



# SOSC 12500 8 - Self, Culture, and Society II - Instructor(s): Matthew Messerschmidt

Project Title: **College Course Feedback - Winter 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, 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
Learned a lot about incredibly pivotal writers and the ways in which they are interconnected.
I found that I gained an ability to write much more cohesive and explorative essays on topics that I found interesting
Matt, taught me how to synthesize text and understand the different viewpoints of existentialism.
The most important things that I learned were ways to understand the self: through religion, power, desire, object/gender, race. I had little to no experience reading these authors or types of texts that focused a bit more on philosophy and social theory, but Mat explained the concepts really well, and I would not choose to take this course with any other professor. I also learned how to think critically and about not just the texts, but also the world around us. Being able to extrapolate what we read and view it in the real world is a skill that I think is invaluable, and this class really prepared me for that.
works by Durkheim, Nietzsche, Freud, Beauvoir, Fanon; totems, repression, death/sex drive, feminism, essentialism & existentialism, racism
I learned about how to more thoroughly understand and then analyze the important, dense writings of philosophers, sociologists, psychoanalysts, etc. These concepts we studied apply to our modern-day life and have value in how we interpret the world. I gained the skills of having a deeper level of reading comprehension and how to apply the writer's theories to my own thoughts in order to evolve my thought process.
This course has provided an exploration of the interplay between individual identities and larger societal structures, offering a deep dive into how cultural, social, and historical factors shape human experience.
I learned about different modes of international philosophical thought surrounding the authors Beauvoir, Fanon, Durkheim, Freud, and Nietzsche.
Reading Durkheim, Nietzsche, Freud, Beauvoir, Fanon and discussing their works
We watched Joker, read Nietzsche, Freud, Beauvoir, and Fanon. I learned a lot about the development of philosophy and psychoanalysis in the 20th century. I learned about different ideas that were developed during this time about the meaning of life, the purpose of life and religion, and regarding existentialism. I also learned how to be ambitious when writing papers analyzing and comparing these complex and dense works.

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

Comments
Professor Messerschmidt's short lectures on topics related to the readings were very enjoyable. Going to office hours to discuss paper ideas is always helpful, too.
Lecture was incredibly helpful in clarifying the text and promoting further thinking
Lectures were engaging and allowed me to fully understand readings without having the text just explained to me
Matt's contextual PowerPoint before readings was very helpful in understanding the meaning behind the texts on a deeper level. In addition, the reading notes were also very helpful, in prepping me for the readings.
The course structure greatly contributed to my learning because the mini lecture that explained more complicated subjects about philosophy or with background on the authors helped us form more thoughtful ideas about the concepts. Also, the smaller group discussions allowed me to hear from less vocal students because of the lower "pressure" environment. Because the essays did not have a strict prompt, it really allowed us to get creative with what we wanted to explore, and Mat was super supportive in exploring "unconventional" paper topics. The readings were also manageable, which meant that we were reading enough to have a discussion but not too much to the point where students were coming to class without having read the texts.
discussions during class were really helpful, as well as office hours and paper feedback.
Our discussions during the class were enormously helpful. Our professor was and is incredible in helping nurture our discussions while allowing us to come up with our own thoughts about the text. Our readings were always interesting, contributed to our greater knowledge, and were never too overwhelming in nature. Once a quarter, we attended a lecture on one of our writers, which supplemented the class with an interesting, new perspective.
I learned a lot in short lectures during class time as well as through small group discussions with other peers.
The discussions were especially helpful in understanding the material and helping me make realizations about my own thoughts and helping me form my own opinions.
Lectures provided a lot of insight into the works we read, which was useful both for learning and for succeeding on the two major assignments
Lectures were very helpful to understanding the readings, which themselves were interesting but sometimes quite dense.

## Please respond to the following:

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
This course challenged me intellectually.	4.64	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	36.36%	63.64%
I understood the purpose of this course and what I was expected to gain from it.	4.64	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	36.36%	63.64%
I understood the standards for success on assignments.	4.55	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	45.45%	54.55%
Class time enhanced my ability to succeed in graded assignments.	4.73	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	27.27%	72.73%
I received feedback on my performance that helped me improve my subsequent work.	4.73	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	27.27%	72.73%
My work was evaluated fairly.	4.82	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	18.18%	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.	4.82	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	18.18%	81.82%

## Additional comments about the course:

Comments
Professor Messerschmidt is just great. He manages to make discussion non-boring most of the time, which is a massive step up from hum last year.
Mat is an amazing professor, and I highly recommend him to everyone.
Mat has made this course 10x more enjoyable for me. Going into self, I was apprehensive, as I had limited experience with philosophy and my expertise largely lay in literature analysis. However, Mat facilitated thoughtful discussion, and enabled our entire class to participate in debate and responses that felt organic. He has continued to give extremely helpful feedback on my papers, and is always happy to discuss my work and questions with me outside of class time. I was saddened to hear that Mat was leaving UChicago as I had wished to recommend his class to my first year friends. I can say with confidence that this has been one of the best courses that I've taken at UChicago.
This was a fantastic and interesting course. I highly recommend it.
Mat is the absolute best!!!!!! Honestly my favorite professor I've had at UChicago so far!! I switched into his class after one quarter with a different professor and Self went from being a class I absolutely hated to one of my favorites all because of Mat!! He really cares about his students and wants us to succeed in his class, making him super helpful in paper meetings. I also liked the structure of our classes— some of the texts we read could be difficult so I really liked how classes were composed of not only discussion but also lecture where Mat taught the material. I'm so glad I switched into his class and can't wait to continue with Mat in the Spring because he is so great!!!
The readings assigned for Thursdays were sometimes a little long.

## 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
Whenever he lays stuff out on the whiteboard.
His willingness to engage in conversation about the text with students and the clarity with which he summarized the ideas of the text
He allowed us to understand the text with our classmates, later clarifying any issues we found
Professor Matt distinguishes himself as an outstanding instructor, exceeding any educator I've encountered since my time at UChicago. His commitment to understanding each student individually enables him to provide highly customized feedback. Additionally, his deep understanding of the authors we study greatly enhances our academic experience in this course.
Mat's willingness to hear everyone's thought through and constructively contribute to the discussion really enhanced my learning. He never dismissed anyone's thoughts and always encouraged discourse. He is also incredibly helpful during office hours especially meeting one on one with students before papers. I have received nothing but encouragement from him, and his constant care about the class and subject shows.
Mat is easily one of the best professors that I have ever had, and this is not an over-exaggeration. I am not a morning person, yet I look forward to showing up to class everyday because of his insights and ability to keep an engaging discussion.
office hours, class discussion, feedback on papers and drafts
Our professor would talk in discussion only to give feedback on our own thoughts and provide background insight on the writers. We could have discussion among the students that would evolve throughout the class time, and he used his time to speak in order to help our own discussions. I learned so much through this style of debate.
Lecture!! I loved PowerPoint days and being taught the material we were reading
Mat was very good at about listening to feedback and integrating it into class, which I think helped enhance our flow of learning and made it a more constructive environment. We also had different modes of discussion, whether it was debate or groups with people that we hadn't previously worked with before, which changed the course up every now and then.
Mat does a great job leading the classes with a mix of group discussion, breaking out into pairs/trios, presenting slideshows, etc... so that the classes do not get overly stale and so that we can best engage with each other
During classes, Mat explained central topics very well then allowed us to discuss in small groups to reconstruct and ask questions about the text, then transitioned a seminar-style discussion to breakdown the complex ideas in the readings. The explanations and discussions were very helpful to my understanding of the readings and the transitions kept classes and the topics discussed interesting.

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

Comments
Nothing comes to mind.
nothing
Nothing, I think each quarter has gotten even better and my enjoyment and understanding has continued to heighten.
Nothing :)
nothing
Nothing. I learned an incredible amount through his class. The discussions and readings paired together very well, and I felt both supported and able to expand my knowledge on my own. It's an amazing class.
Maybe more lecture but that's personal preference
Maybe budgeting a bit more time each class for students to ask questions about (or just propose discussion on) specific interesting passages in the reading.

## The Instructor . . .

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Organized the course clearly.	4.73	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	27.27%	72.73%	0.00%
Presented lectures that enhanced your understanding.	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Facilitated discussions that were engaging and useful.	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 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.	4.82	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	18.18%	81.82%	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.	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.	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%

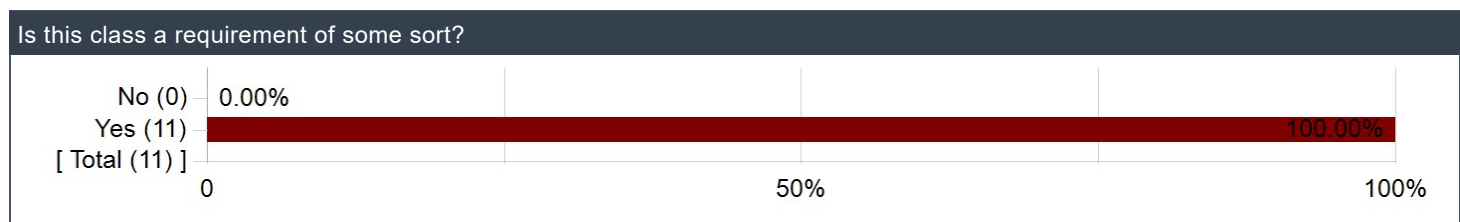
## How much did the following elements of the course contribute to your learning gains?

	Mean	Median	No Gain	A Little Gain	Moderate Gain	Good Gain	Great Gain	N/A
Laboratory Experience	1.00	1.00	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Field Trips	1.00	1.00	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Library Sessions	1.00	1.00	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Review Sessions	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Writing Seminars	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%

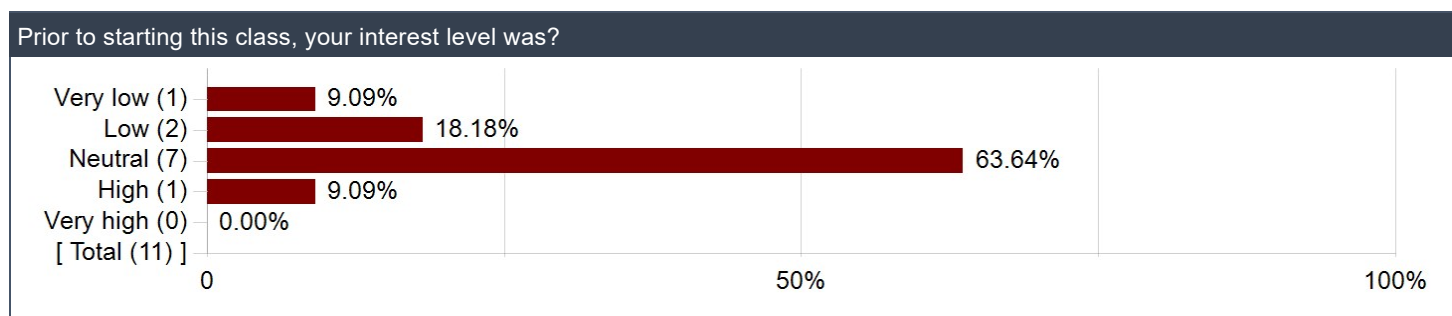
## Other course elements not mentioned above:

Comments
Lectures from other professors — great gain

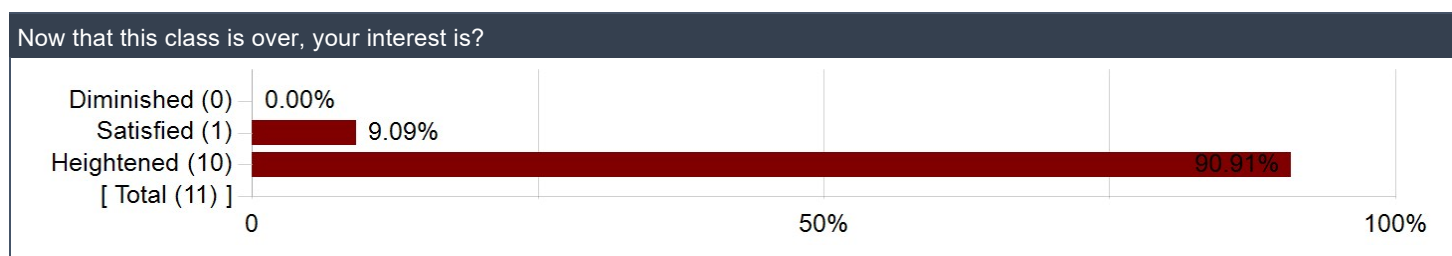
## Is this class a requirement of some sort?



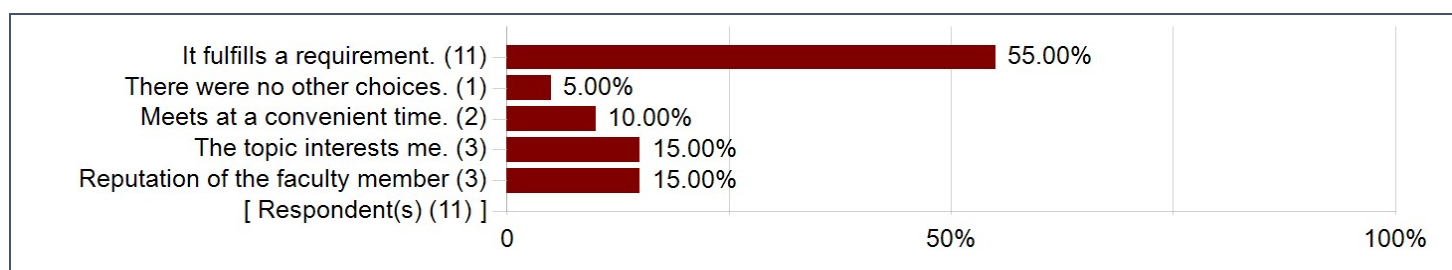
## Prior to starting this class, your interest level was?



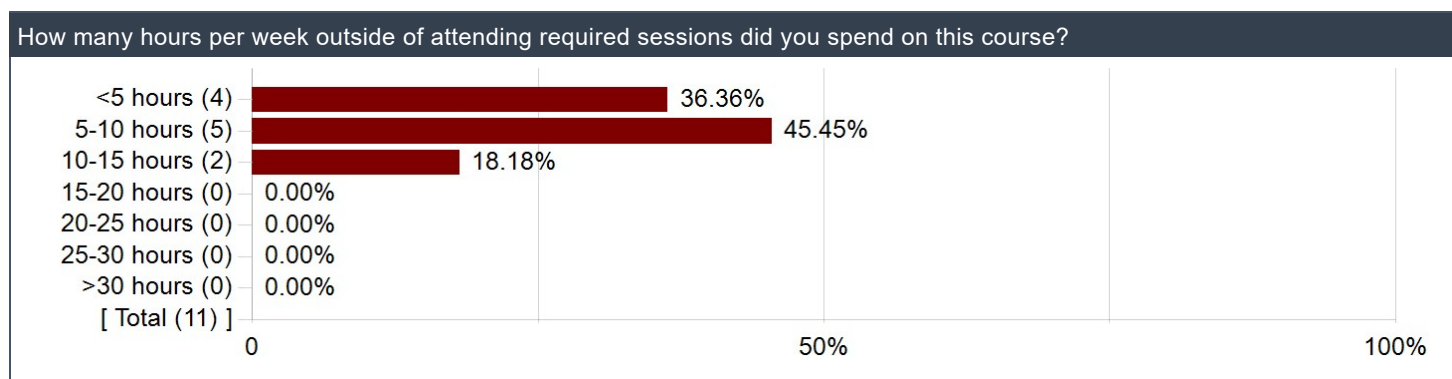
## Now that this class is over, your interest is?



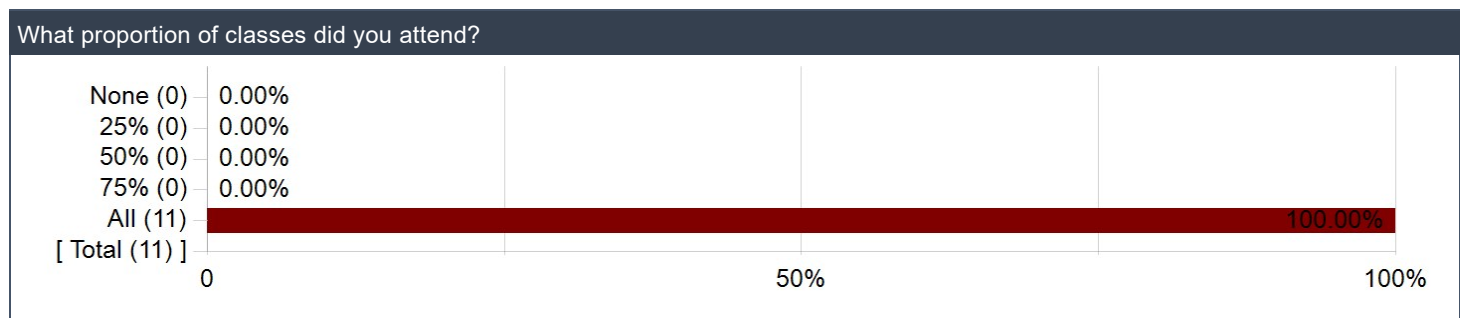
## Why did you choose to take this course? (Select all that apply)



## 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
Pretty easy if you're the type of person who has been reading stuff like this for fun before. If you haven't, it might require more time, but it won't be terribly difficult.
No background, challenging but definitely do-able
The course is not too difficult if you do the readings
I have had no experience reading these authors in the past nor have had any prior knowledge about philosophical topics and social theory, but this class is very manageable and I feel like I learned the most from this class out of all the other classes this past quarter. The topics and skills we touched on, and that Mat decided to focus on, are things that I think I will carry with me for the rest of my life because it really did change the way I viewed the world.
Self is a challenging but rewarding SOSC class. I have really enjoyed self so far and would recommend it to anyone who wants to learn more about society, the human psyche, and how people interact.
The level of difficulty was challenging (not overly so) and remained so throughout the course, but I felt better prepared as time went on and enjoyed studying the readings.
I feel like the material and texts could be pretty challenging but class discussion would definitely enhance and better my understanding every week.
Accessible for me with a STEM background, but I also have a personal interest in philosophy and concepts of identity, society, and culture anyway.
Same expectations and execution as the previous course in the Fall
With a strong background in writing but a dislike for reading, the course content was not too difficult, but the amount of reading was sometimes hard to manage.