



# SOSC 15200 13 - Classics of Social and Political Thought II - Instructor(s): Joshua Trubowitz

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

Number Enrolled: **11**

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: **Thursday, March 28, 2024**

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

Comments
How to effectively organize an argument for a complex argument.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–The history of social contract theory and its development through its 3 main authors</li> <li>–The philosophy behind the evolving perception of government in throughout the 17th and 18th centuries</li> <li>–Contstructive information on writing essays</li> </ul>
Knowledge: social contract theory, human nature. Skills: reading critically—how to annotate, how to break down complex arguments from old texts by asking the right questions
I learned about different areas in philosophy and the ways their views differ and stay the same. More specifically, I learned the ways in which philosophers justify their statements, whether it be through convoluted logic or theology. I also gained a better grasp on how to engage with these texts and write essays about them, something I very much struggled with last quarter.
Learned how to write a good paper on dense philosophical material.
Learning different perspectives of what makes a community thrive and the conditions in which humans find happiness
I learned a lot about how different philosophers view the social contract, and the way in which people form societies. In focusing on a certain topic, I gained the skills of comparing different philosophical texts — something I feel that I have a much stronger grasp of now than I did last quarter.
I learnt about a multitude of aspects of early modern political philosophy, as well as gained a greater ability to analyse political and logical arguments, as well as to compare texts and terms within texts.
I have learned about the evolution of 'modern' human thought in Europe. This starts from the monarchical regimes in England with Hobbes preaching in favor of an absolute sovereign, to Locke's views on property rights, Rousseau's disdain for modern civil society as a downgrade from the natural state, and Wollstonecraft's views on education. I have also improved my rigor of analysis argumentation and writing skills. I can now continue tracing the progress of civil society from the Greeks to the modern philosophers and make more sense of the world around me.

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

Comments
Josh did an excellent job at making the content approachable and relatable. He also provided summaries of the readings to help follow the arguments of the authors we were reading.
Lectures were usually discussions helpful in inderstadning the context behind the works and trying to understand the claims of the authors, their reasoning, and the implications thereof. This was helpful in understanding the information necessary to write the essays and to know more about the history of this course
Classes were extremely helpful. Josh assigned readings that were appropriate in length and made sure that we had time to get to all the most interesting and insightful points within the text during class time. He also held office hours that were very helpful for unpacking the more confusing parts of the texts and helping me write a better essay.
The discussions were crucial for my learning, especially with such dense texts in the reading. They played a large role in helping me understand the text, as you can only stare in front of a page for so long before failing to take away any more. The discussion posts were also helpful as they allowed me to test my own knowledge as well as see what others thought about the text.
We just had lectures and then readings + discussion post. Lectures are helpful, Josh makes sure you understand the text before going into discussion about it. He also holds weekly office hours if you need any extra help / for essays.
Discussions and OH are very helpful to understanding the material
Class discussions were instrumental in developing my understanding of the texts: because of how dense each text is, I definitely appreciated the way that classes were structured to prioritise the most important sections from each reading. The Canvas posts were also very useful, getting me to think carefully about a specific aspect of each reading, and actively engage with the texts.
I found the discussions most helpful in expanding my understanding of the texts; I think the short discussion questions helped a bit, but only on specific areas of each text (e.g. a chapter or two), not the texts as a whole. In terms of the essays, while generally I had to gain a greater depth of understanding in order to write them, I think that for the most part I felt like there was an expected answer, and that this made them less open ended and less contributive to deepening my understanding of the text they were dealing with..
The lectures were beneficial in sharing my views, having them picked apart by my peers, and becoming more cognisant of my biases. Additionally, listening to my peers' diverse views through various moderated discussions helped me grasp a better understanding of the content covered. The professor prompting us to think deeper and in certain directions helped me see things from many new perspectives and avoid lazily accepting the surface level interpretations of the text.

### Please respond to the following:

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
This course challenged me intellectually.	4.90	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	90.00%
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.	4.60	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	40.00%	60.00%
Class time enhanced my ability to succeed in graded assignments.	4.90	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	90.00%
I received feedback on my performance that helped me improve my subsequent work.	4.60	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	40.00%	60.00%
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.	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Overall, this was an excellent course.	4.80	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	20.00%	80.00%

### Additional comments about the course:

Comments
Don't take if you want an A, take if you want to have a fun class
Loved the contents of the class! Well-designed curriculum and I'm glad that we got to read female thinkers like Wollstonecraft as well.

### 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
The lectures were the most helpful elements of my learning, as we discussed as a class, coming to learn a lot about the works and authors
Josh made very effective use of class time by moderating the discussions and pointing us to the more complex or intriguing parts of the texts. He made sure that everyone had the chance to speak, so I had the opportunity to both listen to my other classmates' contributions and also clarify my own thoughts on the contents of the class. Because this quarter was primarily about political society, Josh made the effort to link class discussions to the modern context which made lessons even more engaging and interesting.
I think the aspect that contributed the most was how Trubowitz structured the discussions, framing them around specific areas in the text through actual readings in class. I think that helped focus our attention on what was actually important instead of just having us memorize everything and try and figure out the important parts ourselves.
Josh is great!!! Very focused on making sure you understand the reading, goes through it with the class and then we have discussions about it. Class is structured in a really organized way, and it helps you figure out how to write a good essay.
Good ability to facilitate discussion and the notes prepared in handouts were helpful
Josh's preparation for each class, and what we would discuss in it, was incredibly useful. I thoroughly appreciated the structured nature of our discussions — specific topics would be pinpointed and explained and after that, everyone would get a chance to join the conversation. This meant that everyone understood crucial sections of the text, which was also useful for essay writing down the line.
I think that focusing the discussion on each part of the text in turn, and swapping between allowing open questions and discussions and helping us know through directed questions the meaning of each part was very helpful to my learning. I also enjoyed the board use when it was applicable, and it was helpful in mapping out some of the more difficult aspects of the readings.
1. Introduction to each text sharing the historical context of the text and the life of the author 2. Feedback on our discussion posts on Canvas before each class + This was the only class where the professor urged us to respond to our peers and build on their responses 3. The professor always built a mindmap in parallel with the class discussions on the text and using it he prompted us to explore all the parts of the understanding and then leave class with more complete knowledge

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

Comments
NIL
I think our instructor could be a more deliberate with the ways in which he helped us prepare for essays. I appreciated the notes but when essays were coming up, it felt difficult to meet with him and discuss my essay, something which I very much wanted to do considering how dense these texts are.
Release the prompts on time smh. Also wish he stayed for a third quarter!!!
More feedback on work throughout the quarter would be helpful or providing more examples of what a strong paper would look like under his specific requested writing style
It could be interesting, when looking at a certain philosopher, to be introduced to snippets of what other philosophers' opinions at the time were, or how they reacted to the texts that we're reading. This would place the readings in context, and perhaps make them more applicable to other classes as well.
I'm aware that there is a certain amount of reading to get through each day, but I think that sometimes suing the socratic method to make sure we understand one part takes too much time away from other, more interesting discussions that could be had.
We could try shorter essays (1 page) per book before the big final long essay. Otherwise, we never write on most books.

## 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.	4.67	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	10.00%	70.00%	10.00%
Facilitated discussions that were engaging and useful.	4.90	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	90.00%	0.00%
Stimulated your interest in the core ideas of the course.	4.90	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	90.00%	0.00%
Challenged you to learn.	4.90	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	90.00%	0.00%
Helped you gain significant learning from the course content.	4.90	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	90.00%	0.00%
Was available and helpful outside of class.	4.40	5.00	0.00%	10.00%	0.00%	30.00%	60.00%	0.00%
Motivated you to think independently.	4.80	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	20.00%	80.00%	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.	4.80	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	20.00%	80.00%	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
Mia was outstanding at organizing our writing workshops! Each session was prepared well before the scheduled session, and it was easy to engage with the content.
Mia Thacker – the writing workshops were overall very helpful, I don't really have notes
Mia Thacker – They're great, don't need to modify anything. Made exercises that were really useful towards the essay and made themselves reading available for essay practice.
Writing assistant Mia

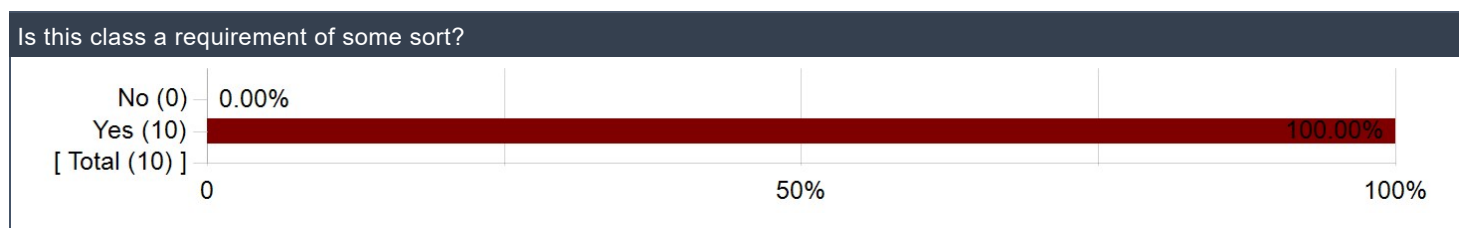
## The TA/CA or Intern. . .

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Facilitated discussions that supported your learning.	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Gave you useful feedback on your work.	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	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.	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Helped you succeed in the class.	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	75.00%	25.00%
Was available and helpful outside of class.	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	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%

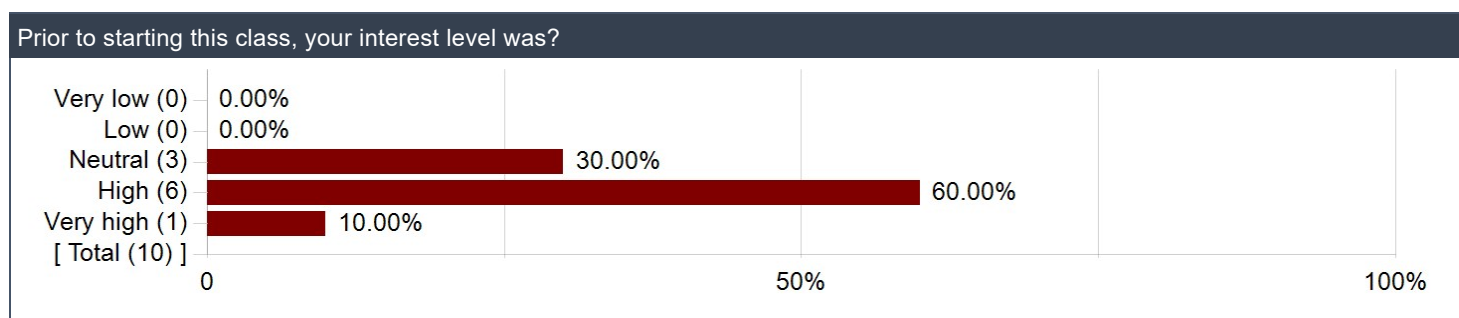
## How much did the following elements of the course contribute to your learning gains?

	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	4.00	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	50.00%	25.00%	0.00%

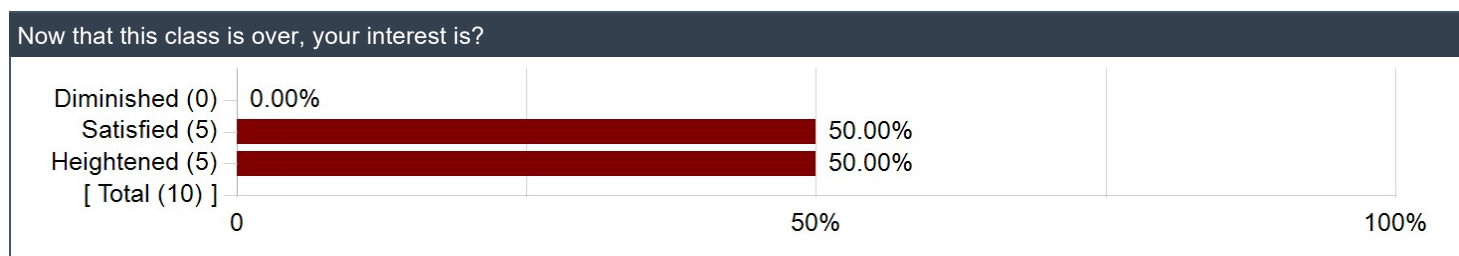
## Is this class a requirement of some sort?



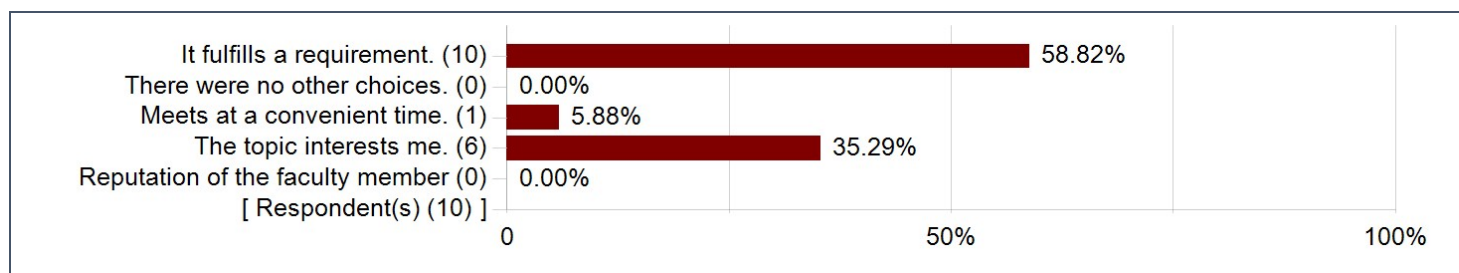
## Prior to starting this class, your interest level was?



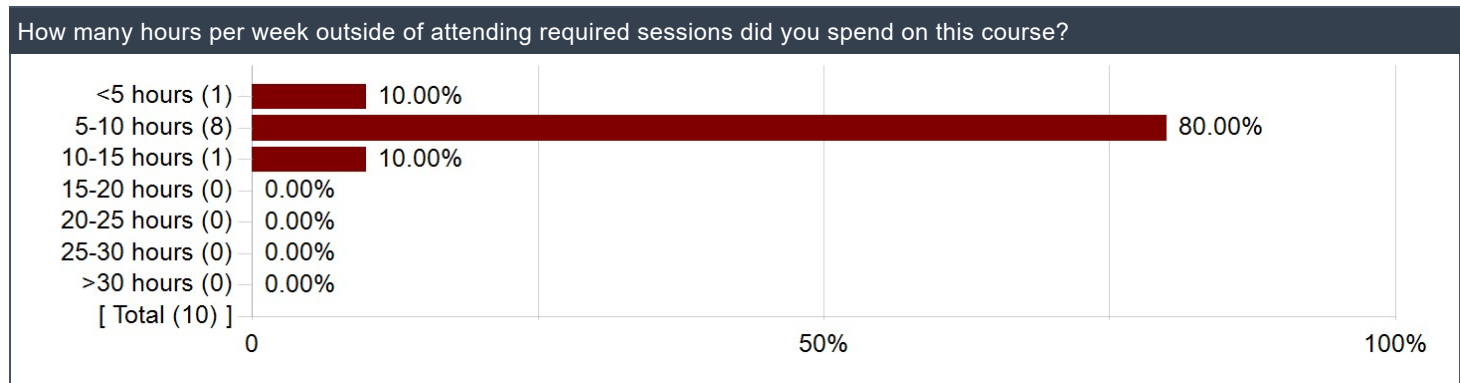
## Now that this class is over, your interest is?



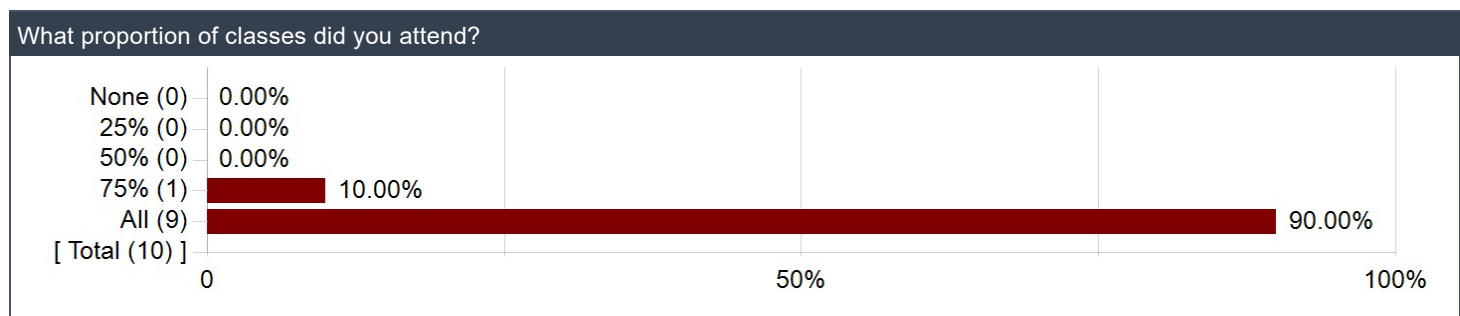
## Why did you choose to take this course? (Select all that apply)



## 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
After taking Classics I, I'd say this quarter was about as manageable as the first quarter.
I had some experience with philosophy from the previous course, which prepared me well for this one even if I had no prior experience before this sequence.
This is a SOSC course, so not super difficult. Really loved it tho, mainly because of the teacher!!!
Pretty difficult content but interesting – discussions were easy enough to grasp but the paper prompts were pretty difficult. Only background in political philosophy was fall quarter.
Having taken Classics last quarter, I was prepared for the workload and so I found it easier than I previously did in that sense. I think that Josh did a great job of making a very hard course more understandable and engaging.
I'm fairly used to discussion based courses, but the readings were somewhat challenging and new to me, as well as many of the concepts and ideas discussed in them.
The reading and discussion posts take time (at least 2 hours reading per class considering I read way faster than my peers + 30 more minutes for posts + additional time for the essays). A lot of the content isn't hard, but the books are written in a very cryptic manner which makes it timetaking to understand the text.