



# SOSC 15300 10 - Classics of Social and Political Thought III - Instructor(s) - Julia Brown

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

Number Enrolled: **17**

Number of Responses: **16**

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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
I learned a lot about the writers featured, which was interesting.
I learned how to extract meaning and connections across various texts and able to concisely reinterpret arguments
I learned to be able to not only read complex texts but also being able to parse through their often technical language to understand the ideas behind them.
How to read and analyze the perspectives of different philosophers, and how to express my own opinions of these theories.
Analyzing philosophical and political texts, argument reconstruction/analysis, close readings, discussing with peers.
In the spring quarter, the most valuable/interesting thing I learned was the particular method of criticism employed by Marx, DuBois, and Beauvoir. Their approach to philosophical problems and their material manifestations was novel to me.
During the most valuable things I learned was when the class a whole discussed Marx's philosophy and approach to criticism outside of his communist perspective. He had much to talk about concerning criticism that I thought was intriguing.
Learned to write better
Learned about social critique. Writing workshop taught introduction and conclusion skills
I feel like I got a really strong background in political philosophy (and other forms of classic philosophy), improved my close reading, learned how to write a new style of essay (argument deconstruction).
How to lead class discussions, analyse and close read text and make connections across different texts.
Reading challenging texts and really understanding them, writing strong text-based essays, and discussing my ideas clearly on topics with which I have limited prior familiarity.
Critically read philosophical texts
I learned how to do close readings of texts in order to glean their broader ideas, as well as how to relate certain texts to the ones I've previously read and find connections. I learned how to recognize political themes and analyze them to get a better understanding of our world.
I learned theories and methods of criticism and analysis derived from key texts, and how to apply these methods under specific constraints.

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

Comments
Discussions and essays were somewhat helpful but I don't feel that my performance really improved.
discussion were really helpful
Class discussions were the most in contributing to my learning and my understanding of texts.
The discussions helped me learn how to articulate more thoroughly my thoughts and how to listen and engage better with the comments of my peers.
I liked seminars because they helped me understand the readings more by talking through it with peers/professor. But the short assignments were also helpful as they forced me to pay attention to the actual reading ahead of a given class period.
Class discussion was particularly helpful in my understanding of the complex and dense texts we covered this quarter.
The discussions during our classes were most valuable towards understandings of the readings. I would come into class unclear of what I had just read and come out with a more comprehensive grasp.
The discussions in class were very useful to understand the texts better.
Lectures went over important aspects of the reading. essay forced me to understand a text more deeply
I think the class discussions and the essays, along with office hours, were the most helpful in augmenting my understanding of the text.
Discussions helped with reading especially if you didn't do that day's work. It's easy to follow and interesting if you're interested in the subject but it can get long and repetitive with certain texts.
Class discussions were extremely helpful and enabled me to really understand the texts we read at home. Weekly commonplace book entries were also a great way to do a deep-dive into the reading and pay close attention to specific passages and how the fit into the broader text.
Class discussions helped clear confusion for the most part
The discussions were helpful, because they allowed me to gain insight into my classmates' ideas and clear up any confusions I had while reading the texts. The commonplace entries were especially helpful because they forced me to do really close readings of a certain passage and understand the ideas posited in them fully, as well as connect them to other ideas in that text or previous texts. Every aspect of this course aided me in my learning.
The discussion sections challenged my point of view and gave nuance to my ideas.

**Please respond to the following:**

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
This course challenged me intellectually.	4.56	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	6.25%	31.25%	62.50%
I understood the purpose of this course and what I was expected to gain from it.	4.38	5.00	0.00%	6.25%	12.50%	18.75%	62.50%
I understood the standards for success on assignments.	4.19	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	31.25%	43.75%
Class time enhanced my ability to succeed in graded assignments.	4.50	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%	25.00%	62.50%
I received feedback on my performance that helped me improve my subsequent work.	4.13	4.00	6.25%	0.00%	12.50%	37.50%	43.75%
My work was evaluated fairly.	4.57	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	7.14%	28.57%	64.29%
I felt respected in this class.	4.75	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	6.25%	12.50%	81.25%
Overall, this was an excellent course.	4.56	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%	18.75%	68.75%

Additional comments about the course:

Comments
N/A
Very good course
I wished the professor had given us clear takeaways from each lecture.
Pretty average for a classics course; not bad
I think this course is an excellent choice for anyone wanting to become better read and have a well-rounded education. It is a great way to gain exposure to some of the most prominent thinkers in our society, both for the sake of their ideas and to understand their impact on our society. I also think Julia Brown is a fantastic professor who structured and led the class very effectively.
She is a hard grader for papers... even if u agree on something, it needs to be phrased the way she phrases it otherwise she will disagree and deduct points. It's not terrible, but u should expect that a B+ is the highest u can get on a paper. Even so, u can manage an A- in the class but I dont know anyone who has managed to get an A
It was a phenomenal sequence and these were my favorite classes I've taken at UChicago so far. I truly gained so much from it — both in skills and in knowledge — that I'm able to use in my everyday and in my academic life. I reference the texts we've read very often because I find them very applicable to our world and I think the ideas I've read about will stick with me for a long time. I took this course to fulfill my SOSC requirement but I gained so much more than just a check on a box or a grade. This sequence changed me as a student and as a thinker, and I appreciate it, Prof. Brown, and my peers so much for it.

I would recommend this course to:

	No	Yes
Highly-motivated and well-prepared students	0.00%	100.00%
Anyone interested in the topic	6.67%	93.33%

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

Comments
Julia was really helpful in leading the discussions and keeping us on track for what she wanted to talk about which will be helpful for the commonplace entries and final. I really appreciated the fact that we only had one essay which really allowed me to follow the readings and participate on a daily basis in class and understand all the readings rather than exclusively devote all my time to multiple essays that I probably wouldn't have gotten feedback on to help me with the next. Additionally, the commonplace entries are so much more manageable than canvas posts ever were and helps you analyze and think within the text rather than just trying to summarize or come up with something random from the reading as a whole. Additionally, the final format is the best thing about this class because it allows me to put into words all the thoughts and analyzes that we've done with the texts at hand without me having to stress about putting it into an essay format, which I think can bog down the ideas at hand.
Her facilitation of class discussions was really helpful in terms of clarifying complex ideas or directing conversation toward the more important topics at hand.
Julia was really good at guiding the discussions and directing the class to the most important points of the readings
Julia is really good at subtly steering you away from an argument (if you said something that showed a misunderstanding of the text.) She is also good at pointing you toward the important themes/arguments in long, dense texts (like Democracy in America and The Second Sex, each of which were ~800 pages.)
I found the handouts with excerpts and guiding questions to be quite helpful in guiding my thinking about the reading. The diagrams and schematics occasionally written on the whiteboard were also helpful.
The instructor's ability to refocus the discussion on a different topic in the same reading when she sensed a lull was important to waste any class time.
She was always available for office hours and seemed to know a lot about the materials
Reading questions and handouts
Prof Brown is very well-versed in the texts and is great at teaching/explaining the more complex texts that we learned.
Discussions and commonplace entries being once a week was helpful. Prof. Brown wrote on the board so it was easy to follow.
Julia did an excellent job facilitating discussion, pushing us to challenge our ideas, and guiding us to the most accurate and insightful readings of the texts. Class time was mostly spent on class discussions, group discussions, worksheets with specific passages, and working through ideas on the board.
When she would explain concepts confused during class wide discussion
Prof. Brown was amazing at facilitating discussions in a way which ensured that students' ideas were heard and explored — paying attention to the concepts that the students wanted to discuss — while also making sure that the main themes of the readings were touched on so that everyone understood the concepts being posited by the authors. She welcomed participation and was quick to clear up any confusions. Discussions were pleasant and insightful and I always felt like I gained great insight from them. She was fantastic at explaining difficult concepts while always opening the floor for anyone to chime in so that the students played a major role. She perfected the balance between professor instruction and student participation. She is the main reason that I was able to gain so much from this course. She's great in this course.
The instructor did very well to move the conversation along and provide guidance to our conversations and navigations of the texts

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

Comments
nothing she was really great and accomodating and cares about the opinions of the class.
not sure; the course was really good
I think it would be helpful to receive feedback on our essays a bit faster to see how we can improve for following assignmentsn
The one—essay—per—quarter format helps some and doesn't help others. I've learned to appreciate it because at the end of the day, only having to worry about one (long) essay is a little bit less stressful than having to write 3 shorter ones throughout the quarter.
Perhaps less breadth and a slightly slower, more comprehensive look at slightly fewer texts would have helped my retention.
The instructor could involve more modes of media such as clips, for example of more modern philosophers speeches, or audio clips as well.
draw more on the board (I am a visual learner); encourage class discussion but still make it clear what your thoughts are on the text (what lesson we should take away from the reading)
I would've appreciated clearer expectations for how to succeed on graded assignments, especially earlier on in the sequence.
Make connections with relevant issues to make it more interesting. Also, Before starting discussions set the foundation for the definitions of words as the author uses them so everyone has a similar understanding of the book.
Provide more context on the historical climate that each writer had and the broader impact and applications that their writing had.
Make the papers easier.... Office hours clears most confusion but it's stressful and B+ is not gonna get me into Law School so yeah
There's nothing she could've done more. She instructed this course perfectly, making sure to retain its intellectual complexity and its insightfulness. She's amazing. I would take any class of hers.

## The Instructor . . .

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Organized the course clearly.	4.75	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	6.25%	12.50%	81.25%	0.00%
Presented lectures that enhanced your understanding.	4.33	5.00	0.00%	6.25%	12.50%	18.75%	56.25%	6.25%
Facilitated discussions that were engaging and useful.	4.75	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	75.00%	0.00%
Stimulated your interest in the core ideas of the course.	4.75	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	75.00%	0.00%
Challenged you to learn.	4.69	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	31.25%	68.75%	0.00%
Helped you gain significant learning from the course content.	4.56	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%	18.75%	68.75%	0.00%
Was available and helpful outside of class.	4.81	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	18.75%	81.25%	0.00%
Motivated you to think independently.	4.63	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	6.25%	25.00%	68.75%	0.00%
Worked to create an inclusive and welcoming learning environment.	4.81	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	18.75%	81.25%	0.00%
Overall, this instructor made a significant contribution to your learning.	4.69	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	31.25%	68.75%	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
Sarah was very eager to help and gave encouraging feedback throughout the essay process
Sarah Jeffries is really nice and always tries to help you out but she didn't really know the material of the class. She was a great writing instructor though!

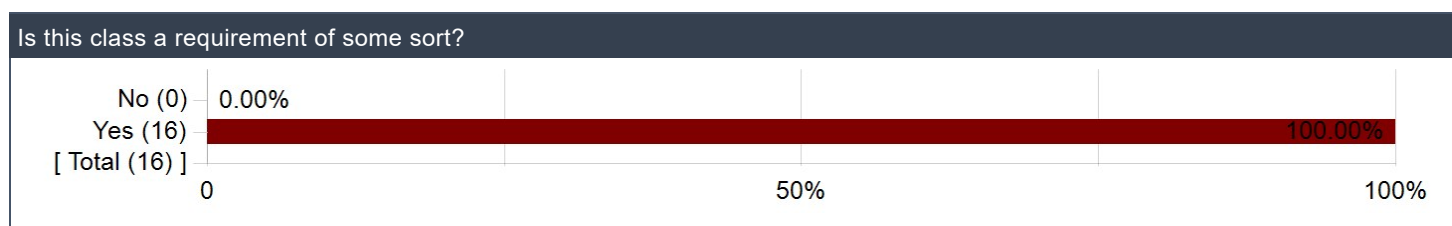
## The TA/CA or Intern. . .

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Facilitated discussions that supported your learning.	4.33	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	66.67%	33.33%	0.00%
Gave you useful feedback on your work.	4.67	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	66.67%	0.00%
Stimulated your interest in the core ideas of the class.	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 succeed in the class.	4.67	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	66.67%	0.00%
Was available and helpful outside of class.	4.67	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	66.67%	0.00%
Overall, this individual made a significant contribution to your learning.	4.67	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	66.67%	0.00%

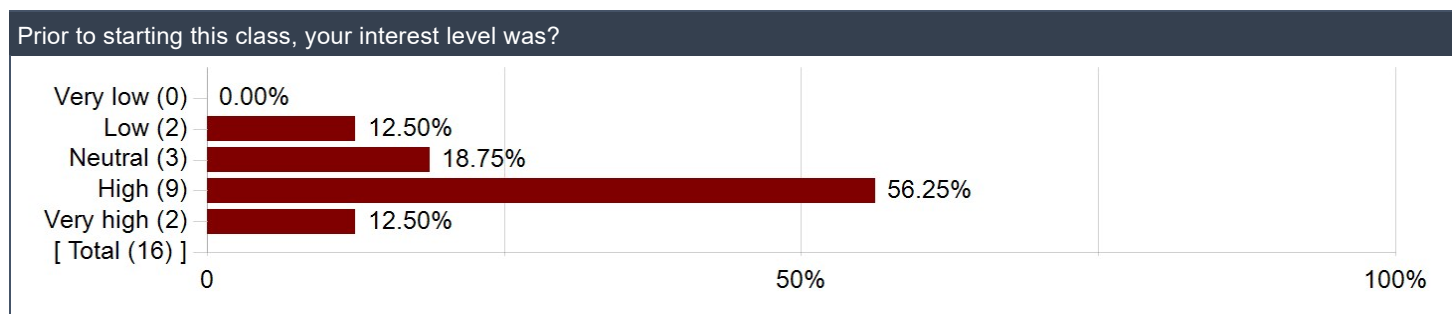
## How much did the following elements of the course contribute to your learning gains?

	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	2.82	3.00	9.09%	18.18%	54.55%	18.18%	0.00%	0.00%

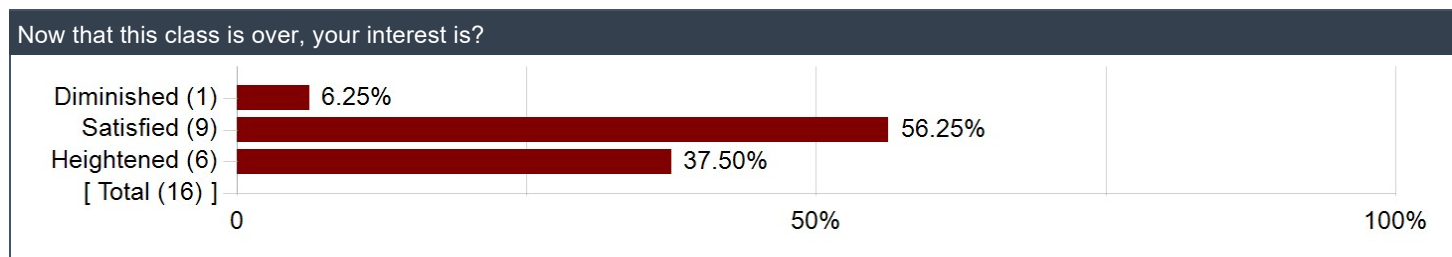
## Is this class a requirement of some sort?



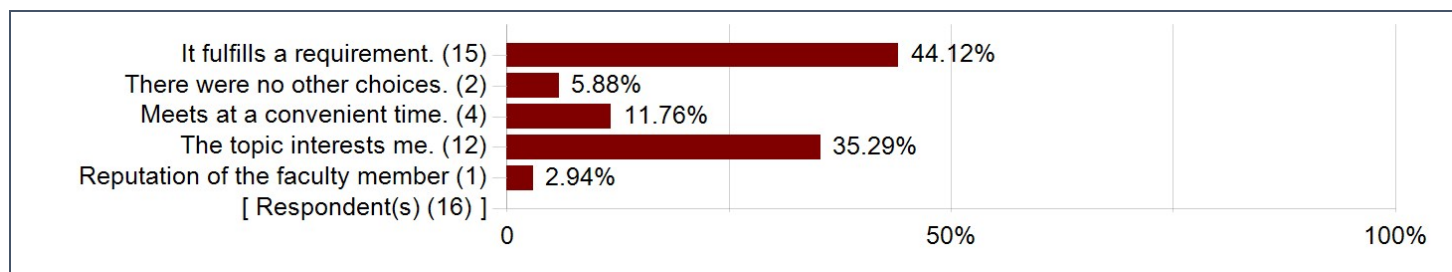
## Prior to starting this class, your interest level was?



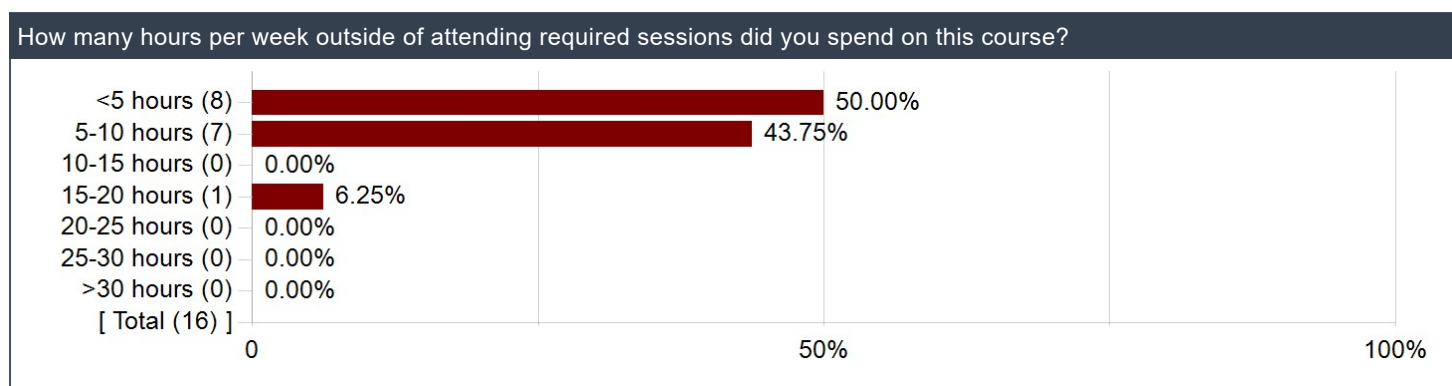
## Now that this class is over, your interest is?



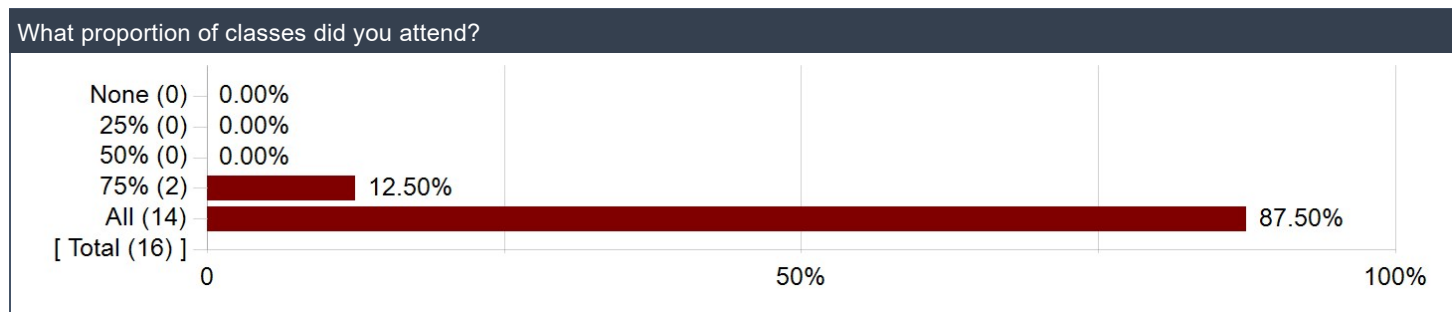
## Why did you choose to take this course? (Select all that apply)



## 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
The class was challenging but not overly hard or overly time consuming. In the past, I have engaged with philosophical texts, so I came in with a strong background, but I think by the third quarter, everyone in the class had acclimated to the style of writing and type of thinking necessary for productive discussions.
I think at some moments the texts and discussions we faced in this class were difficult and I felt having more experience with certain theoretical concepts would have been more beneficial, but overall, the class engages with everyone's level of learning and anyone can participate
It was hard. There's not a lot of work, but there's a lot expected of the work that you submit, i.e. you have to actually think about what you are writing, unlike in some other core classes when you can essentially be braindead and submit whatever to get an A. Julia is by no means unfair—she's an excellent instructor—but the texts are dense and it is clear when you don't understand them.
This course was quite difficult for me despite some background in reading classic philosophical texts. I found the combination of a fast pace and very rigorous analysis of the texts to be challenging, but not overly.
Not that hard
I think coming into it willing to put in the time and with a strong writing background is probably the most important thing — it's not that difficult, but the reading can be dense and difficult to get through at times, especially in the fall quarter of the syllabus.
Challenging but doable
Not ficcult. Hard grader
It was challenging, especially if you have little prior experience to intensive, close reading of texts, but you learn those skills very quickly in this course. It's challenging, but it is extremely worthwhile and I gained so much from taking it. It's tempting to pick an "easy" SOSC but this course has benefited me immensely, so I would 100% choose to do this course if you want to be intellectually challenged and improve from it. It's a great course, even better with Prof. Brown. I highly recommend.