



SOSC 17100 8 - Religion: Cosmos, Conscience, and Community I - Instructor(s): Derek Buyan

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

Number Enrolled: **19**

Number of Responses: **14**

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
I learned that religion is social and that humans are inherently social creatures who are naturally inclined to some form of religion/social construct.
How to ponder questions about texts. How to read them in depth and find ways to explore them by asking and answering questions.
Survey of different religions and how they postulate the origins and nature of humankind and earthly creation. Learned to engage with moderately difficult and dense texts, and how to identify ambiguities that create room for argument.
This course focused on reading religious, philosophical, and sociological texts about religion.
Views of certain religions and their practices (but specifically how to apply them to real life: Daodejing, Menicus in relationships, aspirations), origin of religion, society to text to practice cycle. Why religion and what it does?
If you want to become a better person and have a better mindset, I'd take this course.
creation stories, connection between religion and society, common aspects of various religions from around the world
how to argue for a certain reading of a text
I learned about cosmology stories from a variety of religions as well as texts on religion as a whole. As someone without any religious background, this course was interesting and gave me a valuable new perspective.
I learned how religion (and its relation to society) cannot be easily defined, how religion has manifested in many different states, how it shares or differs in its values, and how we can study the religions of past peoples in order to better understand their way of life.
How to critically and logically engage with religious/philosophical/sociological texts, as well as how to derive religious significance from non-religious texts
I learned a great deal about technical writing from this course. This was the first course I have had that necessitated me presenting my own ideas from a text and exploring them curiously but argumentatively throughout a piece of writing. I felt challenged in doing so, but I also know I grew a lot over the course of the quarter and improved in creating theses, finding evidence, and crafting overall an essay that considers an important text in a more complex way than just summarizing it. And of course, I also learned a lot about the world religions we discussed and the way in which we consider the relationship between religions to each other and their histories.

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

Comments
The discussions were helpful because they allowed us to discuss the readings and share our opinions. The Reading Analyses were a fair assignment that gave us practice analyzing a reading, but sometimes they weren't the most helpful on a reading we didn't understand.
Class discussions helped me to better understand texts. Reading analysis gave me ideas for essays and also made it easier to contribute to class discussions.
I quite like Prof. Buyan's use of the weekly reading analysis assignments, which are good stepping stones for seminar discussions and producing papers. The seminars were usually useful, but sometimes lacking.
Class meetings were very helpful for better understanding readings, and Prof. Buyan was great at contextualizing readings while highlighting some of the most thought-provoking aspects of course material.
Lectures were engaging, would probably benefit from some discussion section. Office Hours were most helpful and engaging, probably where I learned the most and where I was most inspired for outside learning.
lectures helped me gain a deeper understanding of the texts we read
Writing 3 short papers (1000 words max.) this quarter was an interesting experience for me because I'm used to writing longer papers. It was a good exercise in keeping my reasoning concise. Discussions were about as useful as they usually are in discussion-focused courses like this one.
Small discussions about reading material for the week as well as answering pointed questions from lecture slides were engaging and helpful.
Our class discussions were extremely helpful. Professor Buyan did an excellent job leading discussions with questions and occasional lecture-like information sessions. He also broke us up into smaller groups, which facilitated closer discussion of the texts we were focusing on.
Discussions clarified readings significantly, the reading analyses made sure at least half the class had something to talk about and often helped with writing essays
The class periods were primarily discussion based with prompting questions to guide the conversation by the professor. I enjoyed this method, but I often found myself wishing that there had been a short lecture about the text before we transitioned into a group discussion, because usually lectures are what bring up questions and curiosities for me and help shape my understanding of what the rest of the class period or section on a text will look like. I thought the assignments of 1 reading analysis per week and 3 short papers of the same expectations as each other were reasonable and helpful. I especially appreciated that the papers all had the same "prompt" and guidelines and were able to be resubmitted with edits for a higher score, because it allowed me to really observe how my skills and weaknesses in this genre of technical writing were changing over time, and I felt that this method was very conducive to my learning of both the material and how to discuss it. I think the reading analyses should have been worth more points as there were four parts to each of them but they were graded for only two points each, and in cases when one aspect of the reading analysis was incorrect or not acceptable to the professor, half credit was delivered, despite the other parts of the reading analysis still requiring significant effort and holding meaningful information in the student's processing of the assigned text.

Please respond to the following:

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
This course challenged me intellectually.	4.50	4.50	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%	50.00%
I understood the purpose of this course and what I was expected to gain from it.	4.50	4.50	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%	50.00%
I understood the standards for success on assignments.	4.29	4.50	0.00%	0.00%	21.43%	28.57%	50.00%
Class time enhanced my ability to succeed in graded assignments.	4.36	5.00	0.00%	7.14%	7.14%	28.57%	57.14%
I received feedback on my performance that helped me improve my subsequent work.	4.21	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	14.29%	50.00%	35.71%
My work was evaluated fairly.	4.36	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	7.14%	50.00%	42.86%
I felt respected in this class.	4.57	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	7.14%	28.57%	64.29%
Overall, this was an excellent course.	4.57	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	42.86%	57.14%

Additional comments about the course:

Comments
It was a great class and I'm happy that I chose the religion core so far. I appreciated writing short papers because it was helpful for my writing skills and worked with the quarter system.
Reduce lengths of certain readings (Durkheim), more depth and less breadth
Professor Buyan is incredibly engaging and leads class discussions with questions that are insightful and helpful in building your understanding of the readings
This was an excellent course. Professor Buyan is amazing.
Buyan was very encouraging and, while writing the essays can be difficult, he offered up a lot of time outside of class for students to get help. I really appreciated that he let students rewrite essays for full credit– he clearly prioritizes improvement and thought and is willing to take extra time for grading so his students are better off. Take Religion for your socs!!! It is so thought-provoking and enriching!!
Despite periods within the quarter when I felt overwhelmed or exceptionally challenged by this course, I ultimately think I grew more from this course than any other this quarter and "walked away" with a much deeper awareness for religion and the way we consider it.

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 Professor always had an ordered list of how the class was going to be conducted and always wrote on the board all of our ideas from the discussion. From there, he started to group and link our ideas together to build on the topic.
I liked when he would change things up. When we'd work with new partners or switch up the structure of our class discussion. Office hours were helpful, he gave really useful feedback.
Professor Buyan is very approachable and helpful in his feedback. He is very funny as well, which helped brighten class discussions that were otherwise a bit flat sometimes.
Breaking apart more complicated texts during class, like writing out a chart/table/bullet points on the board, really contributed to my understanding of them. Class discussion really clarified a lot for me.
I am in my second year, and Prof. Buyan has been my favorite teacher at this school so far! There was so much to unpack from these texts, and Prof. Buyan was a fantastic discussion leader and very helpful in office hours.
P. Buyan is one of the most receptive professor I've had to feedback, but more importantly, the most willing to implement that feedback in classes. He cares individually about every student, which is reflected in his teaching style of how he engages with students (writing on the board, 1 on 1 discussions, asking people to talk, accepting points and reworking them when they're not what he wants)
There were no lectures for this class, but sometimes the professor would spend a few minutes at the beginning and end of class introducing our readings, which helped give context. I would have appreciated more lectures, but I understand that this is a core class and that it's meant to be discussion-based.
He very clearly cared about the information he was teaching and about presenting it in a way that made us apply the material to bigger picture questions. He was also very available outside of class, if you needed help with an essay his office hours were incredibly flexible and he made it clear what was expected within the essays to score well.
Professor Buyan did an excellent job in making everyone feel very welcome to ask questions and to answer them freely and thoughtfully. He brought a deck of cards and passed them out randomly so that we could form new pairs in order to discuss the texts. I thought this was a very clever way of facilitating discussions with people we normally would not sit next to and thus allowed us to gain new perspectives on the text. Professor Buyan also provided excellent specific feedback on each of our writing assignments (including short papers and reading analyses) that helped me improve my ability to communicate my arguments clearly and effectively. His office hours were also extremely helpful if I needed more guidance on understanding particular texts or on brainstorming for my short papers.
He sketched out the main ideas of the readings on the board, and also came prepared with slides, which really fostered an understanding of the texts. I would say he achieved a very very good balance between letting students talk and chiming in with some clarifying ideas.
I thought the instructor's diligent and continuous feedback contributed positively to my learning. I also thought the questions posed for classmates to discuss with each other to get the ball rolling on a discussion about the text for that class period were helpful.

What could the instructor modify to help you learn more?

Comments
Maybe an example of a high-scoring paper before our first paper is written to help guide us. Or discussing paper topics in class about each reading.
He provided example essays for our short paper 2, which I found very helpful. I think having an example of a 15/15 short paper for short paper 1 would be really helpful.
Something is lacking in the discussions—I didn't feel like they were organized the way that was most helpful to have any memorable takeaways.
Sometimes the discussion was almost a little too technical. It would have been really interesting to have more debates/discussions about different interpretations of the text to practice making arguments. I liked when the instructor asked for our opinion through a show of hands, and then for each side to explain their viewpoint – I felt like this always opened up really interesting discussion.
Demand more from his students, go into the bigger problems more, tell us when we're wrong and don't accept every point. We're here to be challenged, and while I appreciate feeling good, I don't want to be coddled.
I think it would have been better to have the third paper due earlier.
N/A, I thoroughly enjoyed the structure of this course
Though people were pretty good at facilitating discussion for most of the quarter, Professor Buyan could try to call on people (if they are comfortable with it) so that more than some voices are heard each class.
I would give just a little more time in class to allow students to talk about what they found interesting in the texts (maybe at the beginning of class), rather than a structured discussion throughout
If the instructor had introduced a few more lecture segments to begin the discussion of the text after reading it, that would have helped me learn more because it would have built a bridge between my solitary reading of it and our later group discussion of it, providing a foundation of the overarching "story" or main takeaways from the text before beginning our discussion, instead of reminding us of the author and subject of the writing and maybe a few contextual details and then going into the socratic discussion from there.

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%	0.00%	35.71%	64.29%	0.00%
Presented lectures that enhanced your understanding.	4.43	5.00	0.00%	7.14%	0.00%	35.71%	57.14%	0.00%
Facilitated discussions that were engaging and useful.	4.50	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	7.14%	35.71%	57.14%	0.00%
Stimulated your interest in the core ideas of the course.	4.57	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	7.14%	28.57%	64.29%	0.00%
Challenged you to learn.	4.57	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	7.14%	28.57%	64.29%	0.00%
Helped you gain significant learning from the course content.	4.57	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	42.86%	57.14%	0.00%
Was available and helpful outside of class.	4.79	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	21.43%	78.57%	0.00%
Motivated you to think independently.	4.71	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	28.57%	71.43%	0.00%
Worked to create an inclusive and welcoming learning environment.	4.64	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	7.14%	21.43%	71.43%	0.00%
Overall, this instructor made a significant contribution to your learning.	4.64	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	35.71%	64.29%	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
Joshua (writing tutor) Office hours with Josh were extremely helpful. He honestly just helps you with anything, which was so useful because I was able to work on my weak points with him.
Joshua Wagner
Josh was quite helpful in office hours: he helped me organize my outlines for papers and reformulate arguments into a more concise manner.
Josh Wagner
Joshua Wagner. Josh helped me break down arguments of the texts we were reading, which helped me understand them and read them more quickly.
Joshua Wagner

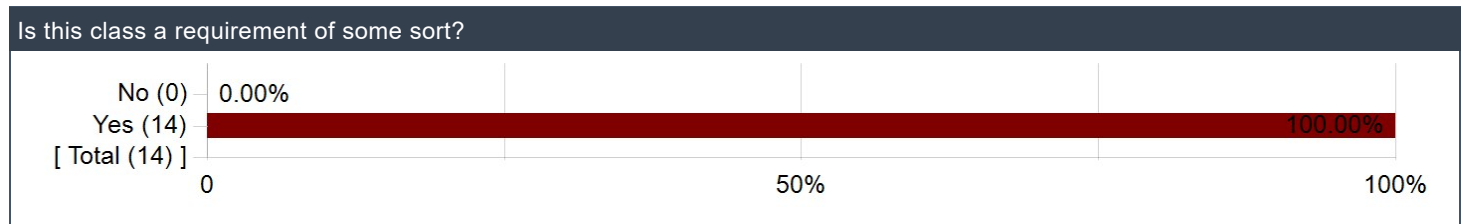
The TA/CA or Intern. . .

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Facilitated discussions that supported your learning.	4.00	4.00	0.00%	14.29%	0.00%	42.86%	28.57%	14.29%
Gave you useful feedback on your work.	3.80	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	28.57%	28.57%	14.29%	28.57%
Stimulated your interest in the core ideas of the class.	3.20	3.00	0.00%	14.29%	28.57%	28.57%	0.00%	28.57%
Challenged you to learn.	3.50	3.50	0.00%	14.29%	28.57%	28.57%	14.29%	14.29%
Helped you succeed in the class.	3.86	4.00	0.00%	14.29%	28.57%	14.29%	42.86%	0.00%
Was available and helpful outside of class.	4.57	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	42.86%	57.14%	0.00%
Overall, this individual made a significant contribution to your learning.	3.43	4.00	14.29%	0.00%	28.57%	42.86%	14.29%	0.00%

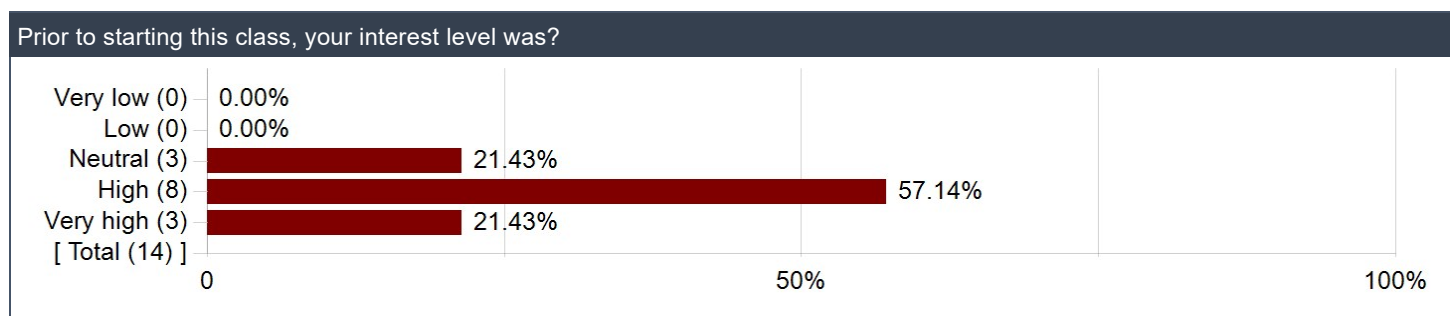
How much did the following elements of the course contribute to your learning gains?

	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	3.17	3.00	0.00%	14.29%	42.86%	28.57%	0.00%	14.29%

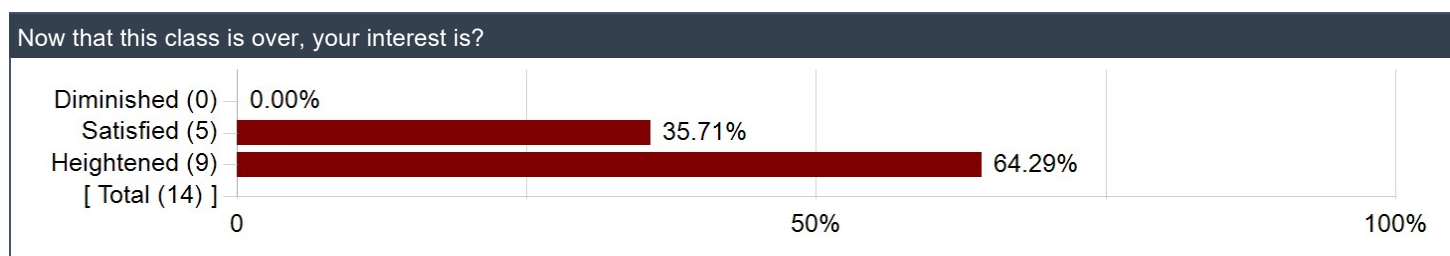
Is this class a requirement of some sort?



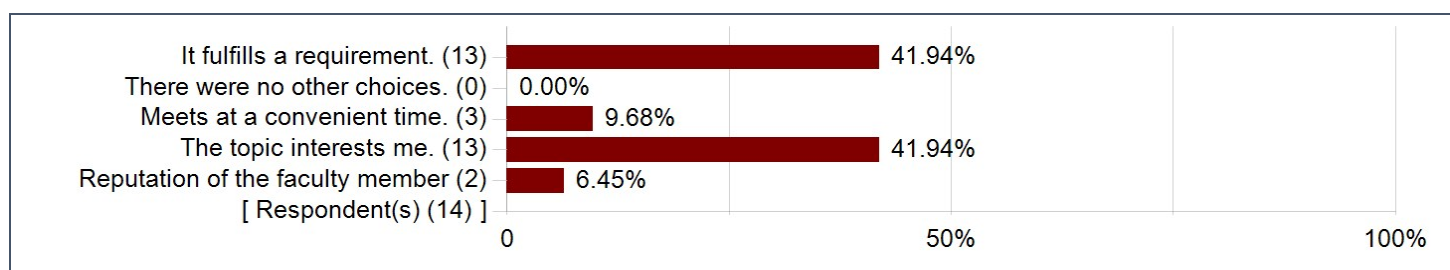
Prior to starting this class, your interest level was?



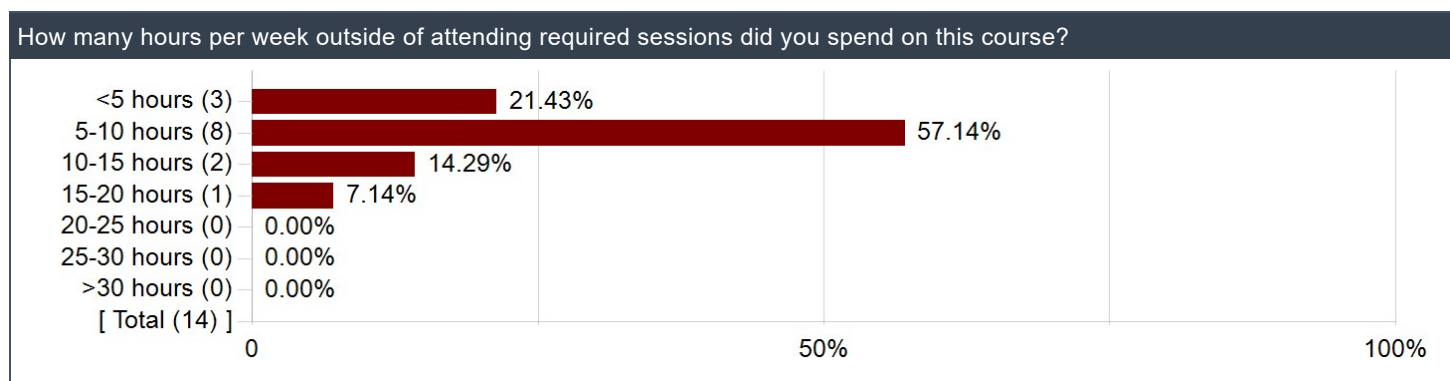
Now that this class is over, your interest is?



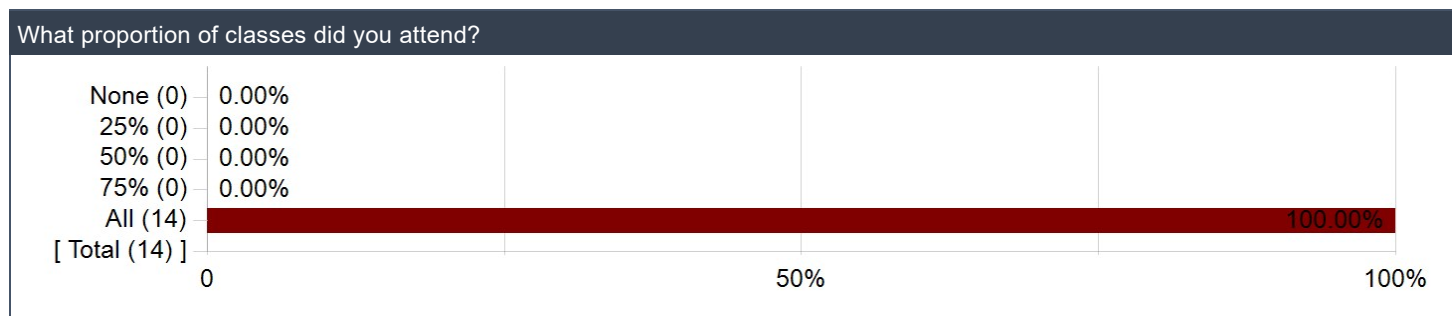
Why did you choose to take this course? (Select all that apply)



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
I have no background in religious studies or religious knowledge besides being raised in a religion and I truly didn't need any background to understand the readings or the topics. He often provided crash courses/intro videos for religions that we needed to be familiar with and that was enough.
The readings can be quite difficult, but giving yourself enough time to sit with them (and knowing which ones you want to write about, so you sit with them a bit more) felt like a good strategy. Professor Buyan is not the harshest grader in my experience, but I wouldn't say he's necessarily easy, either. He's very fair.
The course was appropriately challenging.
This course is a great introduction to religious studies: students do not need to have previous knowledge of religion but should be prepared for class meetings.
Managable
It is a good difficulty for someone who does not have much experience.
The writing wasn't difficult, but I had to adjust my style a little bit coming from phil per.
I had no background knowledge and it was average in terms of difficulty
I had some experience reading texts like this from church and from my AP English Language and Composition class from high school. All of the texts were quite interesting, and I didn't struggle much in getting my work and readings done in a timely and orderly manner.
Not bad at all having taken Human Being and Citizen last year, but writing the essays can definitely be a mind-twister.
I have a significant background in writing but no background in religious studies or analytical writing about religious texts so this course was moderately difficult.