpretations
How to understand, read, and write about philosophical texts.
Our discussions focused on the nature of justice and its role in human societies and politics. Readings included Plato's Republic, selected texts from Aristotle, Aquinas' Summa Theologica, and Machiavelli's The Prince.
This course was very helpful. I found the lecture very engaging and thought provoking. I also found the topic super interesting and caught myself thinking about what it means to be a good person, the role of law in our life, ect. I think this course also helps with practice on how to deconstruct arguments and support claims with evidence.

## Describe how aspects of this course (lectures, discussions, labs, assignments, etc.) contributed to your learning.

Comments
The readings presented an unfamiliar way of thinking and interpreting, and lectures served to clarify points made so that we could present our own reasoning and interpretations. The questions assignments after each reading were helpful for later review of material for writing essays, which were a way for us to support or tear down arguments of the text. The seminars provided guidance to improve our essays and writing.
I loved the discussions, one of the most engaged classes I've had at UChicago
Lectures were very informative, engaging and interesting. The texts in this course are hard to read and therefore are sometimes confusing, but the lectures made a wonderful job of making them much clearer. Also writing seminars guided me in constructing my assignments, since I was new to academic writing.
The reading isn't so bad (30–40 pages before each class) the writing assignments are very manageable, and class discussion is always interesting. You will probably gain the most from just doing the reading but class discussions will certainly serve to enrich your understanding of the texts. You don't need to take notes, but I'd recommend it. It will make writingg your essays easier and your essays will be of better quality.
Helpful lectures.
In–class discussion helped me understand how to read and interpret the text.
Readings were useful to get a grounding in the ideas of each author, but much of the learning came from discussions. Professor Levine guided the class by posing questions, and was generally able to keep us on one topic long enough to have a fruitful conversation. Although he tried to lecture as little possible, I found that those moments were the most educational.
Lecture was kind of essential in this course, I would not of understood the books properly without the insight of the professor.

Please respond to the following:

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
This course challenged me intellectually.	4.50	4.50	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%	50.00%
I understood the purpose of this course and what I was expected to gain from it.	4.70	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	30.00%	70.00%
I understood the standards for success on assignments.	4.30	4.50	0.00%	0.00%	20.00%	30.00%	50.00%
Class time enhanced my ability to succeed in graded assignments.	4.80	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	20.00%	80.00%
I received feedback on my performance that helped me improve my subsequent work.	4.90	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	90.00%
My work was evaluated fairly.	4.70	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	10.00%	80.00%
I felt respected in this class.	4.80	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	0.00%	90.00%
Overall, this was an excellent course.	4.70	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	30.00%	70.00%

Additional comments about the course:

Comments
N/A
Prof. Levine is fantastic. A very fair professor. The course was very well structured and was honestly one of my favorite classes of the semester.
It is very interesting to see the progression of western philosophical thought
The readings were typically 30–50 pages, and understanding the big ideas is more important than remembering every detail, so it was pretty reasonable. Participation is about 45% of the grade, which is also nice, since it's entirely in your control. We only had two essays assigned over the quarter: a short one (2–3 pages) and a longer one (5–6) pages, so the workload felt very manageable. Moreover, you can revise any essay that you get less than an A– on, so the grading policy as a whole is fairly lenient. If you choose to put in the work, it should not be too difficult to get an A or A–.

I would recommend this course to:

	No	Yes
Highly-motivated and well-prepared students	0.00%	100.00%
Anyone interested in the topic	0.00%	100.00%

## Thinking about your time in the class, what aspect of the instructor's teaching contributed most to your learning?

Comments
Asking the professor questions or discussing with them about arguments made in the text helped clarify confusing topics and provided possible material for writing essays. Additionally, they would draw diagrams/images on the board to provide a visual representation of images described in the text.
Very passionate and enthusiastic lectures. He did a great job of asking the right questions to get us thinking and engaged.
The Professor was guiding the class and the discussion to arrive at the analysis of the text, instead of just outlining it, which was very helpful because it forced everyone to think critically. Also he was very careful not to mention his own interpretations, in order to allow everyone to have their own reading of the texts, which was impressive.
Facilitating discussions and illustrating complex areas of the text on the board. Furthermore, he allowed the class to discuss and evolve their ideas of the texts, while providing meaningful insight when needed.
I liked how Professor Levine began each class with an agenda/outline of topics— I think this helped me ground the discussion and understand what subjects were at play in the texts.
He really took the time to get to know all of his students and to support them on an individual basis. He also clearly loves the material he's teaching, and both his enthusiasm and his mastery over the subject broadened my horizons and allowed me to confront the course material in new and interesting ways.
I think the teachers ability to direct the conversation and lead us to the authors intent was essential to the course. Professor Levine managed to tie everything together somehow and show us how things relate that just seemed totally disjunct. He also provided useful context of the Author/ what was happening when the book was written.

## What could the instructor modify to help you learn more?

Comments
N/A
Nothing class was 10/10
I don't have any specific modifications in mind. The course was well structured and fair.
Some greater clarity on the instructions for assignments would be greatly appreciated; Professor Levine did often clarify during meetings about revisions, which I appreciated, but clearer assignment sheets would be helpful in the future.
Nothing :) The professor was really good. i think maybe spending more time on Aristotle or the Prince could be enlightening. We spent a massive amount of time on plato.

## The Instructor . . .

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Organized the course clearly.	4.70	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	30.00%	70.00%	0.00%
Presented lectures that enhanced your understanding.	4.88	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	70.00%	20.00%
Facilitated discussions that were engaging and useful.	4.80	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	20.00%	80.00%	0.00%
Stimulated your interest in the core ideas of the course.	4.70	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	10.00%	80.00%	0.00%
Challenged you to learn.	4.80	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	0.00%	90.00%	0.00%
Helped you gain significant learning from the course content.	4.70	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	10.00%	80.00%	0.00%
Was available and helpful outside of class.	4.80	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	20.00%	80.00%	0.00%
Motivated you to think independently.	4.90	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	90.00%	0.00%
Worked to create an inclusive and welcoming learning environment.	4.80	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	20.00%	80.00%	0.00%
Overall, this instructor made a significant contribution to your learning.	4.90	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	90.00%	0.00%

Please include the name of the TA/CA/Intern you are evaluating. What aspects of the TA's teaching contributed most to your learning? What could the TA modify to help you learn more? Please include any additional feedback for the TA/CA/Intern.

Comments
Justin Smolin – He was fantastic. Highly recommend meeting with him outside of class to discuss your papers/revisions. He was very available and always would give very thoughtful feedback to my drafts.
Justin Smolin
Justin Smolin

### The TA/CA or Intern. . .

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Facilitated discussions that supported your learning.	4.75	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	75.00%	0.00%
Gave you useful feedback on your work.	4.75	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	75.00%	0.00%
Stimulated your interest in the core ideas of the class.	4.75	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	75.00%	0.00%
Challenged you to learn.	4.75	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	75.00%	0.00%
Helped you succeed in the class.	4.75	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	75.00%	0.00%
Was available and helpful outside of class.	4.75	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	75.00%	0.00%
Overall, this individual made a significant contribution to your learning.	4.75	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	75.00%	0.00%

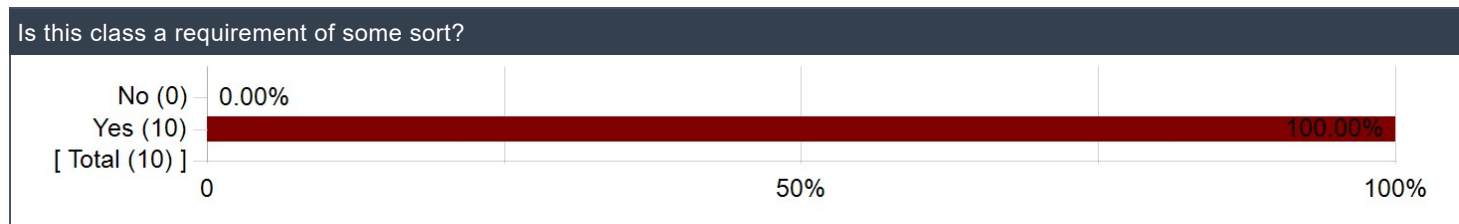
### How much did the following elements of the course contribute to your learning gains?

	Mean	Median	No Gain	A Little Gain	Moderate Gain	Good Gain	Great Gain	N/A
Laboratory Experience	N/A	N/A	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Field Trips	N/A	N/A	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Library Sessions	N/A	N/A	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Review Sessions	N/A	N/A	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Writing Seminars	4.22	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	22.22%	33.33%	44.44%	0.00%

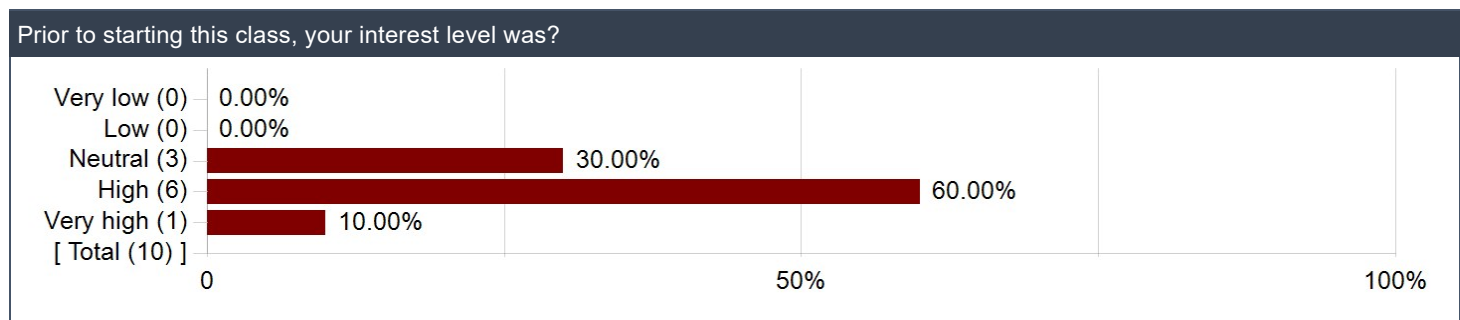
### Other course elements not mentioned above:

Comments
N/A

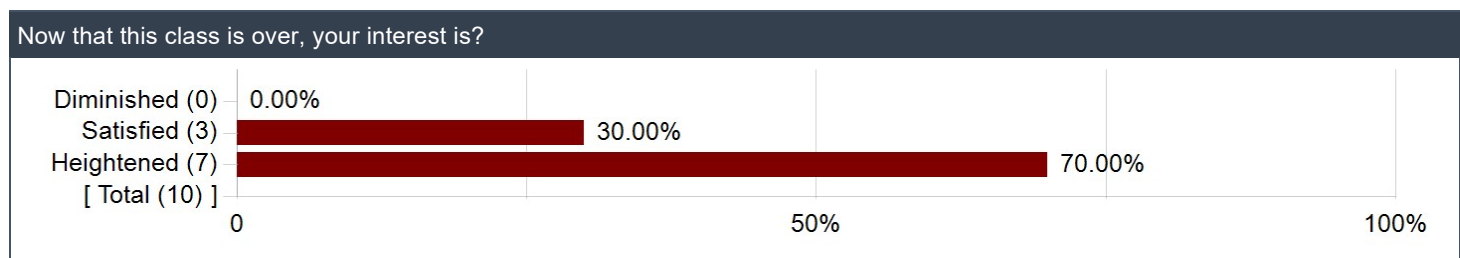
### Is this class a requirement of some sort?



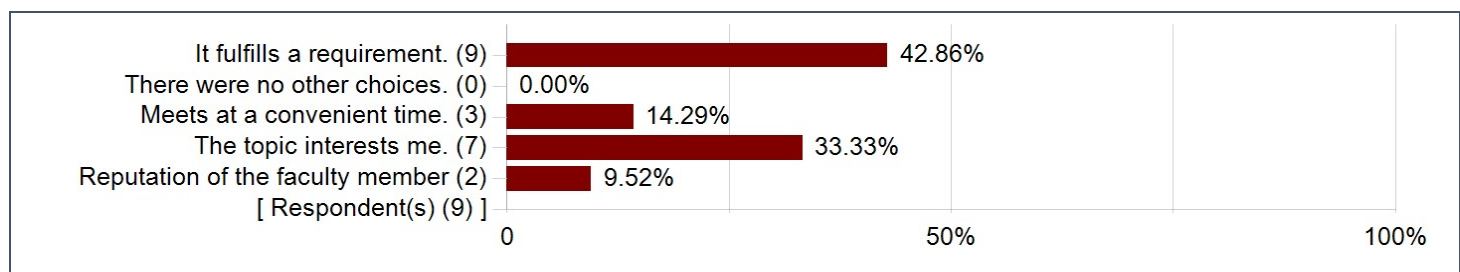
## Prior to starting this class, your interest level was?



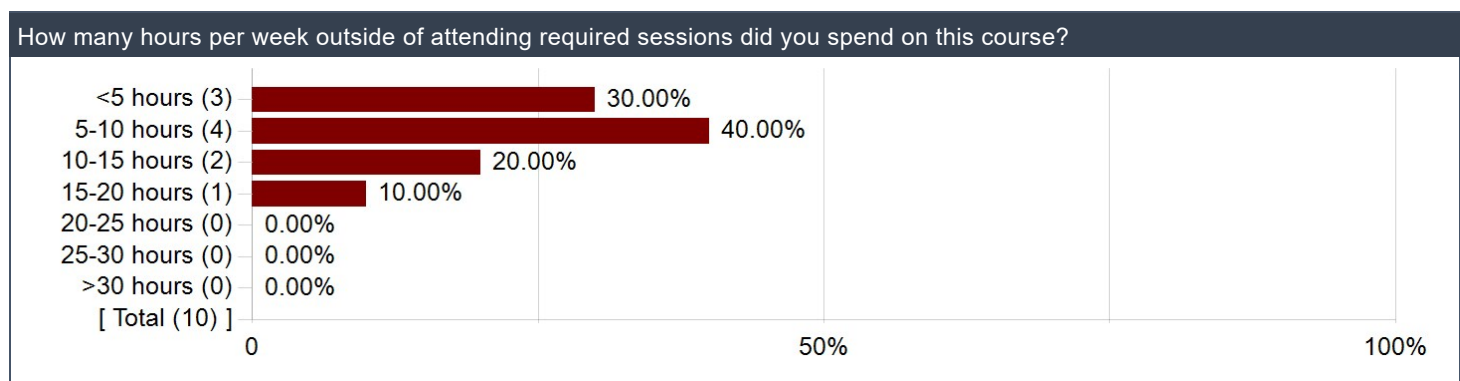
## Now that this class is over, your interest is?



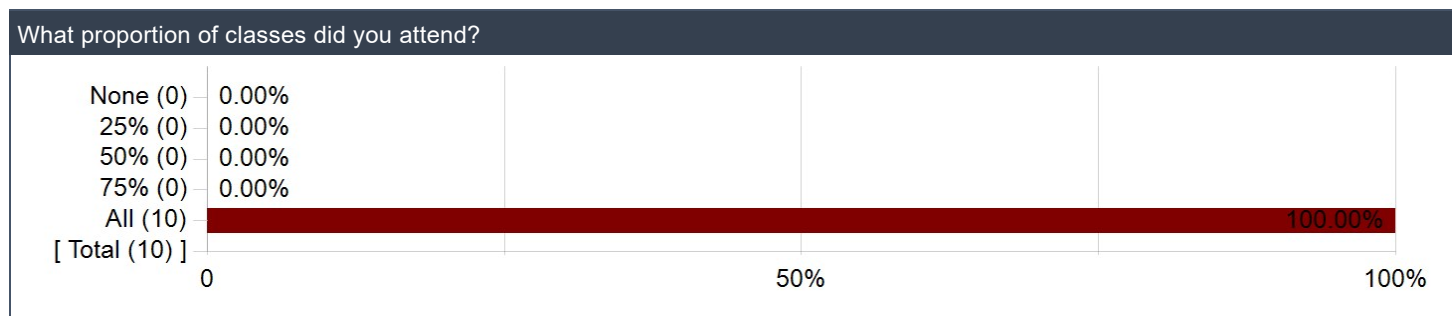
## Why did you choose to take this course? (Select all that apply)



## How many hours per week outside of attending required sessions did you spend on this course?



## What proportion of classes did you attend?



## Please comment on the level of difficulty of the course relative to your background and experience.

Comments
This course focuses on philosophic works for now, which are new to me and somewhat difficult to understand. I have writing experience with the humanities, though this course's writing expectation leans into arguing for/against the text using arguments that you must also provide reasoning for including. Similar to the humanities, but I am adjusting to the difference.
I've never read any of the material before, however he assigned an appropriate amount of reading so I was able to truly engage with the readings and learn.
As long as you are willing to read the texts (30–40 pgs, sometimes less) and write the assignments (2 short essays and a longer paper), as well as revise them then you will do well in the course. Prof. Levine is one of the best humanities instructors I have ever had and he is more than reasonable when it comes to his class.
The course is certainly challenging with a heavy reading load, but the professor makes it approachable.
This course felt well-aligned with my background and experience.
As someone with no particular background in political philosophy or the social sciences as a whole, I found the class very approachable.