



SOSC 15100 5 - Classics of Social and Political Thought I - Instructor(s): Daragh Grant

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

Number Enrolled: **19**

Number of Responses: **9**

Report Comments

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

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
Works of Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas
How to read a classical text.
Writing skills, deconstructing arguments, and drawing connections between an author's ideas
Learning how to analyze a text to see what is being said on a deeper level than what appears at first glance. Understanding the evolution of social and political philosophy in the West from ancient Greek times to Renaissance Italy.
I learned how to effectively read and analyze philosophical texts. We read Plato's Republic, Aristotle's Politics, Aquinas's On Law, Morality, and Politics, and Machiavelli's The Prince.
How to read a dense text and draw connections between two seemingly distinct parts
I began to develop the ability of reconstructing the arguments of ancient thinkers. While that might seem like a niche skill, it has allowed me to practice my critical thinking, ability to organize said thinking, and writing skills in a way a traditional english class wouldn't be able to.

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

Comments
Discussions helped a lot in clarifying the content
The discussions in this course are unbelievably good. The readings are pretty difficult/dense, so I go into class discussions usually pretty confused about the meaning of the reading. I always come out of the discussions understanding way more about the readings. Daragh is really good at asking interesting questions and moderating the discussions.
Discussions are great. The assignments are hard and force you to learn.
Discussions were always lively and constructive: I got a much better understanding of the reading from Daragh's prompts and my classmates' contributions. Daragh always did a great job moderating and clarifying concepts from the text so that every session felt productive and worthwhile. Writing assignments also helped me to consolidate ideas from discussions.
The lectures focused on assigned reading sections and occasional close-reading assignments which focused on specific paragraphs. The class operated as a mix of discussion and lecture, which allowed everybody to express their opinions and enhance their understanding without straying too far away from what is meant to be learned.
Discussions were invaluable and entertaining. Because some of the texts are so difficult to read, sometimes the only way you can really understand them is through the discussions. I also really enjoyed pretty much every class session this quarter. Between the other people in our class and Professor Grant, who is great at facilitating discussions, the discussions were always lively. Additionally, office hours were essential for my success in the class. I went to office hours several times for both essays for feedback, which was very very helpful.
Class was discussion based (though was mostly dominated by the same people). Daragh gave a lot of his own insight and interpretation, which I thought was very interesting as they helped me to better understand the text. Office hours were very helpful in trying to figure out a direction for the essay we were writing. I thought the section-wide lecture was rather boring, irrelevant and hard to comprehend. Essays were helpful in trying to understand the bigger picture but can very confusing
The class discussions are always fun, although may or may not translate to the essay assignments. The essay assignments are the most helpful because you get to meet with Daragh and go over your ideas 1 on 1, which leads to great growth.

Please respond to the following:

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
This course challenged me intellectually.	4.88	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%	87.50%
I understood the purpose of this course and what I was expected to gain from it.	4.50	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%	25.00%	62.50%
I understood the standards for success on assignments.	4.50	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%	25.00%	62.50%
Class time enhanced my ability to succeed in graded assignments.	4.67	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	66.67%
I received feedback on my performance that helped me improve my subsequent work.	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
My work was evaluated fairly.	4.89	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	11.11%	88.89%
I felt respected in this class.	4.67	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	66.67%
Overall, this was an excellent course.	4.78	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	22.22%	77.78%

Additional comments about the course:

Comments
I ended up in this course because socs pre-reg was a catastrophe this year and I didn't think I would enjoy the content, but this course has been amazing.
Lovely class. Would strongly recommend it.
The first essay was especially challenging because its requirements were very different from any writing assignment I've attempted before. Still, Daragh cares a lot about teaching, and was very welcoming during office hours to guide us in the right direction. I never really expected to learn so much from a Core class, so this was a very pleasant surprise! Daragh really pushed us to read and write better and the process probably took more effort than other SOSC classes (or sections), but I'm grateful overall that I joined this section. If you're willing to dedicate a little more time to SOSC, I think it will be a very worthwhile experience.
The course was definitely more difficult than I was expecting, especially coming from Hum. There was a lot of reading for each class period (roughly 2 hours on average) and the essays challenged me to think in a way which I hadn't really done before.
I learned a lot from this class, but I did not necessarily enjoy the class itself, if that makes sense. Daragh has a reputation for teaching Classics, but due to this fact, anyone taking the class with Daragh is basically self-selected into wanting to study the classical texts with a reputable prof, which is great, but means that a disproportionate amount of people in the class are opinionated and that might not always necessarily be a good thing. On the essays, it will be so confusing at the start – Daragh/SOSC want very specific tasks in the essay and that can be hard to figure out, but go to office hours! I also appreciated that accommodations for extensions regarding the pre-class questions/essays and even being excused from class were given ahead of time in the syllabus.

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
Mediation
Class discussions and office hours were both super interesting and helpful.
Discussions.
I thought that feedback on essays was very thorough and helpful & made it very clear exactly what expectations were for writing, as well as how they might be met.
Daragh is an excellent moderator who strikes a fine balance between lecturing and maintaining the flow of the conversation. He often tries to lead us into stronger conclusions by encouraging us to examine our arguments more closely and to identify the source of our disagreements. Not only is he very respectful of everyone's contributions, but he is also very willing to engage with our questions when he employs analogies to illustrate the author's ideas. At the same time, he displays an infectious level of enthusiasm for the texts and his interpretations frequently gave me a newfound appreciation for the reading by the end of class.
Daragh's ability to keep the class roughly wrangled was great, especially when conversations occasionally went off the rails. I really appreciated the emails after some classes to clarify confusing topics. It was obvious that he was very familiar with the material and with the future material for later quarters, which allowed for impactful points and connections to modern life.
Professor Grant is great at leading discussions. I feel like the balance between the class speaking and him speaking is just about perfect. Office hours were also invaluable for every step of the essay-writing process, from brainstorming to revising. Additionally, he is always very available to meet for office hours, especially when essay deadlines are fast approaching (he even met with me while he was traveling for a conference). He is also extremely fast to respond to emails which is always nice.
Daragh adding his own comments in the class, drawing diagrams etc to clarify ideas. Office hours were also very helpful and he was very responsive via email. The course is organized very well, expectations are made clear on day 1 and Daragh is always helpful and willing to clarify anything. During discussions, we had to always try to find specific parts of the text (or at least quote what we remember) to support our arguments in class, which was tedious but I guess necessary to actually try to understand the authors
The way he pushed us to think critically, the welcome and EXTENSIVE essay feedback, and how he tended to link current events to the material, making it the material seem more relevant than it probably is.

What could the instructor modify to help you learn more?

Comments
just the pacing feels off. hard to suddenly go through 2 books in 2 weeks and spend the entire first month on a single book. i would have liked it to be a bit more even if at the cost of some reading.
I personally feel that Daragh could interject a little more often (or earlier) when the discussion begins to veer off course. This might be my own opinion, but I think we sometimes get bogged down over conceptual details that involve little textual evidence or no longer relate as closely to the author's arguments. Daragh does a great job in distilling the ideas we bring up and his comments go straight to the heart of the matter, so the conversation could be made more productive with even more direction from Daragh when these situations take place.
Not much.
Daragh asks questions that he seems to want very specific answers to, and I felt like if I was not offering the answer that he wanted, my comments in class would not be valued. He picks up answers that he is looking for, and then gives us his own perspective by expanding on what he was looking for. I learned a lot from what he lectured on in class and I definitely would not have reached certain conclusions or understandings of ideas on my own, but it might not be what you are looking for in a SOSC discussion class. Daragh is very charismatic and knowledgeable, but his teaching style might not be for everyone.
I think the one mandatory writing seminar was the only part of the quarter that was a let down for me. I would've liked more clarity on argument reconstruction: what one is, how to accomplish it, etc. As is, the writing seminar didn't really achieve that.

The Instructor . . .

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Organized the course clearly.	4.89	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	11.11%	88.89%	0.00%
Presented lectures that enhanced your understanding.	4.88	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	11.11%	77.78%	11.11%
Facilitated discussions that were engaging and useful.	4.67	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	11.11%	11.11%	77.78%	0.00%
Stimulated your interest in the core ideas of the course.	4.89	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	11.11%	88.89%	0.00%
Challenged you to learn.	4.89	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	11.11%	88.89%	0.00%
Helped you gain significant learning from the course content.	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Was available and helpful outside of class.	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Motivated you to think independently.	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Worked to create an inclusive and welcoming learning environment.	4.89	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	11.11%	88.89%	0.00%
Overall, this instructor made a significant contribution to your learning.	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	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
Maya Shenoy
Maya Nandakumar
Maya Nandakumar.
Maya Nandakumar: I didn't make use of any of the other resources that she made available outside of class such as office hours, but I thought the times that they taught the class were very helpful, as well as the feedback I received on my essay.
Maya led discussions twice and did a really great job! I learned a lot from both sessions. Maya also provided detailed feedback on our first essays which helped me identify potential pitfalls for my second essay.
Maya Nandakumar instructed a couple of the class sessions. I appreciated the clear focus and questions designed to probe into specific parts of the text, in addition to an evident familiarity with the context of the texts being read.
Danny Jacobs. He was the writing advisor for our class this quarter. I went to his office hours a few times while writing my essays this quarter. He was useful in helping me brainstorm ideas and revising my essays. He often identified ways in which I could improve the clarity of my writing, from individual sentences to the overall structure of the paper.
Maya. I liked the discussions that she led slightly better, as (in contrast to Daragh) she was very receptive to any and all comments and tried to respond to everything everyone brought up
Maya was great!

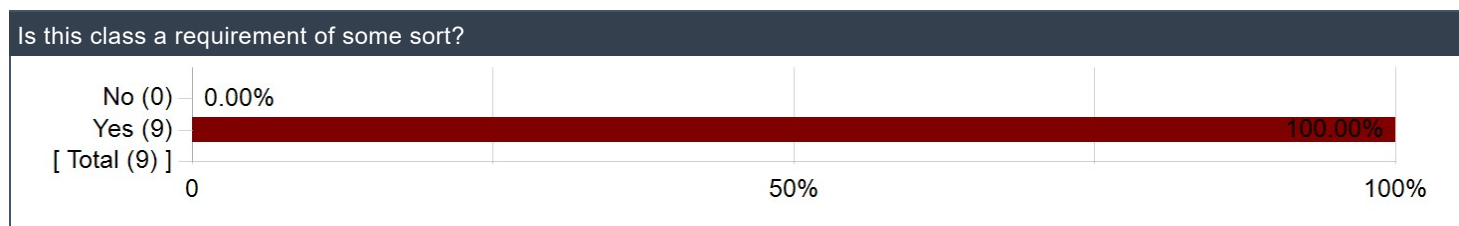
The TA/CA or Intern. . .

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Facilitated discussions that supported your learning.	4.38	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	55.56%	33.33%	11.11%
Gave you useful feedback on your work.	4.80	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	11.11%	44.44%	44.44%
Stimulated your interest in the core ideas of the class.	4.57	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	44.44%	22.22%
Challenged you to learn.	4.43	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	44.44%	33.33%	22.22%
Helped you succeed in the class.	4.50	4.50	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	33.33%	33.33%
Was available and helpful outside of class.	4.25	4.50	0.00%	0.00%	11.11%	11.11%	22.22%	55.56%
Overall, this individual made a significant contribution to your learning.	4.38	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	55.56%	33.33%	11.11%

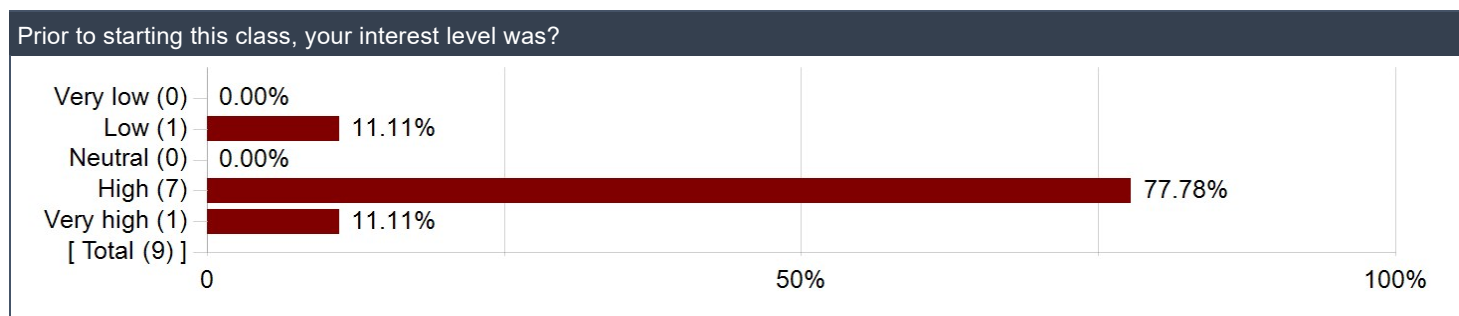
How much did the following elements of the course contribute to your learning gains?

	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	4.00	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%	0.00%	50.00%	0.00%

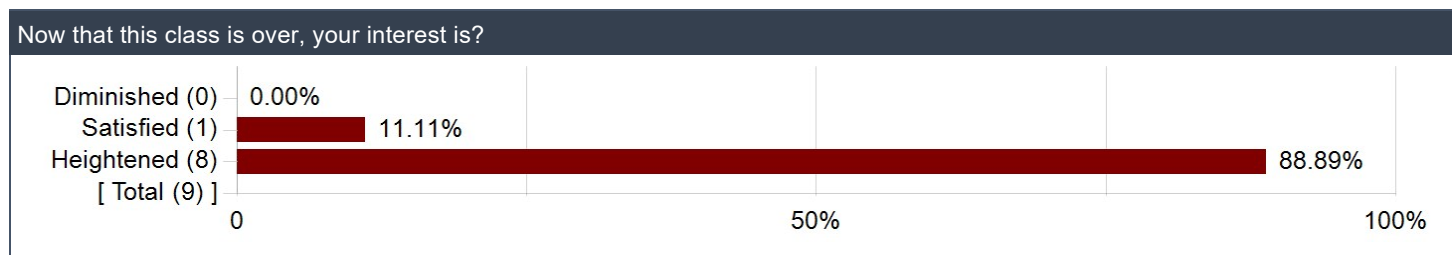
Is this class a requirement of some sort?



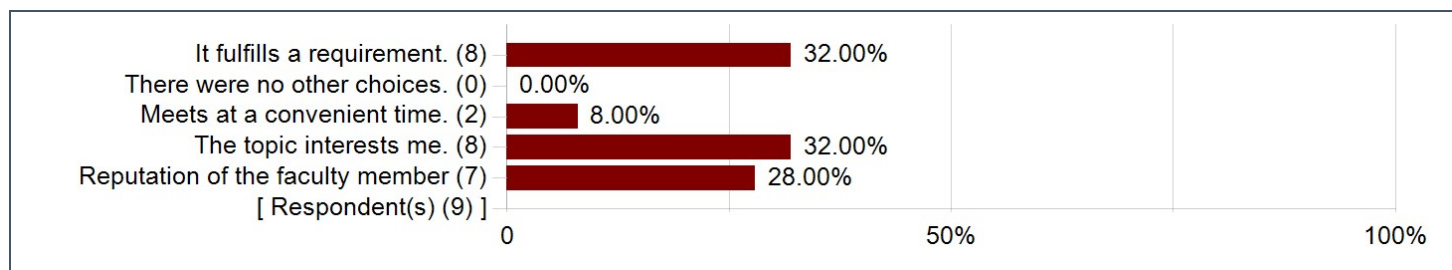
Prior to starting this class, your interest level was?



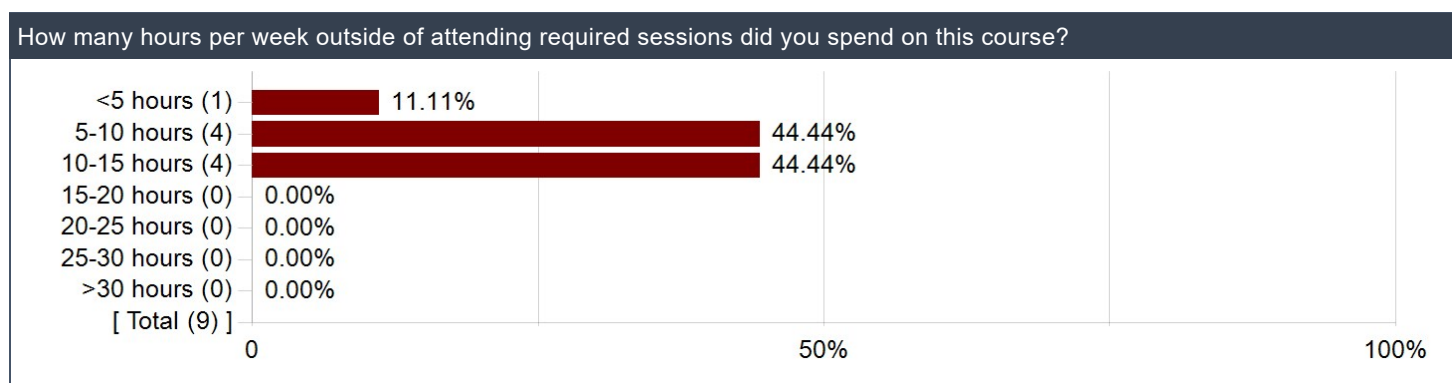
Now that this class is over, your interest is?



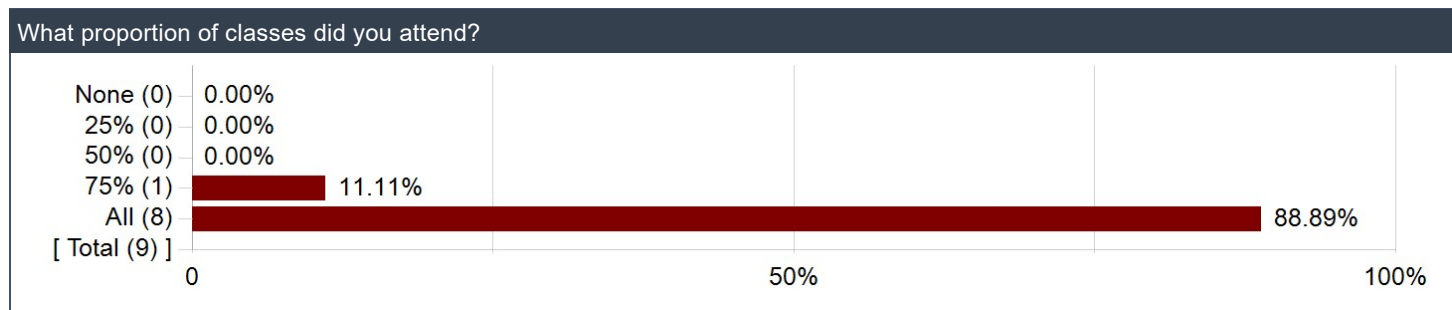
Why did you choose to take this course? (Select all that apply)



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
Hard but interesting
The material is certainly challenging, but I think Daragh does a really good job of preparing everyone for it.
Accessible, no prerequisite knowledge of the texts but found the course manageable overall
Never having read any of these texts or thought about philosophy in the way asked, I found the intellectual side of the class very challenging. On a more fundamental, the amount of reading required a substantial time commitment considering the dense nature of the texts.
I had no background in philosophy before taking this class, and it is quite accessible. Some of the texts are quite difficult to read. The average reading assignment was probably about 30–35 pages for each class section (2 classes per week). Professor Grant is very available to meet outside of class as well.
Very interested in philosophy and have done a decent amount of philosophy before this class. Note for anyone else in my situation: Classics is NOT a philosophy class despite the texts being all philosophy. I have no idea what polisci classes are like, but given that the majority of Classics profs are polisci experts, I would expect that the way the texts are taught resembles polisci more than it does philosophy. We don't critique ideas in class or interpret them with a contemporary POV, but rather try to understand what the author themselves are saying on their own terms, in their own words (which was something I think Daragh taught me to do pretty well)
This class is hard! Irrespective of literature background, you're learning a different way to evaluate a text. Daragh really pushes you, too, but always in a supportive way. I would absolutely recommend this class, but only to committed students that want to advance their critical thinking ability, even at the cost of an extra stressful week or two. If you're a first year, try and design your schedule such that this is the hardest class you take — you'll want the extra time to think, write and critically read the sources; the more time you put in, the more you'll get out of the course.