SOSC 15300 13 - Classics of Social and Political Thought III - Instructor(s) - Joel Isaac

Project Title: **College Course Feedback - Spring 2024**

Number Enrolled: **17**
Number of Responses: **10**

Report Comments

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

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

Comments
I practiced deconstructing difficult texts and close reading.
I learnt a lot about ideas of the self, as well as how individuals relate to their own political systems.
– history of American Democracy, black rights and social inequality, feminist theory – Marx: Antisemitism in Europe, Alienation in the Capitalist Economy – Questioning our morals which we take for granted – good & bad v/s good & evil
Democracy in America – Alexis de Tocqueville, Early Writings – Karl Marx, The Souls of Black Folk – W.E.B. Du Bois, On The Genealogy of Morality – Friedrich Nietzsche, The Second Sex – Simone de Beauvoir, and Truth and Politics – Hannah Arendt
I learned a ton about traditions of social thought and philosophy and how they influence the world we live in today. I also got way more confident in reading and analyzing complex texts.
We studied a broad overview of social thought in the last two centuries (Tocqueville, Nietzsche, Marx, de Beauvoir, Du Bois). I also increased my ability to write analytical essays and do close readings of philisophical texts.
Political philosophy
We read texts from Tocqueville, Marx, Nietzsche, Du Bois, Beauvoir, and some others, and spent time critically discussing their arguments, and how they interacted.
essay writing was the most important skill
The most important things I learned were the ability to read hard philosophical texts and the ability to make connections and apply those teachings to the world.

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

Comments
The class discussions pushed me to think critically and challenge different ideas and interpretations.
Lectures were really useful in pinpointing key parts of readings for further discussion, and the biweekly discussion posts also made me think more rigorously about the content of each reading.
The lectures were great, learned a lot. The discussions were fun, good to see different interpretations.
Discussion sessions – useful and well guided, Canvas discussion posts – a formality and adequate preparation, essay and take–home final – good test of argumentative writing and close reading.
The discussions were frankly amazing; Prof Isaac did a great job balancing between facilitating discussion and teaching us principles and providing context for our readings. The selection of readings was phenomenal, I loved all of them!
The lecture/discussion was very helpful for understanding the text at hand, and the professor did a great job structuring the discussion around different sections of the text. The essay topics were interesting and fun to write about. The weekly discussion posts were interesting and I'm sure they helped with guiding the conversation in class, but I feel as though the word requirement was a little bit unnecessary for the texts we were discussing. I feel as though lots of people just dragged on their points to try to reach the word limit, and that all points to be made could have been done in a more concise manner if there was not such a word requirement.
The discussions contributed greatly to my learning, making it so even if I didn't understand the reading I still got something out of the reading,

Please respond to the following:

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
This course challenged me intellectually.	4.70	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	30.00%	70.00%
I understood the purpose of this course and what I was expected to gain from it.	4.60	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	40.00%	60.00%
I understood the standards for success on assignments.	4.20	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	60.00%	30.00%
Class time enhanced my ability to succeed in graded assignments.	4.70	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	30.00%	70.00%
I received feedback on my performance that helped me improve my subsequent work.	4.40	4.50	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	40.00%	50.00%
My work was evaluated fairly.	4.60	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	40.00%	60.00%
I felt respected in this class.	4.60	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	40.00%	60.00%
Overall, this was an excellent course.	4.50	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	30.00%	60.00%

Additional comments about the course:

Comments
This quarter is thematically different from the two quarters previous. There isn't really direct mentions of states of nature; they are more focused on issues in established society.

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
Joel's wide knowledge of each text and his masterful navigation around each extract was wonderful and meant that class discussions never stagnated.
Introductions and historical context
Joel Isaac is a great professor – amicable, reasonable, and engaging. He leads the discussion session well and allows ample time for assignments and provides useful feedback.
Professor Isaac is incredibly knowledgeable, wise, and kind. Before I took this class, I honestly hated Social thought classes, but this class—due to the Professor's excellent teaching—was phenomenal. I really want to learn more about the social sciences thanks to Prof Isaac, I've even bought some books written by some of the authors we read in class! The Prof also did a great job preparing us for assignments
I think the instructor did a good job of balancing depth and breadth in our discussions; although each reading only got a few days, I think the instructor's individual response to each comment helped provide depth, but the class never stood still for too long and after one or two comments on a topic the instructor gently moved us to another.
The way he structured his discussions around different sections of the text was very well done and very helpful to understanding the text at hand. The 'lecture' components of his classes were very helpful and insightful regarding the texts being discussed.
The questions Professor Isaac asked were very targeted and pointed. I also liked the small groups we were put into to explain different concepts for particularly hard texts like Marx.

What could the instructor modify to help you learn more?

Comments
Maybe make sure that class discussions cover the entire range of each reading — we tended to spend too much time on the beginning of the readings.
Lead the discussion in a student–to–student way instead of student to teacher way (let us respond to each other instead of responding to each of us himself)
Sometimes discussions don't cover the entire reading, but we often make up for it in the next discussion.
N/A
Towards the end of the quarter, I felt rushed on some of the books as we would spend two lessons on a book and the assigned readings felt disjointed so I didn't get a full picture of these books.
To be honest, this might just be me, or just a difference caused by the different books read in this class than the rest of the sequence, but I felt as though the discussion was often more unapproachable for me than previous quarters. I thought the professor certainly invited discussion, but often offered only vague or summary–based questions, making it difficult to engage at times. Often it felt like certain people dominated the discussion because of this. Alongside this, there were a few readings that felt like they were crammed into a short time, such as the second De Beauvoir reading, which was almost 120 pages for one class, which I did not appreciate.
more discussion between students
I don't have any suggestions. I thought the class was led well.

The Instructor . . .

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Organized the course clearly.	4.78	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	22.22%	77.78%	0.00%
Presented lectures that enhanced your understanding.	4.86	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	11.11%	66.67%	22.22%
Facilitated discussions that were engaging and useful.	4.33	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	22.22%	22.22%	55.56%	0.00%
Stimulated your interest in the core ideas of the course.	4.67	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	66.67%	0.00%
Challenged you to learn.	4.67	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	66.67%	0.00%
Helped you gain significant learning from the course content.	4.44	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	11.11%	33.33%	55.56%	0.00%
Was available and helpful outside of class.	4.43	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	11.11%	22.22%	44.44%	22.22%
Motivated you to think independently.	4.44	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	11.11%	33.33%	55.56%	0.00%
Worked to create an inclusive and welcoming learning environment.	4.56	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	44.44%	55.56%	0.00%
Overall, this instructor made a significant contribution to your learning.	4.56	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	11.11%	22.22%	66.67%	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
Juan – he took two classes, they were alright He could focus more on what he wanted to discussion to revolve around and which key ideas from the day's readings actually mattered more
Juan Curiel. Did not contribute when Prof. Isaac was leading discussions. Led two classes and while both covered content well, was a bit dry.
Juan Curiel did a great job
Juan Curiel
Juan occasionally led class, and did so quite well. His approach to the lecture component was very well grounded in the text, and was quite good.
Mia Thacker – Essay writing help was the most useful
Juan. I liked how he led the classes but there were times when he felt a little underprepared, where he started scrambling for things to say. I did like his structure and the way he asked questions though.

The TA/CA or Intern. . .

|	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Facilitated discussions that supported your learning.	4.29	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	14.29%	42.86%	42.86%	0.00%
Gave you useful feedback on your work.	3.67	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	14.29%	28.57%	0.00%	57.14%
Stimulated your interest in the core ideas of the class.	4.14	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	28.57%	28.57%	42.86%	0.00%
Challenged you to learn.	4.00	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	42.86%	14.29%	42.86%	0.00%
Helped you succeed in the class.	4.00	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	42.86%	14.29%	42.86%	0.00%
Was available and helpful outside of class.	4.00	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	28.57%	0.00%	28.57%	42.86%
Overall, this individual made a significant contribution to your learning.	4.00	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	28.57%	42.86%	28.57%	0.00%

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

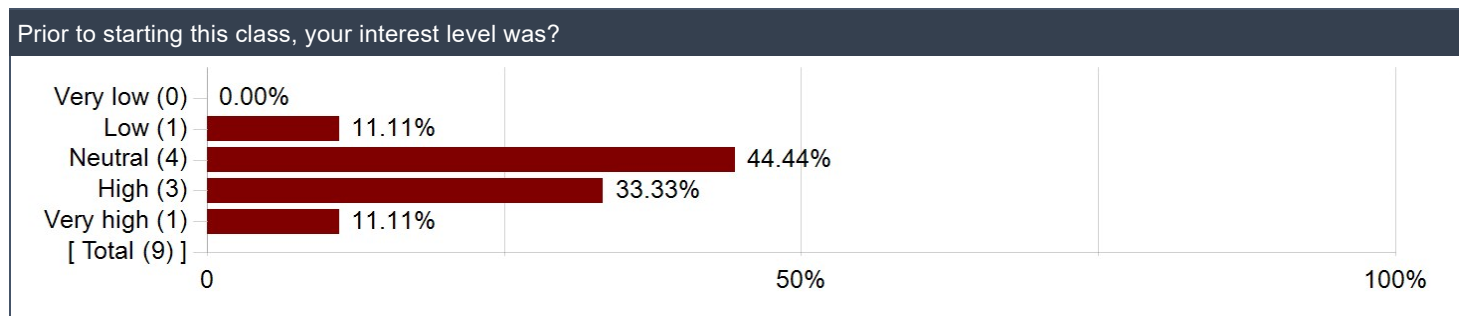|	Mean	Median	No Gain	A Little Gain	Moderate Gain	Good Gain	Great Gain	N/A
Laboratory Experience	N/A	N/A	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Field Trips	N/A	N/A	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Library Sessions	N/A	N/A	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Review Sessions	N/A	N/A	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Writing Seminars	3.83	4.00	0.00%	16.67%	33.33%	0.00%	50.00%	0.00%

Other course elements not mentioned above:

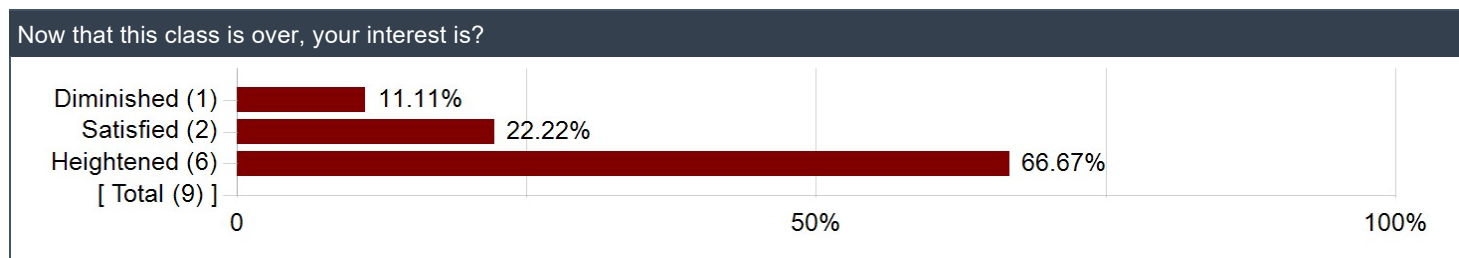| Comments |
|---|
| Drop in writing sessions |
| Mia Thacker (writing advisor) was incredibly helpful and kind! |

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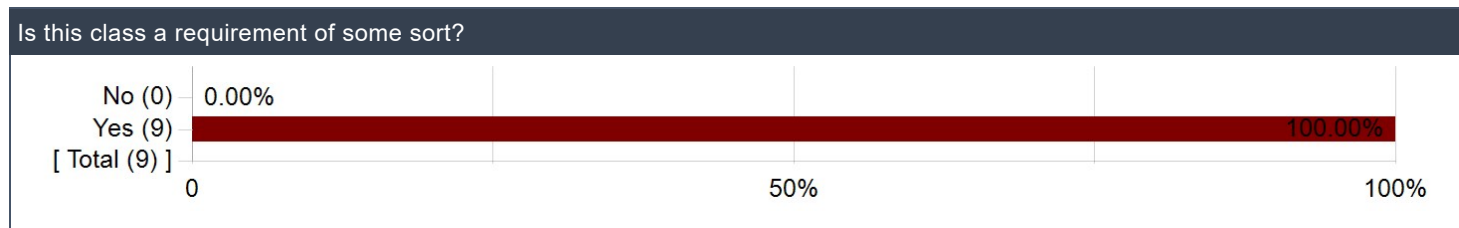
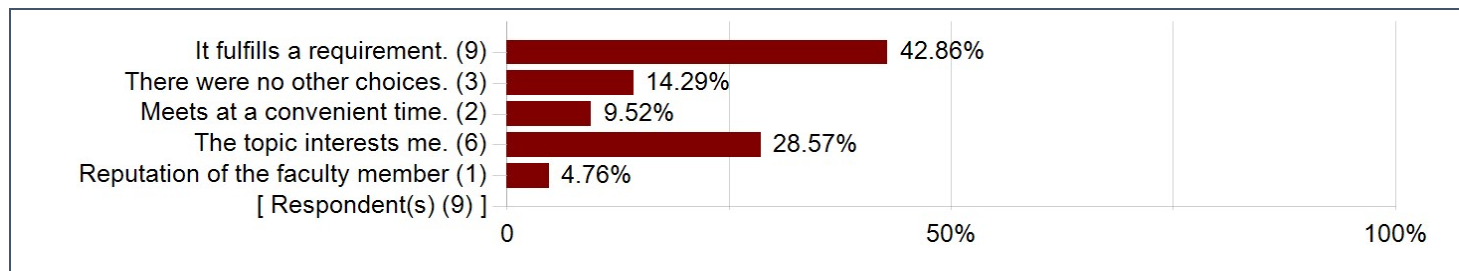Is this class a requirement of some sort?

No (0)	0.00%
Yes (9)	100.00%
[Total (9)]	

0   50%   100%

Prior to starting this class, your interest level was?

Prior to starting this class, your interest level was?

Very low (0)	0.00%
Low (1)	11.11%
Neutral (4)	44.44%
High (3)	33.33%
Very high (1)	11.11%
[Total (9)]	

0   50%   100%

Now that this class is over, your interest is?

Now that this class is over, your interest is?

Diminished (1)	11.11%
Satisfied (2)	22.22%
Heightened (6)	66.67%
[Total (9)]	

0   50%   100%

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

It fulfills a requirement. (9)	42.86%
There were no other choices. (3)	14.29%
Meets at a convenient time. (2)	9.52%
The topic interests me. (6)	28.57%
Reputation of the faculty member (1)	4.76%
[Respondent(s) (9)]	

0   50%   100%

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

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

<5 hours (2)	22.22%
5-10 hours (7)	77.78%
10-15 hours (0)	0.00%
15-20 hours (0)	0.00%
20-25 hours (0)	0.00%
25-30 hours (0)	0.00%
>30 hours (0)	0.00%
[Total (9)]	

What proportion of classes did you attend?

What proportion of classes did you attend?

None (0)	0.00%
25% (0)	0.00%
50% (0)	0.00%
75% (1)	11.11%
All (8)	88.89%
[Total (9)]	
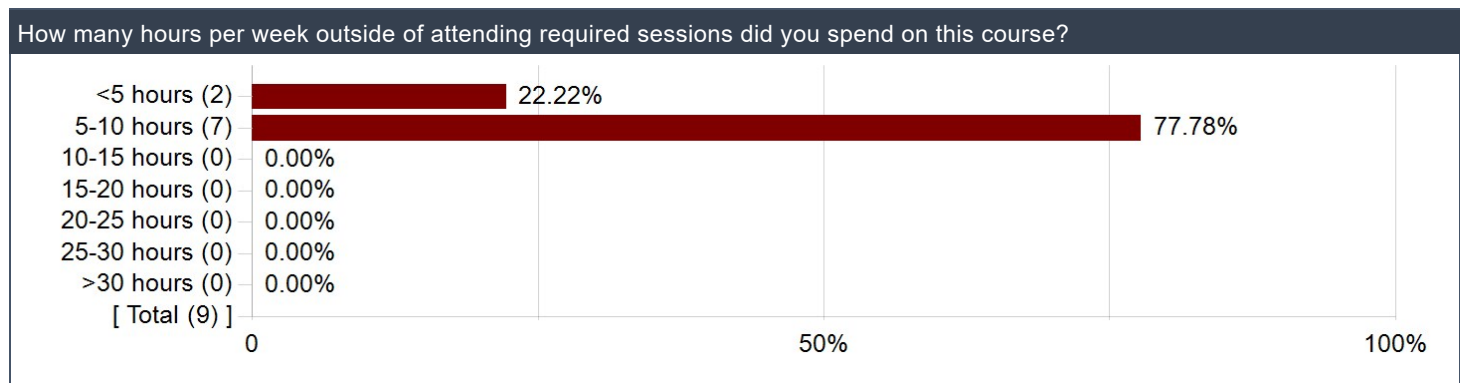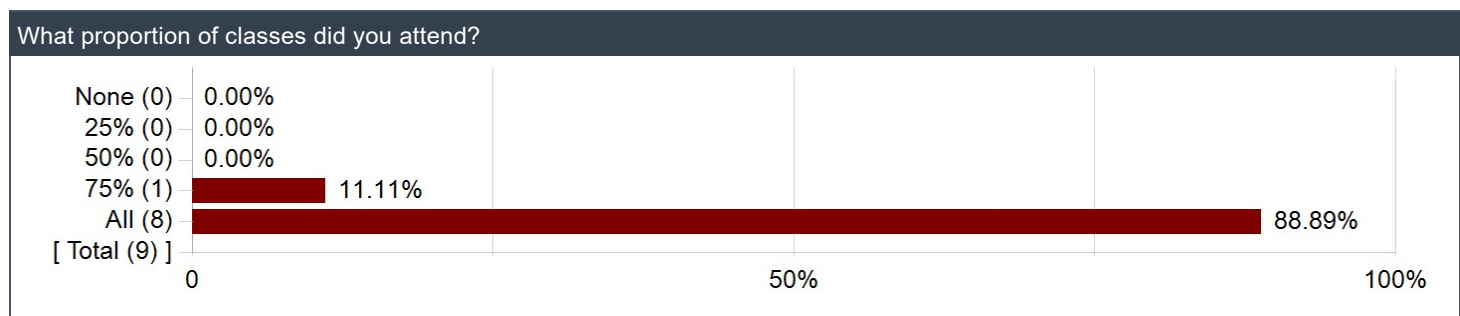
Please comment on the level of difficulty of the course relative to your background and experience.

Comments
I had read none of these authors before – it was a little challenging in the start, but wasn't too bad
Manageable. Found Marx and Nietzsche more difficult than other readings.
It was mostly fine, although in the same vein as the above point about his discussions, it felt like he asked questions directed only towards those with the best understanding of the text, and for any reading I did not already understand well after the first read, it was difficult to participate. Other times there were very large readings which made the discussion more difficult to engage with effectively, because we were covering so much so fast.
With the experience of the previous courses in this sequence, I felt prepared for this class (no prior knowledge before this sequence)