



# SOSC 15300 5 - Classics of Social and Political Thought III - Instructor(s) - Daragh Grant

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

Number Enrolled: **19**

Number of Responses: **11**

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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, July 11, 2024**

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

Comments
This yearlong socs sequence definitely helped me read critically, think ideas through, and be able to formulate thoughts in a logical fashion
I continued to improve on my ability to critically read social science texts and interpret the author's argument. This quarter's readings included Toqueville (Democracy in America), Marx (exerpts from his Early Writings), Nietzsche (On the Geneology of Morality), Du Bois (The Souls of Black Folk), and Beauvoir (The Second Sex).
The later western tradition of social and political thought of the 19th and 20th century
How to articulate myself and read difficult philosophers
reading and writing skills, identifying and constructing arguments in a text
The most important thing that I got out of this quarter was the ability to take a dense philosophical text and read it closely to understand the implications of what is being discussed. This goes beyond any of the specific texts, although the familiarity gained with the concepts of Tocqueville, Marx, Nietzsche, Du Bois, and Beauvoir is also quite useful for diving further into recent thinkers in social and political thought.
How to read and analyze 19th century social and political thought carefully.
How to read text.
This quarter, we read Tocqueville's Democracy in America, a selection of Marx's early writings, Nietzsche's On the Genealogy of Morality, Du Bois's The Souls of Black Folk, and Beauvoir's The Second Sex. Many of the readings this quarter were difficult and really challenged me in my ability to interpret what the authors are arguing for.
Understanding texts, thinking critically about concepts, interpreting claims.

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

Comments
Discussion was great as Daragh is a good moderator, and steps in when needed, but allows us to form ideas and explore possibilities.
Discussions in this course were both interesting and extremely useful for better understanding the reading. Reading response assignments were not always helpful but did encourage us to pay more attention to the text, and close reading assignments were useful in preparing for the final exam. The essay was especially useful in helping me to synthesize some of the arguments built in the text.
Seminars are the main form of learning and they are excellent
Discussions were great, and Daragh's office hours were also very helpful.
Discussions were amazingly informative and well-led
uncovering new details and connections in a text through class discussions
The class was sort of a mix between discussions and lectures, with the balance between the two depending on the difficulty of the material being discussed (for example, the discussions on Marx were guided more closely than the discussions on Beauvoir in my opinion, which makes sense because Marx is much less clear at first glance). "Lecturing" was never telling us what to think, however, but more asking leading questions to guide us towards specific topics and how they might be read. Daragh was always open to alternative perspectives, since there is rarely an agreed opinion on these topics, even among professional scholars. There was also an optional but highly recommended talk given by Aziz Rana on the state of the US Constitution today, which took some of the concepts we were learning about and cast them in a very present and relevant light. Readings were occasionally long (maybe 2–3 hours per class) but there's basically no point in coming to class if you haven't done at least a portion of the reading and thought about the text before class. There was one essay on Tocqueville, and a final exam based on a passage randomly (to the students) chosen from one of the other four texts.
Unlike previous quarters, classics III seems to treat social thought as its focus. In doing so, it provided a new means for me to develop my reading, writing and analytical skills.
Class is good. Essay is very helpful.
Class discussions are always the most interesting and beneficial part of the class. They help me to gain a much deeper understanding of the text than I am able to get on a first read-through. Office hours are also invaluable. Daragh is pretty much always available for office hours if you email him. He is very helpful in every stage of the essay-writing process and in discussing the texts and helping me understand them.
Discussions with Daragh were incredible as always. His ability to engage the class, teach extremely difficult concepts lucidly, push back with students, and be always available and generous in office hours is just amazing.

## Please respond to the following:

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
This course challenged me intellectually.	4.91	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	90.91%
I understood the purpose of this course and what I was expected to gain from it.	4.91	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	90.91%
I understood the standards for success on assignments.	4.09	4.00	0.00%	9.09%	0.00%	63.64%	27.27%
Class time enhanced my ability to succeed in graded assignments.	4.82	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	18.18%	81.82%
I received feedback on my performance that helped me improve my subsequent work.	4.91	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	90.91%
My work was evaluated fairly.	4.73	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	9.09%	81.82%
I felt respected in this class.	4.82	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	18.18%	81.82%
Overall, this was an excellent course.	4.91	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	90.91%

## Additional comments about the course:

Comments
The core is often "marketed" as being "transformative," which I never really felt until I took this course. Classics has definitely changed the way I view and think about the world. Daragh has been a fantastic instructor, and this course has probably been the most excellent that I have ever taken.
One of the best professors at UChicago, take Daragh if you get the chance.
Be ready for long readings, and make sure to actually try and do all of the readings. Daragh prefers that there are no electronic devices out during class time, so make sure to order the books ahead of time, especially if ordering used/from somewhere other than SemCoop or the bookstore. Getting the version of the book listed in the syllabus/reading list is recommended for page numbers, but you can make do with another version if absolutely necessary.
WARNING about the final exam: Do NOT underestimate the amount of time it will take to prepare for the final exam. I only felt adequately prepared after a full 30 hours of studying, which took me over a week leading up to the exam (I should have started earlier). Start rereading the texts and taking notes early so that you don't end up in a scramble as the test day approaches.
This sequence with Daragh has been the best course of my time at UChicago. It's shaped me deeply as a person and caused me to see the world and the history of thought in a new way.

## I would recommend this course to:

	No	Yes
Highly-motivated and well-prepared students	0.00%	100.00%
Anyone interested in the topic	9.09%	90.91%

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

Comments
Daragh's explanation of topics in really understandable ways after we spent some time grappling with the concept was really useful.
Daragh did an extremely good job moderating discussions, allowing students to talk but also ensuring that we moved in the right direction. His passion for the subject was clear, and he was always willing to help when any of us got confused.
Daragh is very good at managing a discussion. You both feel like he is extremely prepared but the discussion does not feel strict or rigid
His ability to direct discussions and the high-quality feedback
knowledge about text, getting students to respond to each others' contributions, availability and engagement during office hours
Daragh has an astounding level of familiarity with the texts and their various interpretations, and has a talent for taking what is being said in often dense language and livening it up. Not to say that the texts aren't interesting on their own, but the way they are presented in class brings an energy and feeling of importance that is really great. The very occasional diatribes or scathing remarks are always funny as well.
His ability to facilitate very productive and interesting discussions.
Daragh is very good at leading discussions in class. He is very knowledgeable about the texts and takes a lot of time to read them before each class, just as we do. He helps to make classes engaging and adds a lot to the discussion, especially when the class is confused (as happened many times given that we read Marx and Nietzsche who are quite difficult to understand).
Daragh's friendliness and approachability, as well as his clear interpretation of the text, contributed significantly to learning.

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

Comments
<p>The one thing that could have been improved is the inconsistency in the amount of reading that we had on a day by day basis. Many days we would have a lot of reading, and this would be followed by lighter days, but not in a very clear pattern. I think this is largely beyond the instructor's control just based on how the texts work (although he certainly did cut down a couple of very large reading days towards the end which was greatly appreciated), but I wonder if other things could have been done to moderate it slightly such as timing close reading assignments to correspond to the days with less reading or something like that.</p> <p>Additionally, for me personally, writing the essay was much more helpful than the final exam. In the process of writing and revision I began to understand Tocqueville much more deeply than I otherwise would have, but in analyzing excerpts on a final I don't feel that I had the opportunity for the same amount of critical thinking – while I appreciated the close readings throughout the quarter (they are a very useful skill to have), having this as a final felt stressful and not helpful in actually understanding the texts.</p>
<p>I don't really know what else he could have done better</p>
<p>The material this quarter seemed more difficult for the class to grasp during discussions (at least, it was more difficult for me). Daragh helped by intervening/guiding the discussion slightly more often than in previous quarters, but I think it would have helped my understanding if Daragh had done so even more.</p> <p>The level of preparation expected/necessary for the final exam was also excessive, in my opinion. Daragh noted that it is reasonable to expect students to prepare for a socs exam the same way they might for a physics or other exam—but the final for this course went far beyond that. I spent the vast majority of my reading period studying for this class (I spent more time studying for this final than for all of my other finals combined, to the clear detriment of my level of preparation in my other classes). Even so, I felt completely unprepared for the final, and I suspect I did rather poorly on it. A reduction from 4 to even just 3 readings to prepare for would have been a great improvement.</p>
<p>n/a</p>
<p>some of the discussions toward the end of the quarter felt disorganized</p>
<p>Not much. It would've been nice if the essay submissions were due at midnight rather than 5 PM just for peace of mind. However, because the due dates are known from the beginning of the quarter it is very possible to plan around that in addition to flexibility with submission timing.</p>
<p>Nothing — he is a nearly perfect instructor.</p>
<p>The only complaint I have about this quarter is the execution of the final exam (in the spring quarter, Daragh gives one essay and a final exam rather than two essays). I am not immediately opposed to the idea of having a final exam for the class, but I felt like Daragh asked a disproportionately large amount of time for us to prepare for the exam (the structure of the exam is that we had four possible passages that could show up on the exam, and then he would choose one and ask three close-reading questions about it; it was open-note and open-book). Since there was one passage from each of the last four authors we read, preparing for the exam essentially entailed re-reading all of those texts and taking notes before the exam. This process legitimately took me over 30 hours to prepare. When it came to the exam, I felt well-prepared, but I also felt that with even 2 fewer hours of preparation, I would not have been well-prepared.</p> <p>I understand why Daragh chooses to structure the final in this way: he feels that we should have to prepare for the exam in the same way that we would have to prepare for any other exam—by studying, and I think this is totally reasonable. However, where I draw the line is the fact that the level of preparation was entirely disproportionate to the amount of preparation for my other classes. Due to the enormous amount of time I spent preparing for socs, by the end of everything, I spent more time preparing for socs than I did studying for my math and econ finals, combined. I started preparing more than a week ahead of time, and I still felt like I didn't have enough time to study adequately for the rest of my finals. I would recommend that the number of possible passages is reduced to make the studying requirement a bit more manageable.</p> <p>The other recommendation I would make is related to the close-reading assignments throughout the quarter. Given that the final is similar in format to these close-reading assignments, and that they are supposed to prepare us for the final, it would be helpful if we could get more detailed feedback on them than simply a check mark of completion. I know that Daragh said something along the lines of "if you are engaging with the text, then you are doing the assignment correctly," but given the fact that the final exam is graded on the quality of our answers, it seems that there is, in fact, a gradient of success when it comes to doing the close-reading assignments, and it would be helpful to know whether our responses are effective and substantive or hot garbage. Because we received no such feedback, for the final exam I wasn't sure what constituted a strong response vs a weak response.</p>
<p>Despite the long wall of text, I really did enjoy this class and would 100% take it again if I had a do-over!</p>
<p>Class discussion was largely made up of about 20% of people in the course (myself included), and I think it might have been better for students if Daragh pressured people who hadn't participated to participate more.</p>

## The Instructor . . .

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Organized the course clearly.	4.64	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	18.18%	72.73%	0.00%
Presented lectures that enhanced your understanding.	4.86	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	60.00%	30.00%
Facilitated discussions that were engaging and useful.	4.82	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	18.18%	81.82%	0.00%
Stimulated your interest in the core ideas of the course.	4.91	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	90.91%	0.00%
Challenged you to learn.	4.82	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	18.18%	81.82%	0.00%
Helped you gain significant learning from the course content.	4.91	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	90.91%	0.00%
Was available and helpful outside of class.	4.91	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	90.91%	0.00%
Motivated you to think independently.	4.91	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	90.91%	0.00%
Worked to create an inclusive and welcoming learning environment.	4.91	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	90.91%	0.00%
Overall, this instructor made a significant contribution to your learning.	4.91	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	90.91%	0.00%

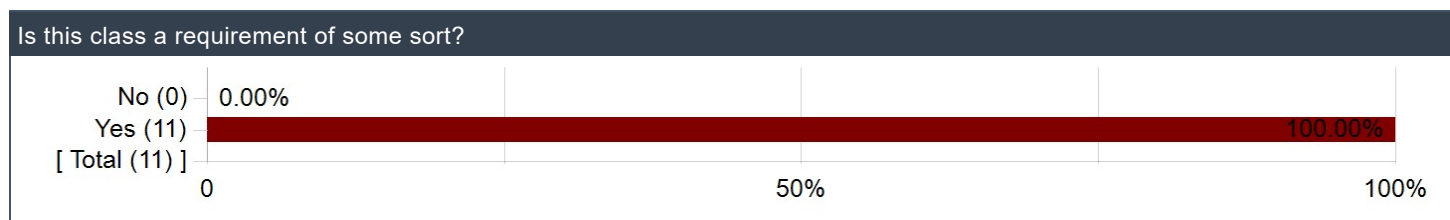
**Please include the name of the TA/CA/Intern you are evaluating. What aspects of the TA's teaching contributed most to your learning? What could the TA modify to help you learn more? Please include any additional feedback for the TA/CA/Intern.**

Comments
Danny Jacobs was helpful in going over essay outlines and providing an additional source of feedback

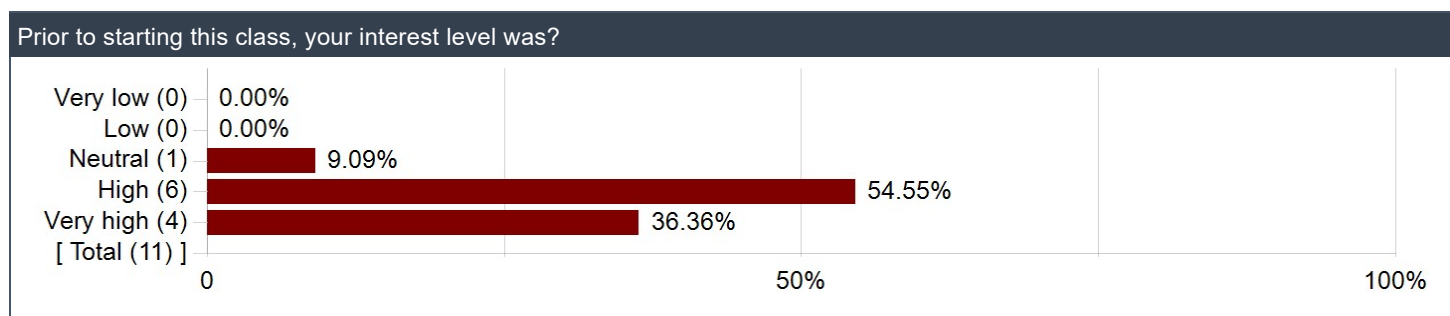
## The TA/CA or Intern. . .

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Facilitated discussions that supported your learning.	4.00	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Gave you useful feedback on your work.	4.00	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Stimulated your interest in the core ideas of the class.	4.00	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Challenged you to learn.	4.00	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Helped you succeed in the class.	4.00	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Was available and helpful outside of class.	4.00	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Overall, this individual made a significant contribution to your learning.	4.00	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%

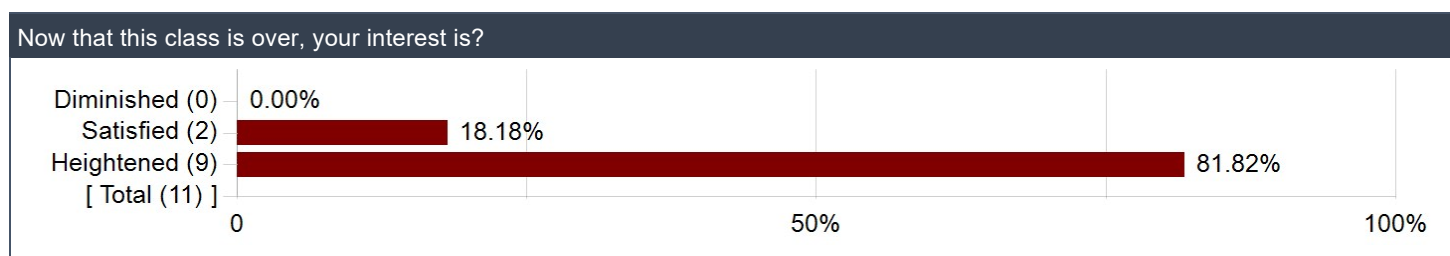
## Is this class a requirement of some sort?



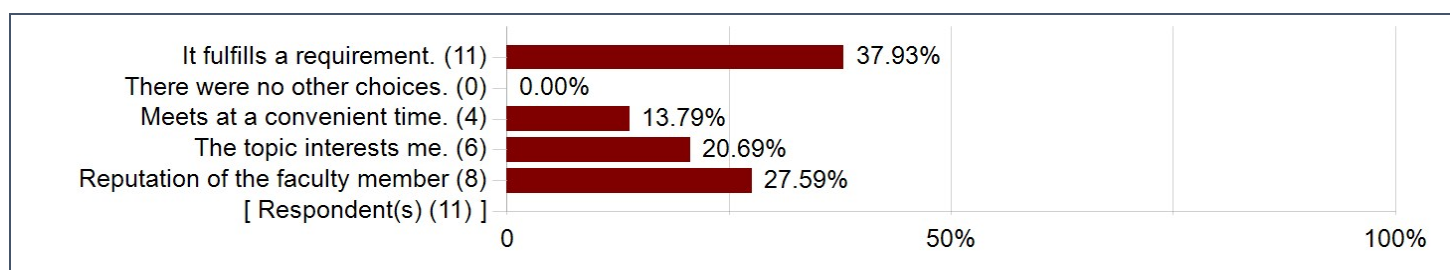
## Prior to starting this class, your interest level was?



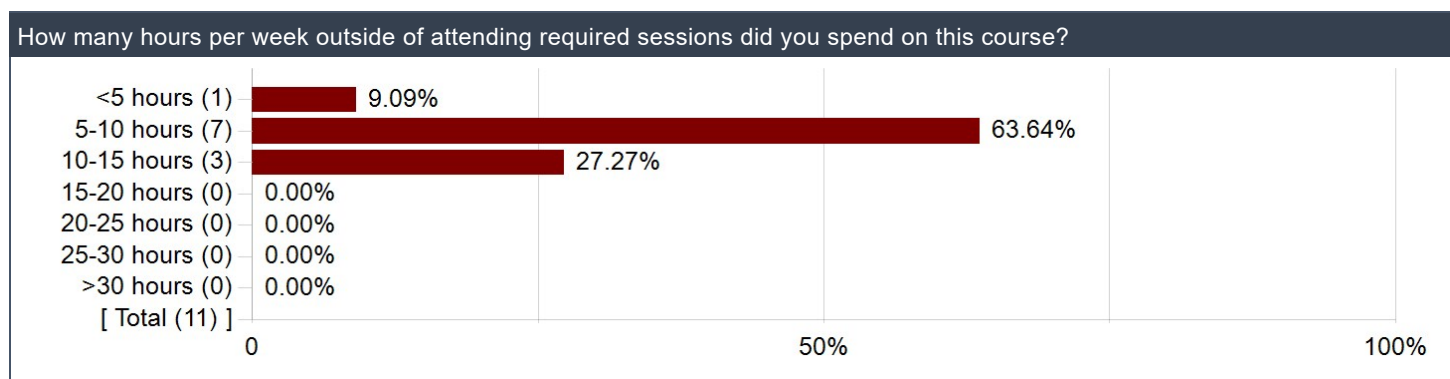
## Now that this class is over, your interest is?



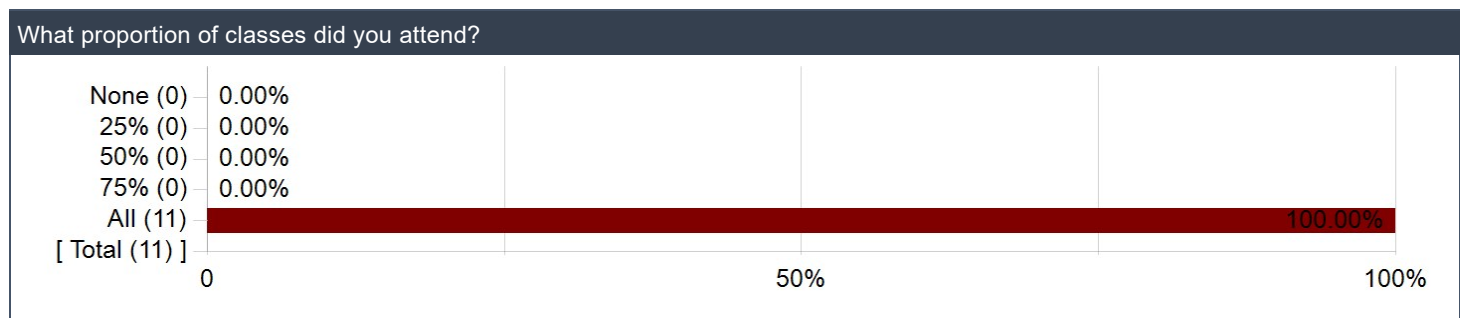
## Why did you choose to take this course? (Select all that apply)



## 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 having done Humanities, I think this was doable, but it requires doing the reading and putting a good amount of thought into the papers. Also going to office hours
For me, this course was more difficult than quarter 2 of CSPT but less difficult than quarter 1. Daragh is a great teacher and I recommend taking CSPT with him.
Very hard but doable if one puts effort in
this quarter felt more fragmented and fast-paced compared to previous two quarter, since we covered a total of 5 authors
The types of reading and writing that is demanded by this class are built up over the whole year, so by this point everybody should have the background they need to at least meet expectations, if not go above and beyond. The language of the texts might be slightly more jargony, but that's balanced by being in more contemporary English and thus easier to parse.
You have to work; this class is not an easy A by any means, but it will develop your brain in a way most UChicago classes cannot. This course, facilitated by Daragh's deft hand, will truly teach you how think and articulate those thoughts. Taking this course was a great decision, and I would highly recommend it.
The texts we read this quarter were some of the hardest of the year.
This is definitely a hard class, especially when it comes to writing papers. Daragh expects students to spend at least 40 hours on his papers, and he grades accordingly. However, he's extremely available in office hours and is an incredible teacher. I've learned and grown more in the SOSC sequence with Daragh than in any class I've taken in my life.